

## Classics of Social and Political Thought: Winter 2017

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15200 – Section 3  
Tuesday/Thursday 10:30am-11:50am

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By the time of the American and French Revolutions at the end of the 18th century, a new set of ideas had come to organize the way people thought about political life. Notions that are still with us today—consent, individual rights, toleration, sovereignty—became essential in articulating the role and obligations of the modern state and of its citizens. This course focuses on four 17th and 18th century thinkers (Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Mary Wollstonecraft) to explore how the social contract tradition and the Enlightenment tradition put a new political vocabulary and imaginary in circulation. This will also allow us to examine whether the concepts that these authors deploy still structure the way in which we think of politics and government as twenty-first century citizens.

The course aims to build your ability to read and interpret complex texts, to do so critically *and* charitably, to engage in rigorous argumentation, and to marshal evidence for your views. While in this class you will use these skills to think about how we live together in a political community, they are also essential across your academic endeavors.

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

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett, 1994)

John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge University Press, 1988)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *'The Discourses' and Other Early Political Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *'The Social Contract' and Other Later Political Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman and A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (Oxford University Press, 2009)

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

### Course requirements

You will write two papers during the quarter. You are responsible for emailing the class two discussion questions over the quarter. 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, like all seminars, is a collective effort so your involvement is crucial. The more people are active, the more we can work out the issues that 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! These are complicated texts that raise difficult issues. 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.

While participation refers to whether you contribute to the discussion, it also refers to the respect and attentiveness you display toward each other. Jumpstarting a conversation requires that we listen to each other and make an effort to respond to other people's questions and thoughts.

Discussion will be stronger if you take the time to read these texts carefully and to identify areas of interest or of concern. I encourage you to take notes while you are reading. This will help you organize your thoughts and it will make it easier for you to raise questions or point us toward important or confusing passages while in class.

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 the 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.

*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. Also, **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 those two days in which there are brief readings posted to Chalk, please 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.

I also encourage you to read the University of Chicago Writing Program's detailed guidelines: [http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/but\\_what\\_if\\_you\\_get\\_stuck.htm#\\_Toc431538594](http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/but_what_if_you_get_stuck.htm#_Toc431538594)

### **Course schedule and readings**

**Tuesday, January 3:** Course Introduction

“Declaration of Independence” (1776)

“Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen” (1789)

Olympe De Gouges, “The Declaration of the Rights of Woman” (1791)

#### **Part 1: Thomas Hobbes**

**Thursday, January 5:** Hobbes, *Leviathan* (question: Bryan)

Introduction, Chapter 31 (§41), Chapters 1-5 (all), Chapter 6 (§§ 1-41), Chapter 7, Chapter 8 (§§ 1-19), Chapter 9.

**Tuesday, January 10:** Hobbes, *Leviathan* (question: Mohammed, Shangling)

Chapters 10-11, Chapters 13-15.

**Thursday, January 12:** Hobbes, *Leviathan* (question: Lucas, Sam)

Chapters 16-18, Chapter 19 (§§ 1-18).

**Tuesday, January 17:** Hobbes, *Leviathan* (question: Spencer)

Chapter 24 (§§ 1-7), Chapter 25 (§§ 1-5), Chapter 26 (§§ 1-23), Chapter 27 (§§ 1-13, 19-27, 35), Chapter 28 (§§ 1-23), Chapter 30

**Thursday, January 19:** Hobbes, *Leviathan* (question: Brayden, Sam)

Chapter 20 (§§ 1-15, 18-19), Chapter 21, Chapter 29,

Also reread Chapter 14, paragraphs 27-29.

**Tuesday, January 24:** Hobbes, *Leviathan* (question: Leron, Zinan)

Chapter 12 (§§ 1-12, 20-32), Chapter 26 (§§ 40-43), Chapter 31 (§§ 1-7, 12-38), Chapter 32 (§§ 1-6, 9), Chapter 33 (§§ 1, 21-25), Chapter 42 (§§ 4-11, 79-80), Chapter 43 (§§ 1-5, 11, 22-24).

*pp. 63-67; 186-189; 233-237; 238-242; 245-247; 249-251; 259-261; 336-339; 372-373; 397-400; 402; 409-410.*

#### **Part 2: John Locke**

**Thursday, January 26:** Locke, *Second Treatise* (question: Alex, Willem)

Chapters 1-5

***Monday, January 30 (noon): first paper due***

**Tuesday, January 31:** Locke, *Second Treatise* (question: Bryan)

Chapters 6-8

**Thursday, February 2:** Locke, *Second Treatise* (question: Owen, Shangling)  
Chapters 9-16

**Tuesday, February 7:** Locke, *Second Treatise* (question: James, Lucas)  
Chapter 17-19

Also read Frederick Douglass, “Is it Right and Wise to Kill a Kidnapper?”

**Part 3: Jean-Jacques Rousseau**

**Thursday, Feb. 9:** Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and the Basis of Inequality Among Men*  
Exordium, Preface and Part I. Make sure to read Notes 9 and 15 (pp.124-160, 197-204 and 218)  
Question: Alex

**Tuesday, Feb. 14:** Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and the Basis of Inequality Among Men*  
Part II. Make sure to read Notes 16 and 17 (pp.161-188; 219-221)  
Question: Willem, Zinan

**Thursday, February 16:** Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (question: Brayden)  
Book I and Book II Chapters 1-2

**Tuesday, February 21:** Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (question: Spencer)  
Book II Chapters 1-12

**Thursday, February 23:** Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (question: James, Leron)  
Book III

**Tuesday, February 28:** Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (question: Owen)  
Book IV

**Part 4: Mary Wollstonecraft**

**Thursday, March 2:** Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*  
pp. 287-295 (through “...shelter all mankind.”)  
pp. 65-97 (through “... within due bounds.”)  
pp. 101-115 (“But avoiding as I have...” to “... liable to error?”)

**Tuesday, March 7:** Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*  
pp. 121-126 (through “...when the heart is out of the question.”)  
pp. 130-132 (from “In short, women through...” to “...of moral excellence.”)  
pp.146-154 (from “Women have seldom...” to “... the following advice.”)  
pp.188-190 (from “I know that a kind of fashion...” to the end of Chapter 5)  
pp.198-202 (to “... insolent condescension of protectorship.”)  
pp.221-231 (all of Chapter 9)  
pp.241-248 (to “...should outshine those of their neighbor?”)  
pp.259-265 (from “My observations on national...” to the end of chapter 12.)  
pp. 271-274, 277-283 (Chapter 13, Sections 2, 4, 5 and 6)

***Friday, March 10 (noon): second paper due***