

Syllabus

KAP Political Theory

September 6– May 2007
Hathaway Brown School
Ms. Judith Nelson

The study of political theory involves questions about the way people organize themselves in communities and the best way to accomplish the tasks of government. These are “old” questions, and we will be looking at some of the ideas of the classical Greeks as well as those ideas which are much more modern. The approaches around which we will organize our study involve some of the following questions:

What is the nature of man?

What is the role of the individual in the community? What is the role of the state?

How should the resources of society best be distributed?

What is the good life – how can we achieve it?

In this year long course will read a variety of sources examining questions of justice in society. Moving from the Greek tradition, through classical liberal philosophy, to modern times, the readings include selections from philosophical works, novels, plays and essays which illustrate the ideas of a variety of thinkers and artists. We will largely be reading primary sources, rather than works about these primary sources.

Emphasis will be placed on the students’ understanding of the major themes of each author, the relationship of various works to a central theme such as liberal democracy, the ability to clearly explain in written and oral work the author’s and the student’s own ideas, and the ability to apply ideas to alternative situations and times. We will consider each work’s relationship to its time period as well as those of its ideas which transcend the work’s history background.

Evaluation of student work includes judgment of student’s participation in discussion, short writing assignments which summarize and apply ideas covered in class to contemporary issues, longer papers of 5-7 pages, final examinations in January and May, and several other projects. Students are frequently asked to lead class discussion and to present sections of various works.

Students must regard being informed about contemporary events in both the international and domestic arenas as an important requirement of the course. Often we will begin class by discussing current issues and their relationship to the ideas we are studying.

Readings

Summer Reading

Fareed Zakaria The Future of Freedom

The Greek Tradition

Sophocles Antigone

Plutarch “Lycurgus”

Thucydides “The Funeral Oration” and the “Melian Debate”

Plato “Apology”, “Crito”, * and selections from The Republic

Aristotle Selections from Politics

Early Moderns

Niccolo Machiavelli The Prince
Thomas Hobbes Selections from Leviathan

Classical Liberalism

John Locke Selections from Two Treatises on Government
Adam Smith Selections from Wealth of Nations
Jean Jacques Rousseau Selections from "The Social Contract"
John Stuart Mill "On Liberty"; "On the Subjection of Women"

Political Rights

Various Authors - Hammarbi, Declaration of Independence, etc.
Madison, Hamilton Federalist Papers 10 and 51
Alexis DeTocqueville Selections from Democracy in America

Contemporary Liberal Ideas and Critique

Milton Friedman Capitalism and Freedom
Irving Kristol "When Virtue Loses all Her Loveliness"

Alternatives of the Left

Karl Marx The Communist Manifesto
V. I. Lenin "Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism"
Arthur Koestler Darkness at Noon
George Orwell The Road to Wigan Pier

Alternatives of the Right

Frederick Nietzsche - Beyond Good and Evil
Adolf Hitler Selections from Mein Kampf

The Question of Good and Evil

Bill Moyers Videotape – *Facing Evil*
Sigmund Freud Civilization and its Discontents
Reinhold Niebuhr The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness

Living in the Unjust Society: Terrorism and Civil Disobedience

Nelson Mandela Selections from Long Walk to Freedom
Film *Battle of Algiers*
Vaclav Havel "The Power of the Powerless" from Open Letters
Henry D. Thoreau "Essay on Civil Disobedience"
Martin Luther King "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
Video *Eyes on the Prize*
Video - A Long Night's Journey into Day" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Documentary and Written Material prepared by Facing History Program

Additional Course Information

Papers are due at the beginning of our first period class. I will collect them and check them in. Any paper which is turned in at another time must be placed directly in my hands, not anywhere else. You should always keep a both a print and a digital copy of your paper.

One third of a grade will be subtracted for each day or portion of a day that the paper is late. If you know in advance that you will have difficulty in finishing the paper on time, you may discuss your

situation with me, complete the request for additional time which we both will sign, and turn in the paper on the agreed upon day with the signature page. Requests for additional time must be made at least two days before the paper is due.

You have two days to make up work that for every day you have been absent. Thus, if you are absent on a Monday, you would have until Wednesday to make up work which you would ordinarily have turned in on Monday. If there are special circumstances, you need to make an appointment with me to discuss them and work out a new schedule for making up the work.

Participation in class, which makes up $\frac{1}{5}$ of your grade, is very important. You should make a definite effort to speak or ask questions at least once during each class period. But participation is about more than just speaking. It is about being prepared for class, asking questions for information, really listening hard to other students to make sure you understand what they are saying, questioning them, summarizing what they have said to make sure you agree on what has been said and meant. Naturally, treating everyone and their opinions with courtesy and respect is essential. You cannot get an "A" in this class without good class participation. Obviously, it will be difficult to participate if you have not read the material and prepared the assignment as suggested.

Quarter grades will be determined as follows:

Papers (2) 60%

Class Participation 20%

Daily Assignments & Class Presentation 20%

Semester grades will be determined as follows:

Quarter 1 50%

Quarter 2 50%

There is no final examination in January. Students will complete a final project due the week of final exams in the spring. This final project will count the equivalent of two papers for the fourth quarter.