

SAMPLE OF RECENTLY TAUGHT GRADUATE COURSES IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

American Political Traditions (Spring 2005). Professor Russell L. Hanson. In this seminar we will explore two traditions in American political thought. One is inspired by the Declaration of Independence and is concerned primarily with the use of political authority to uphold rights, on the one hand, and the abuse of rights by political authorities, on the other. Debates over specific rights are an important part of this tradition, as are disputes about who is entitled to claim them. In the seminar we will examine several of these debates, showing how various rights-based movements, including the civil rights movement, drew on the Declaration of Independence to advance their cause. The Constitution is the touchstone for a second tradition in American political thought. This tradition is concerned mainly with the basis of political authority and its proper distribution in a federal system. Key moments in the evolution of this tradition include the movement from confederation to union, the reconstruction of the union after the Civil War, the assumption of regulatory powers by the national government during the Progressive era, and the construction of a “welfare state” during the New Deal. On each occasion important constitutional issues were debated, and in the seminar we will review primary sources from some of these debates, including the Founding period.

Contemporary Theories of Democracy (Fall 2004). Professor Jeffrey C. Isaac. This seminar is about problems facing democracy today and the way these problems are being analyzed by important and influential political theorists. In this seminar we will be interested in these broad themes, and we will seek to incorporate political analysis and discussion of current events relating to these themes into our class discussions. We will explore these themes primarily through a careful reading and discussion of Jurgen Habermas’s important book *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Habermas’s book raises fundamental questions about a number of important themes, including “the public sphere,” deliberative democracy, civil society, national identity, and cosmopolitanism. The primary goal of the course is to use the writings of Habermas as a particular lens for raising and discussing important problems of liberal democratic politics that are at once problems of political practice and problems of political theory. A secondary goal of the course is to develop a sophisticated understanding of Habermas as a political theorist. A third goal is to develop a historically specific awareness of some of the main lines of argumentation in democratic theory. Other texts in this class include Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, and Jeffrey C. Isaac, *Democracy in Dark Times*.

The French Revolution and Its Interpreters (Fall 2004). Professor Aurelian Craiutu. The purpose of this course is to offer a detailed analysis of the debates

and legacy of the French Revolution. Special emphasis will be put on studying the interplay between events, actors, institutions, and ideas. We shall read closely some of the main texts and documents published during the Revolution such as selections from the *cahiers de doléances*, the debates preceding the convocation of the Estates General, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen*, *The Constitution of 1791* (most of them available in Paul H. Beik, ed. *The French Revolution*), as well as Sieyès's famous *What is the Third Estate?* We'll also study the debates on the royal veto and authority in 1790, the discussions on the nature of representative government, the documents of the Committee on Public Safety and a selection from Robespierre's speeches. In our discussions, we shall focus on major concepts and themes that loomed large in the debates of this period: sovereignty, representation, democracy, republic, the rights of man, and the relationship between the legislative and the executive power. The second part of the course will examine the works of some of the most important interpreters of the French Revolution. It will include representative selections from Madame de Staël's *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution*, Benjamin Constant's *Observations on the Strength of the Present Government of France*, Joseph de Maistre's *Considerations on France*, Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Paine's *The Rights of Man*, and Tocqueville's *The Old Regime and the Revolution*.

Political Thought from Locke to Kant (Spring 2004). Professor Tim Tilton. The primary aim of this course is to help students understand and evaluate the basic political writings of the Enlightenment. Readings include selections from Paul Hazard's *The European Mind*, Locke's *Second Treatise* and *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and *The Spirit of the Laws*, Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, Rousseau's *Discourses*, *Emile*, and *Social Contract*, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and Kant's *Ideas for a Universal History*, *Metaphysical Foundations of Morals*, and *Eternal Peace*. Students may do either three short papers or a longer seminar paper.

Introduction to the Study of Politics (Spring 2003). Professor Jeffrey C. Isaac. The purpose of the course is to acquaint students with the discipline of political science, with the kinds of approaches characteristic of this discipline, and with the diverse ways in which political scientists typically think about the vocation of political science. The course is divided into three parts: (1) an overview of the discipline as a discipline with a distinctive history; (2) an overview of diverse understandings of what it means to study politics "scientifically," and (3) a synthetic discussion of the way different methodological orientations approach a common topic—the study of democratic citizenship—and the way each of these approaches brings something unique and valuable to the study of politics. This section will begin with Alexis de Tocqueville's class work *Democracy in America*, and then examine the way a number of current political and social scientists develop Tocquevillean themes. Books to be discussed will include Robert Bellah, et al,

Habits of the Heart; Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*; Susan J. Pharr and Robert Putnam, eds, *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?* and Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*.

Political Philosophy: Approaches and Issues (Fall 2003). Professor Aurelian Craiutu. This course introduces students to the range of approaches and issues that comprise political philosophy as a distinct subfield in political science. Readings include “Leo Strauss’ “What is Political Philosophy?,” Quentin Skinner’s *Visions of Politics* (Volume I), the German school of *Begriffsgeschichte*, John Rawls’s *Theory of Justice*, Michael Oakeshott’s *Rationalism in Politics*, Karl Popper’s *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, and Isaiah Berlin’s “Two Concepts of Liberty.”

Classics of Social and Political Thought (Spring 2003). Professor Aurelian Craiutu. The purpose of this course is to offer a detailed analysis of a few works that belong to the canon of modern and social political thought: Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws*, Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, Tocqueville’s *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*, *German Ideology*, and selections from the *Capital* (Vol. 1), Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* plus selections from *Economy and Society*. The text that will serve as our guide will be Raymond Aron’s *Main Currents of Sociological Thought* (Vols. I & II).

Democracy in America (Fall 2002). Professor Russell Hanson. This seminar offers a close reading of Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*. Understanding this text in the context of American politics during the age of Jackson is part of this task; so is the need to appreciate Tocqueville’s desire to educate French liberals about the possibilities of democratic politics. Hence we will also read Pierson’s *Tocqueville in America* and Wolin’s *Tocqueville Between Two Worlds*. The seminar concludes with an assessment of well-known efforts to analyze contemporary politics in Tocquevillian terms. This includes the work of Robert Bellah, and more recently, Robert Putnam.

Political Theory After September 11, 2001 (Spring 2002). Professor Jeffrey C. Isaac. This seminar examines the way a number of prominent intellectuals and political theorists have commented on the events of September 11, 2001. The course will be framed around two arguments: (1) the view, put forth by William Bennett and other conservative writers, that after 9-11 intellectuals need to reassert American patriotism, and (2) the view, put forth in different ways by Noam Chomsky, Judith Butler, and many others, that after 9-11 what we need is deep criticism of what the U.S. represents in the world, and of what liberalism means more generally. The seminar will discuss a range of prominent commentaries, including writings by Bennett, Chomsky, Butler, Jean Baudrillard, Sheldon Wolin, Mary Kaldor, Agnes Heller, and others. And it will use these discussions to raise a deeper question about the validity and significance of liberalism in the twenty-first century. Here the key text will be

John Gray's *Two Faces of Liberalism*, though other works of contemporary liberalism will also be discussed.

Topics in Political Philosophy: Moderation and Radicalism (Spring 2002). Professor Aurelian Craiutu. The purpose of this course is to explore the issues of moderation and radicalism in the works of ancient, modern, and contemporary political philosophers. How do moderate and radical minds operate? What are the virtues and limitations of moderation in politics? Readings include relevant *selections* from a wide range of authors including: Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hume, *The Federalist*, Burke, Paine, Robespierre, Tocqueville, Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, Heidegger, Schmitt, Sartre, Arendt, Oakeshott, Cioran, Foucault, and Aron. Also required: Mark Lilla's *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: The New York Review Books, 2001) and Peter J. Steinberger's *The Concept of Political Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Feminist Political Theory: Gender, Politics and the State (Spring 2002). Professor Jean Robinson. In this course we will spend time examining both feminist and more traditional theoretical formulations of gender and the state. Topics include: Are women citizens? Is citizenship gendered? Does the construct and practice of the nation-state presuppose different kinds of citizenship? Does democracy include women? How are reproduction, production, immigration, and soldiering implicated in the construction of citizens and the relation between women, men and the state? Toward the latter part of the semester, we will consider issues of citizenship, women's rights and human rights, diaspora and resistance politics, using a gendered lens. Among authors we will examine are J.S. Mill, Wollstonecraft, Pateman, MacKinnon, Sevenhuijsen, Voet, Skocpol, Judith Butler, Joan Scott and more. Textbooks: Laslett, Brenner and Arat, eds., *Rethinking the Political: Gender, Resistance and the State* (1995) and Judith Butler and Joan Scott, *Feminists Theorize the Political* (1992).

Liberalism in America (Fall 2001). Professor Russell Hanson. The subject of this seminar is liberalism, which is being embraced around the world. Countries that were sworn enemies of liberalism only a few years ago now favor it, and intellectuals who once scorned liberalism now praise it. In light of these developments it seems appropriate to examine liberalism in the United States, a nation long known for its distinctively liberal political culture. More than one observer has been struck by the pervasive influence of liberalism in the United States, and the course will examine several attempts to characterize our culture in terms of an American creed shot through with liberal values and ideas. The course will also review objections against liberalism, particularly those raised by communitarian critics of "rampant individualism" and other alleged excesses of liberalism. It will also consider some liberals' answers to these charges, especially insofar as they stress the putative virtues of liberalism.

Political Philosophy: Approaches and Issues (Fall 2001). Professor Jeffrey C. Isaac. This course will introduce students to the range of approaches and issues that comprise political philosophy as a distinct sub-field in political science. It is a general survey that seeks to touch on a variety of concerns, to open up further inquiry rather than to reach closure on any particular matter. The course covers the following issues: What is the identity of political philosophy, and how has this identity been shaped? The course discusses a number of approaches or paradigms, including interpretivism, pragmatism, and postmodernism and also explores how liberalism has been affected by the development of these various approaches as well as by feminism, post-colonialism, and "multiculturalism."

Contemporary Theories of Democracy (Spring 2001). Professor Jeffrey C. Isaac. This seminar examines problems facing democratic states today, and the way that these problems are being addressed by influential contemporary political theorists. The seminar's central theme is the legitimacy deficit of democratic states, and the central texts are John Rawls's *Political Liberalism* and Jurgen Habermas's *Between Facts and Norms*. Other books discussed include Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement*; Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*; Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*; Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*; Zygmunt Bauman, *In Search of Politics*; and Jeffrey C. Isaac, *Democracy in Dark Times*.

Classics of Democratic Theory (Fall 2000). Professor Jeffrey C. Isaac. This seminar offers a general introduction to core problems of democratic theory, with a focus on foundational texts in the history of political thought. Authors covered include Plato, Aristotle, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, Alexis de Tocqueville, John Dewey, V.I. Lenin, Roberto Michels, C. Schmitt, Joseph Schumpeter, Robert Dahl, and Arendt.

Seminar in American Law & Theory (Fall 1999). Professor Judith Lynn Failer. The course addresses the following basic questions about the nature and character of law: What is law? What is (are) its function(s)? What makes law authoritative? Why should we obey the law? Are there right answers to legal questions? The seminar compares these canonical approaches to basic problems in legal theory, but also analyzes some of American legal theory's original contributions to these discussions: the contributions of legal realism, critical legal studies (including critical race and feminist jurisprudence), and constitutional theory. Where appropriate, the class will also use legal cases to help evaluate and clarify the theoretical debates.

Problems in Constitutional Theory: Creating Constitutions (Spring 1998). Professor Judith Lynn Failer. To what extent can written constitutions shape polities? How can written constitutions gain and maintain political legitimacy? These questions will shape this seminar as we discuss some of the

basic literature in constitutional theory. In the first part of the seminar we shall take up the theoretical dimensions of *creating* a polity through a written constitution. We shall try to understand what kinds of arguments are necessary for justifying the drafting, discussion, and ratification of a new constitution. Among the topics we shall discuss will be the nature of a “constitutional frame of mind,” the concept of a constitution, the nature of constitutional enterprises, and constitutional citizenship. In the second part of the course, we shall take up the theoretical dimensions of *maintaining* a polity through a written constitution. Our primary focus will be on the relationship between constitutional legitimacy on one hand, and constitutional interpretation and apparent constitutional failure on the other. Among our topics will be the interpretation of the “unwritten” Constitution, the possibility of unconstitutional constitutional amendments, and the constitutional legitimacy of secession.