



History of Political Ideas

Course code	POL137
Course name	History of Political Ideas
Type of the course	Compulsory
Study Level	1st
Department	Bachelor studies
Year of study	1st
Semester	Fall
ECTS credits	6 credits: 24 hours lectures; 24 hours of seminars; 112 hours of individual work; 2 hours of consultation
Study form	Full-time
Language of Instruction	English
Lecturer	Dr. Jonathan Boyd jonathan.boyd@ism.lt

Annotation

This course offers an introduction to the visions of key political thinkers from the ancient Greeks through the early-twentieth century. We will begin by examining the extremely influential thought of Plato and Aristotle, then turn to the radical rethinking of politics by Machiavelli and Hobbes, followed by the early modern thought of Locke and Rousseau, then two major nineteenth-century figures — J. S. Mill and Nietzsche — and finish with the political insights of Freud.

Aim of the Course

Through close readings of, and conscientious engagement with, the primary texts of key thinkers in the Western tradition of political thought, students will become familiar with each authors' unique voice, style, concerns, definitions, concepts and arguments. Some select secondary literature will augment understanding of these primary texts by providing historical and scholarly context. The seminar format of the course invites informed and civil discourse amongst all students in the spirit of liberal learning.

Subject learning outcomes

Subject Learning Outcome		Study methods	Assessment methods
SLO1	Comprehend and interpret each primary text.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Written assignments, examinations
SLO2	Have a basic understanding of the historical context of each thinker, and describe how it may have influenced each thinker.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Written assignments, examinations
SLO2	Know the basic bibliographical information of each thinker.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Written assignments, examinations
SLO3	Critically assess the validity of each thinkers' arguments.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Written assignments, examinations
SLO4	Discuss the relevance of each thinker to today's political concerns.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Written assignments, examinations
SLO5	Understand the contested and changing nature of key political concepts, such as justice, liberty, obedience, authority, and power.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Written assignments, examinations
SLO6	Engage in informed and civil discourse with peers about the the meaning of each text.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Written assignments, examinations
SLO7	Write insightful commentaries on each thinker and on various important political concepts.	Lectures, seminars, individual study	Written assignments, examinations

Quality issues

The lecturer assures a variety of teaching methods as well as modes of self-assessment. The feedback from students will always be highly valued and appreciated.

Cheating issues

The teaching and testing methods are chosen taking into account the purpose of the minimisation of cheating opportunities. The ISM regulations on academic ethics are fully applied in the course.



Individual work and assessment:

TYPE	TOPICS	TOTAL HOURS	EVALUATION %
Midterm exam	1 -- 6	34	30
Essay	7 -- 12	34	30
Final Exam	1 -- 12	44	40
TOTAL		112	100

Course assignments and evaluation:

1. Midterm exam

The midterm will be held in week 7 of the term. Students will be provided with excerpts from key texts which they will be asked to provide commentary on.

2. Essay

Students will choose to answer one question from a list of three, their answers must be based on textual interpretation, and the essay's length must be no less than 1000 and no more than 1500 words. One hard copy of the essay must be submitted. The deadline will be announced during week 8.

3. Final exam

The final exam will be a closed-book test; students must choose one political concept from a list of three, and discuss the concept's use by the political thinkers studied throughout the course. In case of a negative final grade, students are permitted a retake exam. It will cover all course material. The weight of a retake is 70%. The assignment cannot be re-done but its evaluation (if positive) is not annulled.

Schedule

Week	Topic	Class hours	Reading
1	Plato I	4	Plato, <i>Apology</i>
2	Plato II	4	Plato, <i>Gorgias</i>
3	Aristotle I	4	Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i>
4	Aristotle II	4	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i>
5	Machiavelli	4	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i>
6	Hobbes I	4	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>
7	Hobbes II	4	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>
8	Locke		Locke, <i>A Letter Concerning Toleration</i>
9	Rousseau	4	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i>
10	John Stuart Mill	4	J. S. Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>
11	Nietzsche	4	Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
12	Freud	4	Freud, <i>Civilisation and its Discontents</i>

Required reading:

Plato, *Apology*
Plato, *Gorgias*
Aristotle, *Ethics*
Aristotle, *Politics*
Machiavelli, *The Prince*
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*



John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* (aka *Second Discourse*)
John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*
Sigmund Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents*

Supplementary reading:

David Boucher & Paul Kelly, *Political Thinkers from Socrates to the Present*, OUP, 2003.
Janet Coleman, *History of Political Thought* (two volumes), Wiley-Blackwell, 2000.
I. F. Stone, *The Trial of Socrates*, Anchor Books, 1988.
C. C. W. Taylor, *Socrates: A very short introduction*, OUP, 2001.
Julia Annas, *Plato: A very short introduction*, OUP, 2003.
Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle: A very short introduction*, OUP, 2000.
Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli, A very short introduction*, OUP, 2000.
Richard Tuck, *Hobbes: A very short introduction*, OUP, 2002.
John Dunn, *Locke: A very short introduction*, OUP, 2003.
Robert Wokler, *Rousseau, A very short introduction*, OUP, 2001.
Michael Tanner, *Nietzsche, A very short introduction*, OUP, 2001.
Anthony Storr, *Freud, A very short introduction*, OUP, 2001.

Excerpts from the required texts to study in class will be provided each week.

I highly recommend you purchase copies of the main texts; indeed, they should be in the personal library of every well-read person.. E-versions are poor substitutes for owning these classic works. Nor are they expensive: used copies in particular can be very affordable.

Supplementary reading material is in the library or will be provided on e-learning; it is not required reading, but is highly recommended.

Class rules:

The learning environment will be traditional and classical: in class, students' attention will be solely occupied by the text and our conversation. To that end:

1. Laptops and mobile phones must be put aside; exceptions may be made for those with special learning requirements.
2. Powerpoint slides will not be used by the lecturer; all instruction will be communicated verbally.
3. Bring paper and pen(s) to each class (and perhaps a highlighter); absent of your laptop, this will be your only means of taking notes.
4. Students will be expected to participate: all will take turns reading aloud, and all will occasionally be asked questions by the instructor.