

Classics of Social and Political Thought: Spring 2017

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15300 – Section 3
Tuesday/Thursday 10:30am-11:50am

Instructor: Daniel Nichanian
dnichanian@uchicago.edu

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, political thinkers confronted a wide range of transformations, starting with the construction of liberal democratic institutions, the emergence of capitalism, the struggles for equality of hitherto excluded groups, and the rise of bureaucracy. In this course, we read six authors—Tocqueville, Marx, Nietzsche, Du Bois, Weber, and Arendt—who developed trenchant and critical outlooks toward these transformations and their effects on social and political life. The course also aims to build on your ability to interpret complex texts, to engage in rigorous argumentation, and to marshal evidence for your views.

Required books (available at the Seminary Co-Op):

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Goldhammer (Library of America)

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Tucker (Norton)

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Clark and Swensen (Hackett)

W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Gooding-Williams (Bedford)

Make sure to acquire these specific editions and to bring your copy to class on relevant days.

Course requirements

You will write two papers during the quarter, as well as two discussion questions. You are expected to attend every class and be an active participant in discussion. Each paper will represent 35% of the final grade. A participation grade (determined by your involvement in class discussion and your discussion questions) will make up the remaining 30%.

Participation: This course is a collective effort to better understand these texts so your involvement is crucial. The more people are active, the more we can work out the issues you encounter. No question is too basic to be voiced in class, nor do you need to be certain of an answer to share your thoughts. If there is something in a text that you find challenging or confusing, chances are others find it challenging or confusing as well! Class time should be an opportunity for you to raise problems you have about the text and to discuss concerns and interpretations with each other. As such, participation will be an important part of your evaluation for this course.

Participation entails contributing to the classroom conversation; it also refers to displaying respect and attentiveness to each other. You should all listen to each other and make an effort to respond to your peers' questions and thoughts. Participation also requires coming to class equipped to dialogue with others about the text at-hand; one thing this means is bringing to class the same edition of the book that your peers are reading from. Finally, discussion will be stronger if you take the time to read these texts carefully and identify areas of interest or of concern. I encourage you to take notes while you are reading.

Attendance: You are expected to attend every class, unless you have a medical or compelling personal reason requiring you to miss it. If you have such a reason, please contact me *before class*, and as soon as you know about it. An unexcused absence will lower your participation grade; repeated unexcused absences will severely affect it, up to a failing participation grade.

Paper assignments: You will write two papers during the quarter. I will distribute instructions and topics before the papers are due.

Your papers must use the specific editions I have assigned for purposes of citation and quotation.

Late papers: I will deduct one-third of a letter grade for each day the paper is late.

Course completion: You need to have turned in both papers to pass the course.

Discussion questions: You will each sign up for two sessions at the beginning of the quarter. For those two sessions, you will write a discussion question and share with the class via e-mail **by 6pm the evening before**. You should spell out something that you find puzzling, ambiguous, or meaningful in the readings and over which you would like to engage the class in a discussion. Your question should be no longer than a paragraph. Don't hesitate to keep the question simple, but make sure to explain what it is that you find worth discussing as a group. While in class, I will ask you to present your question and direct a brief discussion around it. All students must come to class prepared to discuss the day's discussion questions.

Other important matters

Office hours: Please do come my office hours—whether there is something about the texts that you find perplexing or exciting, or if you simply want to talk about the course further! Even a short conversation could clear up a point about which you want clarification and open up new perspectives on the text, which will be helpful when the time comes to write a paper. You can schedule to meet me at another time if you have a conflict during my office hours.

Use of electronic devices: Unless you require an electronic device as part of the accommodation of a disability, in-class computer use or phone use is not permitted. On the days in which there are readings posted to Chalk, you can use a laptop in class only in order to consult the readings. Even then I encourage you to print the material.

Plagiarism: Academic honesty requires that you hand in your own original work. You must cite any source you draw on while writing the paper, whether you quote it directly or not. You are also not allowed to turn in a paper that you have written or are writing for another class. **Any breach of these rules is a very serious matter.** Plagiarism may lead to a failing grade for the course, as well as to disciplinary action by the College. Talk to me if you have *any* question about the appropriate standards and about what it means to properly cite sources.

Writing assistance: First-year students can talk to the writing interns of their Humanities Core section. All students can consult the writing tutors who work at Harper Library. See here for more details: <http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/tutor.htm>. You may also benefit from the Writing Program's guide to college writing, available at the following link: <http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/index.htm>

Tuesday, March 28: Course Introduction
Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Introduction (pp.3-17)

Thursday, March 30: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
pp. 31-77, 97-110, 215-223

Tuesday, April 4: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
pp. 224-230, 264-302, 311-318, 330-364

Thursday, April 6: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
pp. 365-419, 470-476, 692-708

Tuesday, April 11: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*
pp. 479-493; 581-594; 610-616; 649-652; 787-793; 803-834

Thursday, April 13: Marx, “The Jewish Question”
in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (pp. 26-52)

Tuesday, April 18: Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts”
in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (pp. 66-105)

Thursday, April 20: Marx, (a) “Preface” to *Contributions to a Critique of Political Economy*,
(b) “The Communist Manifesto; (c) “Critique of the Gotha Program” (Part I, section 3
in *The Marx-Engels Reader*: pp. 3-6, 469-500, and 528-532.

Tuesday, April 25: Marx, *Capital*
in *The Marx-Engels Reader*: pp. 294-329

Thursday, April 27: Marx, *Capital*
in *The Marx-Engels Reader*: pp. 329-367, 373-376, 431-438

Monday, May 1 (noon): first paper due

Tuesday, May 2: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*
Preface and First Treatise (pp. 1-33)

Thursday, May 4: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*
Second Treatise (pp. 35-66)

Tuesday, May 9: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*
Third Treatise (pp.66-118)

Thursday, May 11: Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
The Forethought, chapters 1, 3-6 (pp. 34-44, 62-102)

Tuesday, May 16: Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
Chapters 10-14 and The Afterthought (pp. 148-195)

Thursday, May 18: Max Weber, “Science as Vocation” (on Chalk)

Tuesday, May 23: Max Weber, “Politics as Vocation” (on Chalk)

Thursday, May 25: Hannah Arendt, “Freedom and Politics” (on Chalk)

Tuesday, May 30: Hannah Arendt, “On Violence” (on Chalk)

Monday, June 5 (5pm): second paper due