

POLITICAL SCIENCE 409D/609D

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL

THEORY

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Off: MSS 219
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This course will provide a general overview of the political thought of the twentieth century. It will focus primarily on some of the most important contemporary works which have influenced the political, social, cultural, and economic theories of our time. The philosophic tradition in the West gave rise to many of the most profound theoretical writings about politics ever produced. That philosophic tradition established the vocabulary of practical politics. Concepts such as justice, nature, regime, convention, reason, virtue, equality, liberty, and the common good were derived from that tradition. But, the meaning--and the importance--of those ideas came to be doubted, or transformed, in the 20th century. We begin with Nietzsche, who died in 1900, because he initiated 20th century thought. It has been said the Nietzsche brought an end to the western philosophical tradition, and the traditional morality which derived from it. The empirical political and social sciences grew out of that collapse. Empirical science tried to escape the dilemma by denying the meaningful character of value judgments, or morality. It meant to establish science as the undisputed authority in terms of understanding man as well as nature. Nonetheless, in the 20th century, politics continued to be animated by differences concerning normative questions, or value judgments. Social, political, economic, and cultural movements, such as capitalism, socialism, communism, fascism, liberation ideologies, feminism, environmentalism, identity politics, deconstructionism, and post-modernism, are all driven by moral considerations--or their rejection--unrelated to science. The problem of 21st century political theory is how to establish values, when all moral authority--if Nietzsche is right--is said to be without foundation.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*

John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*

Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*

Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*

Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*

Walter Lippman, *The Public Philosophy*

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*

Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*

G.F.W. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*

Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question, Communist Manifesto*

Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There will be one essay exam, a review essay, and a comprehensive final exam during the semester, as well as a term paper. In determining the final course grade, the midterm essays will represent 30% of the grade, the final will represent 25% of the grade, and the final paper will constitute 25% of the grade. The remaining 20% of the grade will be determined by performance in assignments--some written--not made in advance, and classroom participation. Each student is expected to complete all the reading assignments before the class meeting. Grades in this course will be awarded using the plus/minus grading system. Student (and faculty) conduct shall conform to the standards of conduct as referenced in the University of Nevada, Reno 2008-2009 General Catalog and the Student Handbook. The University of Nevada does not tolerate sexual harassment or harassment of any kind of its students or employees. Disability related needs will be accommodated. Cheating in any form or manner may result in an automatic grade of "F" for this course for the semester. The term paper will be due on Tuesday, December 7, 2009.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

WEEK:	ASSIGNMENT:
August 24:	Introduction: Discussion of course content, class requirements, and overview of the subject. Begin Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy of Morals</i> ,
August 31:	The break with the tradition of philosophy and morality; Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy</i> , second essay.
RECOMMENDED, ROUSSEAU, SECOND DISCOURSE, PREFACE, AND PART ONE.	
September 7:	Continued: Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy</i> , Last essay.
September 14:	Constitutional liberalism and its transformation: Dewey, <i>Liberalism and Social Action</i> , pp. 1-50.
RECOMMENDED, LOCKE, SECOND TREATISE.	
September 21:	Finish Dewey, <i>Liberalism</i> . Begin Arendt, Preface to <i>Between Past and Future</i> .
September 28:	History, Tradition and Modern Thought: Arendt, <i>Between Past and Future</i> , essays 1 and 2.
October 5:	Freedom and Authority: Arendt, <i>Between Past and Future</i> , essays, 3-4.
October 12:	Education and Culture: Arendt, <i>Between Past and Future</i> , essays 5-6;
October 19:	Science and Truth: Arendt, <i>Between Past and Future</i> , essays 7-8;
October 26:	The Decline of the West: Lyotard, <i>The Postmodern Condition</i> , : Introduction, cphs. 1-7. Marx:, "On the Jewish Question" Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right'."
November 2:	Liberalism and the Public Philosophy: Lippmann, <i>The Public Philosophy</i> , Book 2
RECOMMENDED, MARX, COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, HEGEL, PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT.	
November 9:	Whitman, Dewey, and America: Rorty, <i>Achieving Our Country</i> ; pp. 1-38.
RECOMMENDED: NIETZSCHE: BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL, PTS 1-6. ECLIPSE OF THE REFORMIST LEFT: RORTY, <i>ACHIEVING OUR COUNTRY</i> ; PP. 41-71. RECOMMENDED, NIETZSCHE, BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL, PTS 7-9, AFTERSONG.	
November 16:	Culture, Science, and Technology, Rorty, <i>Achieving Our Country</i> , pp. 75-140.

RECOMMENDED: HEIDEGGER, THE QUESTION CONCERNING TECHNOLOGY.

November 23 : Liberalism and the Public Philosophy: Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy*, Book 1.

RECOMMENDED: MARX, "ON THE JEWISH QUESTION" "CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT'."

November 30: Lippmann, *The Public Philosophy*, Book 2; Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*.

December 7: Conclusion: Politics and Identity in the Postmodern Era.

**Final Exam: Monday, December 14th, 2009,
2:15-4:15 p.m.**