

Professor Andrew Poe  
MW 10-11:20 in Webster 217  
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3-5PM in 202 Clark House  
Email: [apoe@amherst.edu](mailto:apoe@amherst.edu)  
Phone: 413.542.5459

## **Political Science 335**

### **Modern Political Thought**

#### ***-Introduction-***

Modernity – the age of individualism, increasing social autonomy, and political self-determination – was an era of enormous progression and novelty in political thinking. In it we find new conceptions of political rationality and affect (how to think and feel about politics), as well as reconceptualizations of such key concepts as equality and liberty, the state and civil society. Such changes held much promise, shaping institutions that seemed destined to improve economic and social conditions for rapidly increasing populations. Yet the politics that ensued from such ‘modern’ thinking sometimes proved disastrous: The 20<sup>th</sup> Century – once thought to fulfill the promise of modernity – has been the most violent in history.

This course surveys the development of political concepts in modern Western thought. We will trace paradigmatic shifts in political ideas as they begin to surface in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century European thought, evidenced in the writings of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant, amongst others. And we will compare these ideas with the thinking of some prominent 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century critics, including Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, and Schmitt. Through close textual readings and contextual analysis we will engage in a systematic comparison of our assumptions about politics with those expressed in these philosophical debates. And, in so doing, we will attempt to further our understanding of contemporary politics and the problems requisite to our own political practices.

## ***-Course Requirements-***

There are **five** requirements for this course:

1. 5-7 page paper on the origins of the idea of the state. Topics will be distributed on February 8<sup>th</sup>; papers will be due by email (word attachment) at or before 5pm on February 15<sup>th</sup> – 20%
2. 5-7 page paper on politics and the Enlightenment. Topics will be distributed on March 7<sup>th</sup>; papers will be due by email at or before 5pm on March 16<sup>th</sup> – 20%
3. 5-7 page paper on the concept of progress. Topics will be distributed on April 9<sup>th</sup>; papers will be due by email at or before 5pm on April 16<sup>th</sup> – 20%
4. 5-7 page final paper on the end(s) of modernity. Topics will be distributed on May 2<sup>nd</sup>; papers will be due by email at or before 5pm on May 11<sup>th</sup> – 20%
5. Attendance and participation in the course (measured by weekly reader responses submitted in class, prior to discussion) – 20%

**Late Papers:** Except in documented cases of serious emergency, late papers will receive a 1/3 grade penalty for each calendar day the paper is late.

## ***-Texts-***

The following books are available for purchase at Amherst Books:

Hobbes – *Leviathan* (Hackett)  
Carl Schmitt – *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes* (Chicago)  
Locke – *Political Writings* (Hackett)  
Spinoza – *Theological-Political Treatise* (Cambridge)  
Kant – *Political Writings* (Cambridge)  
Rousseau – *Basic Political Writings* (Hackett)  
Hegel – *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford)  
Marx – *Selected Political Writings of Karl Marx* (Hackett)  
Nietzsche – *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (Vintage)  
Max Weber – *The Vocation Lectures* (Hackett)

The remainder of the readings will be available on course e-reserve.

## ***-Schedule and Readings-***

### **Introduction**

January 23<sup>rd</sup> – Modernity and Modern Political Thought

### **Part 1: Origins of the Modern State**

January 25<sup>th</sup> – The Image of the Leviathan

Readings: Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Frontispiece, Letter, Introduction)  
*The Book of Job* (chapters 40 and 41)

January 30<sup>th</sup> – A New Humanity

Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* (chapters 1-8)

February 1<sup>st</sup> – Fear and Politics

Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* (chapters 13-16)

February 6<sup>th</sup> – Constituting the State

Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* (chapters 17-22, 28, and 30)

February 8<sup>th</sup> – ‘Belief’ as a Political Problem

Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* (chapters 12, 31-32, 36-37, and 42)

February 13<sup>th</sup> – The Myth of the *Leviathan*

Reading: Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*  
(pp. 5-87)

### **Part 2: Enlightenment**

February 15<sup>th</sup> – Civil Society

Reading: Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (chapters 1-9)

February 20<sup>th</sup> – Right of Rebellion

Reading: Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* (chapters 10-19)

February 22<sup>nd</sup> – Toleration

Reading: Locke, *Letter on Toleration* (complete)

February 27<sup>th</sup> – Faith and Interpretation

Reading: Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* (selections)

February 29<sup>th</sup> – Freedom of Thought

Reading: Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* (selections)

March 5<sup>th</sup> – Even for a Nation of Devils

Reading: Kant, *Perpetual Peace* (complete)

March 7<sup>th</sup> – What is Enlightenment?

Readings: Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?”

March 12<sup>th</sup> – The Feeling of Freedom

Reading: Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Introduction and Letters 1-11, 16, 24-27)

March 14<sup>th</sup> – Asking the Question Again: What is Enlightenment?

Reading: Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”

### **Part 3: Historical Progress and its Crisis**

March 26<sup>th</sup> – Humanity before History

Reading: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (part 1)

March 28<sup>th</sup> – Sociability

Reading: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (part 2)

April 2<sup>nd</sup> – Confronting Barbarism

Reading: Diderot, *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (complete)

April 4<sup>th</sup> – Desire

Reading: Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Preface; Self-Consciousness)

April 9<sup>th</sup> – Catastrophe and Progress

Reading: Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Self-Alienated Spirit – Culture)

April 11<sup>th</sup> – Fragments of History

Reading: Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”

## **Part 4: The End(s) of Modernity**

April 16<sup>th</sup> – Alienation

Reading: Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (selections)

April 28<sup>th</sup> – Class Struggle

Reading: Marx – *The Communist Manifesto* (complete)

April 23<sup>rd</sup> – Morality Past Enlightenment

Reading: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (selections)

April 25<sup>th</sup> – Politics Past Enlightenment

Reading: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (selections)

April 30<sup>th</sup> – Modern Rationality (Part I)

Reading: Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation”

May 2<sup>nd</sup> – Modern Rationality (Part II)

Reading: Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”

### **Additional Readings on Modern Political Thought:**

Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (The MIT Press, 1988)

Hannah Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age" in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (Penguin, 1993)

Leo Strauss, "Three Waves of Modernity" in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays* (Wayne State University Press, 1989)

Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (The MIT Press, 1982)

Hans Gumbrecht, "A History of the Concept 'Modern,' " in *Making Sense in Life and Literature* (Minnesota University Press, 1992)

Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (The MIT Press, 1987)

Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Harvard University Press 1993)

Robert Pippin, *Modernism as Philosophical Problem: On The Dissatisfactions of European High Culture* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1999)