

Syllabus

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Objectives of the Course:

Liberalism is a rich philosophical tradition to which some of the best known political philosophers and economists have made important contributions. But almost from its early beginnings it has branched out in several directions. One of the challenges of the course will be to find what these thinkers and intellectual currents have in common while also underlining their differences. Today, however, all these interpretations of liberal principles seem to be under attack from illiberal movements and new intellectual currents.

The approach followed in this course is largely historical in the sense that we examine the most significant liberal theorists in their historical contexts as the tradition unfolds over the course of three centuries. But this historical overview also reveals some recurrent themes such as natural law, individual rights, spontaneous order, negative liberty vs. positive liberty, and on-going debates about the limits of the state's power. The course end with a discussion of contemporary challenges.

Learning Objectives:

Students will i) acquire an appreciation of the ideas that unite and oppose the leading liberal thinkers, and their place within political philosophy as a whole; and ii) develop an ability to critically engage with the ideas of these thinkers.

Assignment

SHORT PAPER (20%), DUE: 19 FEBRUARY

First, select two articles from the following list of journals; these articles must bear on one or two philosopher/thinker included in the syllabus and/or on a particular school of (liberal) thought. Preferably choose articles that appear to offer different point so views (e.g., take opposite positions in an on-going controversy). Here (in no particular order) is a list of suggested journals—other academic, *peer-reviewed* journals in the general area of political philosophy) are acceptable too:

American Journal of Political Science
American Political Science Review
British Journal of Political Science
Canadian Journal of Political Science
Critical Review

Ethics
European Journal of Political Theory
History of Political Thought
Journal of Philosophy
Journal of Political Ideologies
Journal of Politics
Journal of Political Philosophy
Philosophy and Public Affairs
Political Studies
Political Theory
Polity
Review of politics
The European Legacy

Then Summarize, compare and critically evaluate these articles.

It is not required that you consult other secondary sources for that purpose, but if/when relevant, brief references to primary sources would be appropriate. For example, does one author seem more biased, more/less coherent, more/less convincing, etc., than the other. (It is up to you to suggest other criteria of evaluation.)

RESEARCH PAPER (40%) DUE: 1 APRIL

The paper should be addressing a **question** that you think is important and relevant to the course; the essay will consist in a well-organized and coherently argued answer to that question (in 12 to 15 double spaced pp.)

By 11 March (at the latest), you should have submitted a 2-3 pp. research design that includes:

- The question you intend to discuss (e.g., “In view of his critique of individualism, can Tocqueville still be regarded as a liberal thinker?”)
- Explain why this question is important; relevant to the course; etc.
- A brief outline of some of the major points you intend to present
- A short bibliography.

PARTICIPATION (10%)

This grade is assigned on the basis of a) an in-class presentation on an assigned text or question (and a 3-4 pp. written follow-up to be submitted within a week after the presentation); and b) attendance and participation in seminar discussions.

FINAL EXAM (30%)

Two sections: A (25% of exam grade) factual questions requiring brief answers; B (75% of exam grade) essay-type questions.

Reading List

9 Sept. Introduction

Objectives of the course; assignments, etc.
Background reading: *Encyclopedia of Modern Political Thought*, entry re: “Liberalism” .

PART I: FOUNDATIONAL IDEAS

16 Sept. Natural Rights & Natural Law

Read:

J. Locke, the Second Treatise “Concerning the True Original Extent and End of Civil Government” chs. II to XIV
J. Tully, *A Discourse on Property*, ch. 6
M. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, chs. 1, 2 & 13

23 Sept. Harmony of the Passions (Spontaneous Order)

Read:

D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Part II, chs. 1, 2, 7 & 9
A. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* Parts I, II (s. 2) & III
A. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book I, chs. 1 to 4; also recommended: Book V ch. 1
Recommended: Hardwick and Marsh (eds.), *Propriety and Prosperity: New Studies on the Philosophy of Adam Smith*, ch. 4 (Dobuzinskis)
J. Otteson, *Adam Smith's Marketplace of Ideas*, ch. 1, 2, 4 & 5

30 Sept. National Day for Truth and Reconciliation: No class

PART II: LIBERALISM TAKES SHAPE—EARLY 19TH CENTURY

7 Oct. Rule of Law; Constitutionalism

Read:

Fawcett, ch. 11
P. Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, ch. V (“Montesquieu and the Separation of Power”)
Federalist Papers, no. 10, 51, 80 & 84
F.A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, ch. 12
J. Ajzenstat (ed.), *Canadian Constitutionalism: 1791-1991*, especially chs. by Bercuson & Cooper; McRae-Buchanan; and Ajzenstat

14 Oct. Individual Liberties/Protection of the Private Sphere

Read:

Fawcett, pp. 34-43
B. Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns”

Recommended: T. Todorov, *A Passion for Democracy: Benjamin Constant* pp. 47-60 & 75-86

W. von Humboldt, *The Spheres and Duties of Government* chs. II & IV
“Editor’s Introduction” to Humboldt’s *The Limits of State Action*

21 Oct.

What Role for the State?

Read:

1. Conservative Liberalism

Fawcett ch. 2-ii & 3-iii

C. Crossley, *French Historians and Romanticism*, ch. 3

2. Early Libertarians

F. Bastiat, *The Law*, pp. 1-82

French Liberalism in the 19th Century, eds. Leroux & Hart, chs. 14, 15 & 29

Recommended: *The Encyclopedia of Libertarianism* entries re: “Bastiat,” “Molinari” & “Nock”

28 Oct.

Elitist Democratic Theory

Read:

Fawcett, ch. 2-iii & 2-vi

A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, Introduction; vol. 2 Part II & Part IV ch. 6

J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* chs. 1 to 3

Recommended: *Encyclopedia of Modern Political Thought*, entry re: “Tocqueville”

J. Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, chs. 1, 6, 7 & 11

PART III: THE ROOTS & UNFOLDING OF CONTEMPORARY TRENDS AND DEBATES

4 Nov.

The Rise of Progressive Liberalism

Read:

Fawcett, chs. 2-iv, 2-vii, 7-ii & 8-v

J.S. Mill, *Chapters on Socialism*, chs. 2 to 4

L. Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, chs. VII to IX

I. Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”

Recommended: Katz, Claudio J. “Syndicalist Liberalism: the Normative Economics of Herbert Croly.” *History of Political Thought* 2001 22(4): 669-702.

11 March

Egalitarian Liberalism: Rawls and Critics

Read:

Fawcett, ch 12-iv

J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Parts I, II & V

Feminist Interpretations of John Rawls, R. Abbey (ed.), ch. 2

A. Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, Parts I & III

18 March

Multiculturalism & Diversity

Read:

W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys*, Part II
W. Kymlicka, *The Current State of Multiculturalism in Canada and Research Themes...*, Section 1
C. Sypnowich, *Equality Renewed*, ch. 5
S.M. Okin, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?”

25 March

Classical Liberalism & Ordo-liberalism

Read:

F.A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, vol. 1 “Rules and Order” chs. 1, 2, 5 & 6 (2013 re-edition)
M. Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, “Rationalism in Politics”
Liberalism, Conservatism, and Hayek’s Idea of Spontaneous Order, eds. Hunt & McNamara, chs. 5 & 10
J. Tomasi, *Free Market Fairness*, chs. 1, 4 & 8.
M. Wörsdörfer “Von Hayek And Ordoliberalism on Justice.” *J. of the History of Economic Thought* 35 (2013), no. 3: 291-317.
S. Gregg, *Wilhelm Röpke’s Political Economy*, ch. 8

1 April

Libertarianism: From Market Anarchism to Left-Libertarianism

Read:

R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, chs. 5 & 7
J. Narveson, *The Libertarian Idea*, Part Three
The Encyclopedia of Libertarianism entry re: “Left-Libertarianism”
E. Roark, *Removing the Commons*, chs. 1, 2 & 6
P. Van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All*, chs. 2 & 4
Recommended: H. George, *Progress and Poverty*, “Introductory: The Problem” & Book VI.

8 April

Challenges to Liberalism from the Left and the Right

Read:

Fawcett ch. 14
L. Zerilli, “Feminist Critiques of Liberalism”
N. Fraser, “The Old is Dying but the New Cannot be Born”
G. Badano & A Nuti, “Under Pressure: Political Liberalism, the Rise of Unreasonableness, and the Complexity of Containment”
P. Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed?* Chs. 1, 3, 8 & 9
W. Schleurman, “Donald Trump Meets Carl Schmitt” & other relevant articles in *Philosophy and Social criticism* vol. 45 (2019), no. 9-10.