



Lakehead University
Contemporary Political Thought (2017)
POLI-4513-WA
T 11:30-2:30 – Ryan Building 3024

Instructor: Dr. Patrick Cain (Political Science)
Office: Ryan Building 2035
Phone: 343-8304
Email: pncaain@lakeheadu.ca
Office hours: Tuesdays 10:00-11:00 and 2:30-3:00 pm (or by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on thinkers who explore the character of contemporary democracy, and its relationship to modernity, liberalism, and political philosophy. Themes that are of particular concern include: (1) the impact of the nation state and its alternatives on democratic citizens and their social associations; (2) the understanding of aspects of modernity in terms of intellectual and political movements, including conservatism, liberalism, communism, feminism, and fascism; (3) the attempt to define and evaluate the conditions necessary to the fulfillment of human freedom and equality; (4) considerations of the relationship between the religion, philosophy, and political life; (5) analyses of the possibilities of human excellence in the contemporary world. In exploring these themes, our aim will be to reach fuller understanding of the strengths, limits, and problems of contemporary political life and political philosophy.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Texts:

Because we will refer often by page number to the texts during class, and because some translations are better than others, please purchase the editions listed

1. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (University of Chicago Press)
2. Pierre Manent, *A World Without Politics?* (Princeton University Press)

Grading:

Reading Assignments: 12.5% X 6 = 75%

Term Paper proposal: 5%

Term Paper: 20%

Assignment and Grading Details:*Reading Assignments*

There will be 9 reading assignments (three sets of three). Students will select and answer in essay form two reading assignments from each set of three, defending a clear, robust, thesis. Each reading assignment is associated with a particular set of readings. Prompts and more details will be provided.

Term Paper Thesis Development

In response to term paper prompts, students will develop a clearly defined thesis and outline of their term paper. Late proposals will see a grade deduction of 10% per day late.

Term Paper

Once proposals are approved by the instructor, students will prepare work on their term paper. More details will be provided. A late term paper will see a grade deduction of 2% per day.

Citations

All papers should use notes in accordance with the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th Edition. A useful guide can be found at:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Class Readings: The readings from this course involve complicated ideas and difficult arguments. Moreover, the presentation of these ideas and arguments sometimes take forms that may not be familiar to students. Students should therefore read the assigned readings carefully, slowly, and even several times in order to grasp their content.

Other Policies:*Communication*

The instructor will regularly communicate with students about a variety of matters, both through in-class announcements and via email (using students' Lakehead email account). Students are encouraged to contact the instructor with any questions that arise during the course of the semester. While course administrative questions are entirely appropriate, students are also encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss questions related to the course's subject matter. Students are reminded that while email is appropriate for factual inquiries, more complex questions are usually best handled in person.

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make

themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policies in this area. Although all these policies will be enforced in full, it is worth emphasizing the following:

Plagiarism involves presenting another's work, ideas, theories, or interpretation as one's own.

To avoid plagiarism, writers should always:

1. Put quotation marks around any words from sources
2. Paraphrase material completely; changing (with the help of a thesaurus) or rearranging a few words or the tense of a verb is not paraphrasing.
3. Give accurate and complete citations for all material including paraphrased material.
4. Avoid borrowing entire arguments or approaches to a subject from another writer. Make it 'original' while staying faithful to the assignment parameters.

COURSE SCHEDULE

*(Readings and schedule will be adjusted throughout the year
at the instructor's discretion)*

- 1/10 Course Outline (30 min)
Break (60 min) to read:
Catherine H. Zuckert, "Chapter Nine: Three Paths from Nietzsche to Heidegger," in *Postmodern Platos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
Quiz on reading and class discussion (60 min)
- 1/17 *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville's Introduction
Democracy in America, Volume One, Part One, chapters 2 (pp. 37-end)
Democracy in America, Volume One, Part Two, chapters 1, 5 (pp. 210-216), 6 (pp. 220-229), 7, 9 (pp. 274-282)
- 1/24 *Democracy in America*, Volume Two, Part One
Reading Assignment #1.1 Due (Note: since this is a reading course, and it may take you some time to track down all the readings in Ethiopia, you should consider all deadlines flexible. However, my assumption is that all materials will be in by the last day of exams. If that will be a problem, you need to let me know at least three weeks in advance of that date).
- 1/31 *Democracy in America*, Volume Two, Part Two
Reading Assignment #1.2 Due
- 2/7 *Democracy in America*, Volume Two, Part Four
Reading Assignment #1.3 Due

- 2/14 *Democracy in America*, Volume Two, Part Three, chapters 8-12, Note XX
(pp. 699-701).
Butler, *Contingent Foundations*
Mansfield, *The Contradiction that Rules Feminism*
Reading Assignment #2.1 Due
- 2/21 READING WEEK—NO CLASSES
- 2/28 Ratzinger, *Truth and Freedom*
Ratzinger, "Introduction,"
Strauss, *Progress or Return?*
Reading Assignment #2.2 Due
- 3/7 Strauss, *Restatement*
http://www.interpretationjournal.com/backissues/Vol_36-1.pdf
Reading Assignment #2.3 Due
- 3/14 Manent, *A World Without Politics?* Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-4
Reading Assignment #3.1 Due
- 3/21 Manent, *A World Without Politics?* Chapters 5-9
Reading Assignment #3.2 Due
- 3/28 Manent, *A World Without Politics?* Chapters 10-14
Reading Assignment #3.3 Due
- 4/4 Manent, *A World Without Politics?* Chapters 15-18
Term Paper Due

FINAL EXAM