

Classics of Social & Political Thought III

SOSC 15300 – Section 07 Spring Quarter 2015

Instructor: Sean Hannan

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Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:00 p.m. – 1:20 p.m.

Room: Cobb 319

Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. in Gates-Blake 505

Note: If you don't fancy the idea of walking up all five flights of stairs in Gates-Blake, you can take the elevator up in Cobb and connect through the doors on the fourth or fifth floors.

Course Overview

Many of the texts we'll be encountering in this course should give us pause to reflect on shifting ideas of value in human society. In the Autumn quarter, you were introduced to the ancient roots of so many classical conceptions of justice and virtue. In the Winter, you saw those conceptions give rise to notions of right, sovereignty, and civil order. Now, in the Spring, we'll aim to see how modern thinkers were able to reevaluate all of these conceptions and notions in light of new ideas about what might count as truly valuable in humanity's social and political life.

With Alexis de Tocqueville, we'll learn to frame a society's sense of liberty and equality in light of that same society's cultural mores. With John Stuart Mill, we'll see how utility can be used as a criterion for judging between strategies of preserving both liberty and equality. From Marx, we'll gain an appreciation for how economic value can be seen to lie beneath so many of our projects of emancipation and egalitarianism. And with Nietzsche, we'll be challenged to consider what it would mean to reevaluate all of the moral values that continue to condition our outlook on all of these social ideals.

Throughout the course, our focus will rest not on value in the abstract, but on how different arrangements of social and political value have resulted in very real consequences for very real people. Two thematic threads will guide us here: the struggle of women and the question of race. When reading Mary Wollstonecraft, Emma Goldman, and Simone de Beauvoir, we'll have to ask ourselves how these authors were able to seize upon the varied lineages of political thought and constructively bring them to bear upon women's struggle for liberty and equality. And when reading W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, we'll have to ask the same question about how these writers intervened in those intellectual lineages for the sake of emancipation. In both cases, as we'll see, these texts were able not only to amplify politically marginalized voices, but also to make new and meaningful contributions to the history of social and political thought as a whole.

Required Texts

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Ed. David Blight & Robert Gooding-Williams. Bedford, 1997.

Marx, Karl, & Friedrich Engels. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd Ed. Robert C. Tucker. Norton, 1978.

Mill, J.S. *On Liberty and Other Essays*. Ed. John Gray. Oxford UP, 2008.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Eds. Maudemarie Clark & Alan J. Swensen. Hackett, 1998.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*. Trans. George Lawrence; ed. J.P. Mayer. Harper, 2006.

All other readings—those authored by Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, Emma Goldman, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X—will be posted as PDFs on Chalk.

Course Requirements

In order to fulfill the requirements for this course, you'll be asked to attend every regularly scheduled meeting and contribute to the weekly discussion. Getting everyone to participate in our shared conversation will be one of our main goals this Spring. So that we can create the conditions for that to happen, we'll aim to encourage an open environment that will lead to lively discussion and rigorous reflection on the texts at hand.

You'll also be asked to write two papers over the course of the term. The first should come in somewhere between 1700-2200 words (about 7-9 pages) and will be due by the end of Friday, April 24. (By 'the end of,' I mean 11:59 p.m.) The second and final paper should also be between 1700-2200 words and will be due by the end of Monday, June 9.

The purpose of these assignments is to sharpen your skills in composing arguments at the college level. The shorter pieces you will have written in earlier quarters can now be seen as building blocks, providing a foundation on which you can construct more complex forms of analysis and argumentation. By the end of the quarter and of this academic year, you should be able to say not only that you've learned more about the history of political thought, but also that you've developed more effective ways of expressing what it is you've learned about that history.

Grades

First Paper: 20%

Second Paper: 50%

Participation: 30%

The first paper will count for less of your overall grade and will serve as a primer on expectations for writing in this course. Don't panic if your initial grade isn't immediately what you expected. We assign an early essay that counts for a bit less so that some room for improvement will be left over. Lessons learned from that first paper can then be applied to the final assignment, which will count for a greater percentage of your final grade.

Please note that participation, too, counts for a substantial portion of that final grade. Constructive contributions to class discussion will ultimately be worth just as much as a well-crafted final paper.

Course Policies

Absences

Only by attending all of our regularly scheduled class meetings will you be able to earn a full participation grade. If you need to be absent for a substantive reason—such as a health issue, personal emergency, or religious occasion—please email me to let me know.

Late Assignments

Papers handed in after 11:59 p.m. on their respective due dates will be docked one third of a letter grade. That is to say: a very impressive paper handed in at 12:00 a.m. the following day will be docked from an A to an A-, and so on down the line. The letter grade will continue to go down by one third for each added day that the paper is late. In general, it's much better to hand in a paper on time than to hold on to it for an extra day in hopes of ratcheting up its quality. The daily loss in thirds of a letter grade tends to make holding on to papers no longer a worthwhile enterprise.

Formatting Papers

Please try to hand in your papers as Word documents attached to an email. Be sure to send that email to me. Please also try to stick to the allotted amount of words. There are all sorts of tricks that students can try in order to fit a good number of words onto a relatively small number of pages. Please refrain from trying these tricks out. They can easily be flouted thanks to Word's handy 'word count' feature. If you do choose to exceed the allotted amount of words by an egregious amount (in the range of, say, 200-400 words), such egregious excess will find its negative reflection in that paper's grade.

Plagiarism

Above all, please refrain from committing the intellectual crime of taking someone else's words as your own. This is known as plagiarism, and it can run the gamut from stealing a friend's paper wholesale to improperly citing a scholarly text. Papers marred by plagiarism would have to receive a failing grade. It would also be my duty to report authors of a plagiarized paper to the College. That would be a sad day for all involved. Happily, though, the University's Writing Program has prepared a useful guide to avoiding plagiarism, even during those dark nights of the soul when you're feeling most tempted to finish that paper by any means necessary. Rather than waiting for such nights, it would be best to check out their website in advance:

http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/but_what_if_you_get_stuck.htm

Writing Assistance

When they're not busy combatting plagiarism, the Writing Program also provides a number of other services that can prove helpful to burgeoning writers in the College. If you're taking a section of the HUM core this year, then you may already be acquainted with the Writing Intern assigned to work with you throughout that course. They can aid you as you strive to sharpen your essay-writing skills as the quarter progresses. The Writing Program also employs Writing Tutors, who can take extra time to introduce you to the strategies that make for successful composition and argumentation at

the college level. Again, feel free to peruse the Writing Program's website and check out the full suite of options available to you:

<http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/>

Accommodations

If you believe you may need any kind of special accommodation when attending class or completing an assignment, please let me know right away. I will be sure to connect you with the appropriate offices in the College, so that we'll be able to arrange accommodations as soon as possible.

Laptops & Phones

Though it can be difficult to tear ourselves away from our electronic devices and the vast stores of data they hold within themselves, we should aim to prioritize interaction with our fellow humans during class time. There is nothing wrong with using a laptop or tablet to take notes, but please don't distract yourself or others by browsing extracurricular sites. Please also keep the sound switched off, even if (or, rather, especially if) you have one of those apps that makes your keyboard sound like an old-fashioned typewriter. As for phones, it's best to set those aside entirely for the duration of our meeting. Our goal, remember, is to create the conditions for a constructive conversation, and that's a goal that demands our attention if we're ever going to meet it.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Tuesday, Mar. 31: Introductory Meeting (no reading assigned)

Thursday, Apr. 2: Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* [on Chalk]

Week 2

Tuesday, Apr. 7: Tocqueville, *Democracy*, pp. xiii-xiv, 9-20, 31-57, 231-276

Thursday, Apr. 9: Tocqueville, *Democracy*, pp. 316-363, 584-603

Week 3

Tuesday, Apr. 14: Mill, *On Liberty*, I-III, pp. 5-82

Thursday, Apr. 16: Mill, *On Liberty*, IV-V, pp. 83-128

Week 4

Tuesday, Apr. 21: Mill, *Subjection*, I-II, pp. 471-523

Thursday, Apr. 23: Mill, *Subjection*, III-IV, pp. 524-582

Friday, April 24: **First Paper Due**

Week 5

Tuesday, Apr. 28: Marx, “On the Jewish Question” (pp. 26-52); “Theses on Feuerbach” (pp. 143-145)

Thursday, Apr. 30: Marx, “Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (pp. 66-93)

Week 6

Tuesday, May 5: Marx, “Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (pp. 93-125)

Thursday, May 7: Marx, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (pp. 469-500)

Week 7

Tuesday, May 12: Goldman, “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation;” de Beauvoir, *Second Sex*, Introduction [both on Chalk]

Thursday, May 14: Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, Preface & First Essay (pp. 1-34)

Week 8

Tuesday, May 19: Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, Second Essay (pp. 35-66)

Thursday, May 21: Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, Third Essay (pp. 67-118)

Week 9

Tuesday, May 26: Du Bois, *Souls*, pp. 34-102

Thursday, May 28: Du Bois, *Souls*, pp. 103-195

Week 10

Tuesday, June 2: King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail;” Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet” [both on Chalk]

Thursday, June 4: Reading Period begins

Finals

Monday, June 9: **Final Paper Due**