

MODERN POLITICAL THEORY
SPRING 2009

PROFESSOR TARR

OFFICE HOURS: M,W: 12:15-1:15 or by appointment at 401 Cooper

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TEXTS: All texts are available in the bookstore. Students who have other editions of these works should consult the instructor about assignments. Some works may also be found on the internet. The authors are listed in the order in which they will be treated. Most of the books will be read in their entirety. We will be spending roughly two weeks on each author.

Locke, SECOND TREATISE ON GOVERNMENT
Mill, ON LIBERTY
Rousseau, BASIC POLITICAL WRITINGS
Burke, REFLECTIONS ON THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE
Marx, SELECTED WRITINGS
Nietzsche, BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

SECONDARY SOURCES: Reading assignments are all from primary sources--the political philosophers themselves. However, some students may feel it useful to supplement this reading with readings explaining the political thought of the various authors. The assigned books contain listings of pertinent secondary materials. In addition, the pertinent chapters for each author from Strauss & Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy*, have been placed on electronic reserve.

CONDUCT OF THE COURSE: Class sessions will be devoted to discussion of the assigned readings. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class and to be prepared to discuss them. A separate syllabus for each author will be distributed, giving assignments, study questions, etc.

I shall present each author as sympathetically as possible. That does not mean that you must accept whatever they say--indeed, the authors propose profoundly different understandings of human nature and of political life. Rather, you should enter into a dialogue with the authors. Such a dialogue is of course impossible if you immediately dismiss everything with which you disagree. So be open to what the authors can teach you, even those with whom you ultimately disagree.

EVALUATION: There will be three non-cumulative tests (including the final), each covering two authors. Tests will include both objective and essay sections. Each will count roughly 25% of your grade. Students will also be expected to submit short (maximum of 3 pages) essays on at least three of the authors (see below). Together, the grades on those essays will make up roughly 25% of one's grade. Finally, the quality of one's participation (or non-participation) in class discussions can raise or lower your final grade.

ATTENDANCE: Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate in class discussions. The readings in this course are difficult, and most students will find class sessions necessary to comprehend the material fully. Prolonged or frequent absences (with a consequent failure to participate in class discussions) will result in a lowering of your final grade.

TAKE-HOME ESSAYS

REQUIREMENT: At the conclusion of our discussion of each author, a question or choice of questions dealing with that author will be distributed to students. Each student must submit three short papers in the course, on questions for three of the authors. The choice of authors on which to write papers is left to each student. These papers will require students to analyze in depth a question not covered (or only briefly covered) during class discussions of the author. Completion of these assignments will not require research beyond analysis of the assigned text.

LENGTH: A maximum length of three double-spaced typed pages will be enforced--I will not read beyond the third page.

FORMAT: Only typed essays will be accepted. Pages must be stapled together. You must retain a copy of the essay in case something happens to the one you submitted.

DEADLINES: The essay topics will be distributed during class on the last day the author is considered (or on the date of the test, in the case of Mill and Burke). Completed essays are due one week from the date on which the topic is distributed or, in the case of our last author (Nietzsche) anytime before the final examination. ALL essays not submitted by that time will be penalized one-half grade per day. Early submission of essays is, of course, permissible.

EVALUATION: Essays will be evaluated on their understanding of the author's thought, their depth of analysis, and presentation. This last category includes such matters as grammar, quality of writing, spelling, and proofreading. So be forewarned!

FINAL GRADE: Your grade on the essay assignment will be an average of the three grades you receive. If you decide to submit more than three essays for evaluation, it will be the average of your best three grades.