

# Liberalism and its Critics

POLS 384  
Spring 2013  
Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:15pm  
203 Oldfather Hall  
Coffee Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:45-10:45am

Ari Kohen  
537 Oldfather Hall  
akohen2@unl.edu  
@kohenari

## Required Texts

Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i>	Marx and Engels, <i>Communist Manifesto</i>
Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals; Perpetual Peace and Other Essays</i>	Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government; Letter Concerning Toleration</i>	Rousseau, <i>First and Second Discourses; Social Contract</i>
Smith, <i>Theory of Moral Sentiments; Wealth of Nations</i>	

## Purpose of the Course

There is a long-standing debate amongst political theorists about who ought to be considered the first modern theorist and who the last. Is it Machiavelli or Hobbes, on the one hand, and Marx or Nietzsche, on the other? This semester, we'll begin with this interesting question before substantially narrowing our focus. For rather than considering modernity as a whole, we will spend our time in a close examination of the concept of liberalism, the most influential political idea that arose during that era. The reasoning for this narrowing – rather than adopting the classical approach of chronologically sorting through the theorists of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries – is that a thematic approach highlights the immediate and obvious usefulness of modern political thought. After all, liberalism is the founding principle of our own political system; if we can conduct only one detailed theoretical study, we are likely best served by this one. That said, while the central question of our course might appear tangential to the larger puzzle of modernity, we will actually go a long way toward uncovering the core ideas of modern political theory in this class. And, by the end of the semester, we will have made considerable progress toward providing an answer to the question – about what modernity means – with which we began.

## Design of the Course

Students will write two papers of between six and eight pages over the course of the semester. In addition, there will be an hour-long midterm examination and a two-hour final examination.

Late papers will be penalized one letter grade each day. Make-up exams will not be given, except in the event of a medical emergency; a note from a doctor is required before a make-up can be scheduled and the note must say more than simply that you saw a doctor on the day of the missed exam. Further, an illness that prevents you from using the time that you set aside to study will not be considered a legitimate excuse.

The success of the each class meeting depends upon both your active involvement in the day's discussion and upon your careful assessment and critique of the daily reading

assignment. Because of the importance of these activities, the quality of your class involvement will be evaluated daily.

### **Grading**

Paper #1	20%
Paper #2	25%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%
Quality of Class Involvement	10%

Each assignment for this course is graded on the same four-point scale that is used to calculate student grade point averages. An A is a 4 and an F is a 0. There are gradations for A, B, C, and D grades; for example, a B+ is a 3.3 and a C- is a 1.7. There are no gradations for an F. What this means is that if you receive a 38% on your midterm, you get a 0 as the grade for your midterm. If you receive a 52% on your midterm, you get a 0 as the grade for your midterm. An F signifies that you failed to meet the minimum standards for the assignment; I award no points for failing to meet the minimum standards.

### **Class Absences**

The work of this course demands regular attendance. Excessive absence, therefore, will be reflected both in the kinds of grades you likely will receive on written work, and – of course – in my evaluation of your class participation. Arriving approximately ten minutes late or leaving early on three occasions will be counted as one absence. Missing roughly 1/4 (7) of the total number of classes (30) will result in automatic failure of the course.

### **Plagiarism / Academic Dishonesty**

I consider academic integrity essential to teaching, learning, and research – in short, to the entire academic enterprise. I hope you will talk to and learn from one another both inside and outside the classroom. You must provide appropriate citations whenever you incorporate someone else's words or ideas into your writing and you may not turn in the same work for multiple classes. Plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in an automatic F on the assignment in question and, at my discretion, referral to the relevant university officials. If you have any questions about academic integrity, don't hesitate to ask. I ask that you write out and sign an Honor Pledge on all written work done outside of the classroom; I will not read papers that are handed in without an Honor Pledge.

### **Other Important Notes**

Cell phones, MP3 players, PDAs, PSPs, and all other electronic devices should be turned off and put away before class begins. If your cell phone rings during class, I reserve the right to deal with the interruption in a manner of my choosing. If you are awaiting an important telephone call, please set your phone to 'vibrate' and then take the call outside. If for any reason you need to leave class early or arrive late, please do so quietly and without ceremony. I will not be offended or disturbed – unless you stop the class to ask

if you may come or go. If you plan to leave early or arrive late on a regular basis, you should speak with me due to the above attendance policy.

If you miss a class – with or without a legitimate excuse – you are responsible for getting lecture notes from a classmate. If you have questions about the material after looking over the notes, please stop by during my office hours or schedule an appointment with me. Please do not send me an e-mail to ask whether you missed anything important, as you definitely did.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

### **Day-by-Day Assignment Breakdown**

Tuesday, January 8	Introduction: What <i>is</i> Modernity?!
Thursday, January 10	Locke, <i>A Letter Concerning Toleration</i>
Tuesday, January 15	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters 1-5)
Thursday, January 17	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters 6-11)
Tuesday, January 22	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters 12-15)
Thursday, January 24	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (Chapters 16-19)
Tuesday, January 29	Paine, <i>Rights of Man</i> (Selections)
Thursday, January 31	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (§406-445)
Tuesday, February 5	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
Thursday, February 7	Kant, “On the Common Saying: This May Be True In Theory But It Does Not Apply In Practice”
Tuesday, February 12	Kant, “Perpetual Peace” <b>Paper #1 Due</b>
Thursday, February 14	Smith, <i>Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> (Part I, Section I, Chapters 1-3; Part II, Section I, Chapters 1-2; Part III, Section I, Chapters 1-4; Part V, Chapter 2)

Tuesday, February 19	Smith, <i>Theory of Moral Sentiments</i> (Part I, Section III, Chapters 2-3; Part II, Section II; Part III, Chapter 6; Part IV; Part IV, Section I and Section II, Chapter 2)
Thursday, February 21	Smith, <i>Wealth of Nations</i> (Pages 10-30, 330-349, 452-456, 687-688, 724-731, 781-788, and 814-816)
Tuesday, February 26	Smith, <i>Wealth of Nations</i> (Pages 381-387, 397-405, 411-422, and 708-723)
Thursday, February 28	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
Tuesday, March 5	Rousseau, <i>First Discourse</i>
Thursday, March 7	Rousseau, <i>Second Discourse</i>
Tuesday, March 12	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> (Book I, Chapters 1-3, 6-9)
Thursday, March 14	Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> (Book II, Chapters 1-12; Book IV, Chapters 1, 8)
Tuesday, March 19	<b>Spring Break – No Class Meeting</b>
Thursday, March 21	<b>Spring Break – No Class Meeting</b>
Tuesday, March 26	Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i>
Thursday, March 28	Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i>
Tuesday, April 2	Marx, “On the Jewish Question” (Part I); Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program”
Thursday, April 4	Marx and Engels, <i>Communist Manifesto</i> <b>Paper #2 Due</b>
Tuesday, April 9	Nietzsche, <i>On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life</i> (Selections)
Thursday, April 11	Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (Part 1)
Tuesday, April 16	Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (Part 2)
Thursday, April 18	Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (Part 5)
Tuesday, April 23	Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (Part 9)

Thursday, April 25

Conclusion

Thursday, May 2

**Final Exam (3:30-5:30pm)**