

POL321H
Modern Political Thought: History, Freedom, and Progress
Winter Term 2023

Instructor: Professor Melissa S. Williams
3040 Sidney Smith Hall

Office hours: Wednesdays, 2-4 PM or by appointment
(in person and online)

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Lecture location: OISE 2212, 252 Bloor Street West

Lecture time: Tuesdays, 6:00-8:00 PM EST

Tutorials: Schedule TBD

Teaching Assistant:

TBA

Course description:

This course examines central themes in the political thought of modern era through the careful reading of texts that date from the 19th through the early 20th centuries. Although the course picks up chronologically from the thinkers studied in POL320H, it does not presuppose that you have taken that course.

One of the distinctive features of political modernity is the idea of the progressive development of the human species through history. The course will examine contrasting theories of progress as well as thinkers who are skeptical about the idea. Do those who struggle against domination need to believe in historical progress toward freedom as a source of motivation? Does belief in progressive human emancipation rely on the same theories of civilization and human development that were used to justify slavery and colonialism? Is the progress of modern scientific rationality a gain for human freedom, or does it generate new forms of domination? What remains of political agency – our capacity to act in and change the conditions of our political existence – once we believe that history unfolds according to a pattern? To explore these questions, the course brings texts by East Asian, African American, and South Asian thinkers into critical conversation with texts in the Euro-American “canon.”

Readings:

This course proceeds through the close reading of written texts (though we will also problematize the conventional practice of treating only written texts as significant sources in the study of political thought). We will situate these texts in their historical contexts, aiming to understand them on their own terms. But our purpose is also to reflect deeply on whether the visions of politics they express offer guidance for our political judgment here and now. Every text is open to multiple interpretations, and the goal is for to develop *your* interpretation through careful reading and lively debate with your peers. In other words, the course will cultivate your ability to think like a political theorist, able to present a convincing interpretation of the texts *and* articulate your judgment about whether the account of political life that you find in the texts is appealing or compelling *to you*.

For each text, we have prepared a set of reading questions to help focus your encounter with it, and these will be posted in Quercus in advance of the scheduled reading assignment. We encourage you to keep a reading journal of your notes on the text, and to take the time to write out your answers to a few of the questions (or to your own questions) each week. If you do this as part of your regular study regimen, you'll be well prepared for essays and exams.

The following required texts are available for purchase at the UofT Bookstore or from online booksellers. Some of them (as indicated) are available electronically through the UofT Libraries system. There are many different translations and editions of many of these texts. Be sure to read these particular editions and use them in your course assignments. I strongly encourage you to get your own copy of these texts so that you can mark them up as you read them, an important way of interacting with the text and making them your own. All other readings will be posted on the course portal (Quercus) the Module for the week in which they're assigned.

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays*. Edited by Mark Philp and Frederick Rosen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015 (ISBN-10: 0199670803, ISBN-13: 978-0199670802)(Available online through UofT Libraries: <https://oxfordworldsclassics-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/view/10.1093/owc/9780199670802.001.0001/isbn-9780199670802>).

Nakae Chōmin, *A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government*. Translated and edited by Noboku Tsukui; edited by Jeffrey Hammond. Boston: Weatherhill, 1984 (ISBN-10: 0834801922, ISBN-13: 978-0834801929)(Note: According to the UofT Bookstore, this text is out of print. However, both new and used copies are available from some online booksellers. A .pdf version of the text is posted in the Quercus module for this week, but we encourage you to use a print version if possible.)

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Edited by Allen W. Wood. Translated by H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 (, ISBN-10: 0521348889, ISBN-13: 9780521348881).

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*. Edited by Lawrence H. Simon. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994 (ISBN: 9781603847216). (Available online through UofT Libraries: <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/lib/utoronto/detail.action?docID=775232>)

Mohandas Gandhi, *“Hind Swaraj” and Other Writings*. Edited by Anthony J. Parel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 (ISBN-10: 052114602X, ISBN-13: 9780521146029)(Available online through UofT Libraries: <https://www-cambridge-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/core/books/gandhi-hind-swaraj-and-other-writings/79AA4643B302279F6B57AE5CF6493F02>).

Lectures and Tutorials:

This course combines lectures and tutorials to orient your reading of the texts and to deepen your understanding through class discussion. In lectures, Professor Williams will provide historical context for each text, outline its key arguments, identify some challenges for interpretation, and link back to the overarching themes of modernity and human freedom. Attending lectures is important for your success in the course, as they will help make the texts more accessible and prepare you for your tutorial discussions, essays, and exams. You should make time to *do the readings and review the reading questions before the lecture on a given text*, every week.

Tutorials are also essential to your learning, and tutorial attendance is mandatory. See below for further details.

Normally, both lectures and tutorials will be held in person. However, select lectures will be online, and we are prepared to move instruction online if pandemic conditions so require.

Course requirements:

<u>Tutorial participation</u>	15%
<u>Close reading assignments (2 per term, 10% each)</u>	20%
<u>Essay (due Monday, March 6):</u>	30%
<u>Final Assessment (Exam period)</u>	35%

1. Tutorials

Regularly scheduled tutorials are crucial for your learning experience in this course, and tutorial participation is therefore a course requirement. Tutorials will be led by skilled doctoral candidates who are deeply knowledgeable about the history of political thought. Through tutorial discussion, you will refine your interpretation of the texts we are studying

and your judgment about whether the visions of politics they offer are convincing or appealing.

2. Close reading assignments

An important learning objective of this course is to develop your skills in the close reading of texts. Twice during the semester, you will be required to write a short interpretive essay (250-500 words) interpreting (or “unpacking”) a particular passage in the assigned reading. Your main task in these assignments will be to articulate, in your own language, what you understand to be the core meaning of the passage and how it illuminates the larger vision of politics expressed in the text as a whole. Your TA will provide guidance as to the particular weeks for which you will be responsible. **These assignments are due by 2:00 PM on the day in which the material will be discussed in lecture.**

3. Essay

An interpretive essay of 2000-2500 words on an assigned topic based on the readings from the first six weeks of the course.

4. Online Final Assessment

The final assessment will cover material from the entire course but will focus on material from the second half. It will comprise two short essays. Further details will be provided closer to the exam period.

Lateness and related policies

1. Late essays will be penalized at the rate of 1 percent per day of lateness, including weekends. Extensions will be granted only with a valid medical excuse, and only if your TA has given express written permission for late submission before the final essay deadline.
2. Your essay will not be graded until you have submitted the Academic Integrity Statement.
3. Essays will be penalized for exceeding the maximum word limit at the rate of 2 points per 100 words over the limit.
4. Reading assignments may not be submitted after the tutorial in which the assigned text is discussed. In other words: there can be no extensions for reading assignments. If you have a medical condition that prevents you from submitting your reading assignment on time, contact your TA in advance of tutorial to request an accommodation (e.g., submitting an assignment on a later week).

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the University of Toronto degree that you earn will be valued as a true indication of your individual academic achievement, and will continue to receive the respect and recognition it deserves.

Familiarize yourself with the University's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#). It is the rulebook for academic behaviour at the U of T, and you are expected to know the rules. The fundamental principle is that every written assignment must be your own original work, based on your thoughtful engagement with the readings. Don't resort to plagiarism or use AI to generate your essays.

For further guidance, see ["How Not to Plagiarize"](#).

To remind you of these expectations, and help you avoid accidental offences, *we will ask you to include a signed Academic Integrity Checklist with every assignment (downloadable from Quercus). If you do not include the statement, your work will not be graded.*

Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments to the University's plagiarism detection tool website for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their material to be included as source documents in the University's plagiarism detection tool reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the University's plagiarism detection tool service are described on the company web site.

We treat cases of academic misconduct very seriously. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the *Code*. The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact your TA. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, seek out additional information from your TA, or from other available campus resources like the University of Toronto's [Writing website](#). If you are experiencing personal challenges that are having an impact on your academic work, please speak to your TA or seek the advice of your college registrar.

Quercus, E-mail, and Communication

All students should ensure that they are registered on the course on Quercus, as reading materials and course announcements will be posted electronically. If you would like to change your Quercus profile (e.g., to make sure that your preferred name appears correctly), follow the instructions [here](#). You should regularly check your utoronto email account to make sure that you receive important email notices.

Please use the Quercus Inbox tool for all course-related email communication. We will endeavour to respond to emails within 72 hours, but please be patient if we are slow to respond, and please do not expect responses on evenings or weekends. Email is for short clarification questions only. If you have concerns or questions that cannot be answered in a short response please see us during office hours.

Course Accessibility and Supports for Students

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach Kavita Reddy (kavita.reddy@mail.utoronto.ca) and/or the Accessibility Services Office (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/>) as soon as possible.

If you have preferences regarding your gender pronouns, please inform the professor and your TA.

Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. Information on these services can be found on their website (<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>). Accessibility Services can also be reached by phone (416-978-8060) or email (accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). The sooner you let them know your needs, the more quickly they can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Other Supports for Students

Students also have access to mental health and safety, and research and writing resources:

Mental Health & Safety

- Guide to available resources (<https://safety.utoronto.ca/>).
- Health & Wellness Centre (<https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>).
- Crisis Support: Students in distress can access a range of free crisis lines available from the University of Toronto and the City of Toronto, as listed below:
 - University of Toronto: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/support-when-you-feel-distressed/>
 - City of Toronto: <https://www.toronto.ca/311/knowledgebase/kb/docs/articles/311-toronto/information-and-business-development/crisis-lines-suicide-depression-telephone-support-lines-non-crisis-mental-health-services.html>
 - Most of these crisis lines are available 24 hours a day and some address specific problems that students may be experiencing. Immediate assistance is available as follows:
 - My SSP for University of Toronto Students: 1-844-451-9700.
 - Good 2 Talk Student Helpline: 1-866-925-5454
 - Gerstein Crisis Centre: 416-929-5200
 - Distress Centres of Greater Toronto: 416-408-HELP (4357)

- The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH): 250 College Street (walk-in)

Research & Writing

- Research and writing guide (<https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/>).
- Chicago Manual of Style citation guide (https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html).
- Writing Centres (<http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/>).

You are not alone: To be human is to need the support of others. Please get help if you're experiencing difficulties and are in distress about personal or academic matters.

Schedule of lectures and readings

Week 1 (January 10): Introduction: Progress toward Freedom?

Week 2 (January 17): Liberty and Progress (Mill I)

On Liberty, chs. 1-3 (pp. 5-72)

Week 3 (January 24): Educations for Liberty (Mill II)

On the Subjection of Women, chs. 1-2 (pp. 409-454)

Considerations on Representative Government, ch. 18 (pp. 388-405)

Week 4 (January 31): Intoxications of Modernity (Chōmin)

Nakae Chōmin, *A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government* (entire) (pp. 47-137) (pp. 29-70 on .pdf)

Week 5 (February 7): Freedom's Dialectic (Hegel I)

"Lordship and Bondage" (aka "Master-Slave Dialectic") from G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 111-119 (available on Quercus).

Elements of the Philosophy of Right, Preface and Introduction

Week 6 (February 14): The Actualization of Freedom (Hegel II)

Elements of the Philosophy of Right, Part I, sections 41-51; 72-77; Part II, sections 105-114; Part III, ss. 142-169, 181-190, 231-49.

February 21: Reading Week; no class

Week 7 (February 28): The Modern State and World History (Hegel III)

Elements of the Philosophy of Right, Part III, ss. 255-86, 330-360.

**** Essay due Monday, March 6, by 9:00 PM****

Week 8 (March 7): Emancipation through Struggle (Douglass)

Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, chapters XV (pp. 233-249) (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), available at: <https://heinonline-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/HOL/Page?handle=hein.slavery/mybmf0001&id=1&collection=slavery&index=>

Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” (1852), available at: <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/>

Frederick Douglass, “Lecture on Haiti” and “Dedication Ceremonies of the Haitian Pavilion” (Chicago: Violet Agents Supply Co., 1893), pp. 7-44. Available at: <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/rbc/lcrbmrp/t2109/t2109.pdf>

Week 9 (March 14): The Illusions of Bourgeois Freedom (Marx I)

“On the Jewish Question” (pp. 1-26)

Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, “Alienated Labor” (pp. 58-68)

Theses on Feuerbach (pp. 98-101)

The Germany Ideology, Part I (pp. 102-156, esp. pp. 103-132, 153-56)

Week 10 (March 21): Dialectical Materialism and the Revolutionary Class (Marx II)

The Communist Manifesto (pp. 157-186)

“The Indian Revolt” (1857) in *On Colonialism* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001), pp. 152-155

Marx to Engels (Oct 8, 1858), in *On Colonialism*, pp. 320-321.

Week 11 (March 28): The Disease of Modernity (Nietzsche)

Nietzsche, “On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life,” in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 59-123.

Week 12 (April 4): The Truth of Non-Violence (Gandhi)

Hind Swaraj, Preface to the English edition; Foreword; chs. 1-9, 13-14, 16-17, 20 (pp. 5-48, 64-72, 77-97, 110-117)