

PSC 2118 - Main Currents in Political Thought

Introduction

Political thought from the early to modern periods is an important part of the undergraduate learning process in Political Science. Political thinkers and philosophers have shaped not only political ideas, but also political institutions and practices. Most of the concerns that political philosophers had expressed even in early periods, for example in Greek, Roman, or early Indian and Chinese traditions, have a relevance even today.

This course seeks to generate an enthusiasm among second year undergraduate students in political philosophy. It will focus on the political thought in ancient Greece and Rome, the Christian Political thought, European political ideas of the Renaissance era, Social Contract thinking of the Enlightenment period and the Marxist political thought.

Course Objectives

- i. To identify the nature of Political Thought and to understand the similarities and differences among various currents in political thought.
- ii. To understand the historical forces that provided the context for the main trends in classical and post-classical political thought, and
- iii. To identify the ways in which normative principles are constructed in the ideologies of key political thinkers.

Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- i. Assess for themselves the historical forces and processes that shaped the basic concepts and theories in political thought;
- ii. Obtain a critical knowledge of the way in which political ideas are formed and developed in intellectual and philosophical contexts.
- iii. Relate their own thinking to the key ideas of major European political thinkers.

Course Outline

1. Greek Political Thought

- i. Plato: Views on Justice, Nature of the Ideal State, Concepts of 'Philosopher King' (from The *Republic*); Political ideas in *Statesman and the Law*.
- ii. Aristotle: the State, Classification of systems of government, Principles of mixed constitution, citizenship, slavery, justice.

2. **Roman Political Thought:**

- i. Polybius: Principle of mixed government, Theory of checks and balances.
- ii. Cicero: Concepts of natural law and popular consent.

3. **General Characteristics of Christian Political Thought**

- i. St. Augustine: City of God, Christian Commonwealth, Conflict between state and church.
- ii. St. Thomas Aquinas: views on state, political power, church and state, laws.

4. **Machiavelli and the Political Thought in the Renaissance Period**

The basis of state, politics and morality, strategy and power politics (from *The Prince*).

5. **Reformation and Protestant Movement in Europe**

Main ideas of Martin Luther and John Calvin.

6. **Political Thought of the Enlightenment Period**

- i. Thomas Hobbes: Social Contract and the absolute state.
- ii. John Locke: Social Contract and the limited government.
- iii. Rousseau: General Will and Sovereignty.

7. **Marxist Political Thought:**

Historical materialism, the state, class struggle and revolution.

Assessment

<i>Method</i>	<i>Weightage</i>
Take- home Assignment	20%
Mid-Semester Test	20%
End- Semester Examination	60%
Total	100%

Recommended Reading

Bagby Laurie M. 2001, *Political Thought: A Guide to the Classics*, Oxford University Press.

Balot, Ryan K. 2006, *Greek Political Thought*. London: Blackwell.

Coleman, Janet. 2000, *A History of Political Thought: From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, London: Blackwell.

Ebenstein, William. 1975, *Great Political Thinkers*, Oxford University Press.

Michael, Rosen. Wolff, Jonathan. and McKinnon, Catriona, 1999, *Political Thought*, Oxford University Press.

Rowe, C. J, Schofield. Malcolm, Simon., Harrison, Lane S, Melissa, 2000, *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press.

Sabine.G.H, 1950, *A History of Political Theory*, New York: Henry Holt.

Steinberger J., Peter. 2000, *Readings in Classical Political Thought*, Hacket Publishing Company.