History 867: European Social and Intellectual History: Political and Social Ideas in Early Modern Europe

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2-4.
Office: 5214 Humanities.
Classes: 1:30 to 3:30 on Mondays

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Course requirements: this course has two principal aims: (1) to introduce students to the most important and influential theories about the nature, purposes, and objectives of the state and society which circulated in early modern Europe, and which have shaped how people have thought about these questions ever since; (2) to improve students' skills in analyzing and criticizing political arguments and theories, both in discussion and on paper. Students will (1) attend classes and contribute to discussion (this will count for 30% of the grade); (2) write two papers of 10-15 pages (inclusive of bibliography and notes; due 3/14; 5/9; each will count for 25% of the grade); (3) give a classroom presentation (lasting for 30 minutes or less) to introduce the week's discussion (this will count for 20% of the grade).

Required texts: More, Utopia; Machiavelli, The Prince; Vitoria, Political writings; Filmer, Patriarcha and other writings; Hobbes, Leviathan; Locke, Two treatises of government. All these books are published by Cambridge University Press in the series Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought.

Other reading: here are some modern writings which are useful as general introductions or for reference:

- Figgis, John Neville, Studies of Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius, 1415-1625, Cambridge 1907. Good, clear introduction.
- Gierke, Otto von, Natural Law and the Theory of Society, 1500 to 1800, ed. and translated by Ernest Barker, 2 vols., Cambridge 1934. A classic, though it is difficult and Gierke had some strange ideas.
- Tuck, Richard, Philosophy and Government, 1572-1651, Cambridge 1993. Discusses a number of thinkers rarely considered elsewhere, but should be used with caution.

Class schedule, and further suggestions for reading:

I. Christian humanism, the Renaissance, and utopianism: Thomas More's Utopia.

Read: More, Utopia.

Suggested reading:
- Erasmus, Desiderius, The Essential Erasmus, ed. John P. Dolan, Mentor
Books, New York 1964; or *Praise of Folly*, translated by Betty Radice, Penguin Classics, 1971; or other editions of Erasmus’ writings (and especially *Praise of Folly*). Erasmus was the greatest Christian humanist of the age, and a close friend of More’s.


**Questions:** in what sense is More a humanist, or a scholastic? how seriously should we take what he says? is *Utopia* feasible, and would you like to live there? what is the point (for More, and also in general) of writing about a utopia? what were the political goals of the Christian humanists?

II: Machiavelli, Machiavellism, and reason of state.

**Read:** Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

**Suggested reading:**
(for important articles see pp. xxix-xxxi of *The Prince*)

Baron, Hans, *The crisis of the early Italian Renaissance*, Princeton 1966. Highly important on the background to Machiavelli, though its central thesis has been widely challenged (for details see vol.1 of Quentin Skinner’s *Foundations*).


Machiavelli, Niccolo, *The discourses*, 2 vols ed. L.J. Walker, London 1950. There are also many other editions of this book, which is extremely important for a full understanding of Machiavelli’s thought.

Meinecke, F., *Machiavellism: the doctrine of raison d’état and its place*
in modern history, translated by D. Scott. The classic discussion.
Pocock, J.G.A., The Machiavellian Moment; Florentine Political Thought
and the Atlantic Republican Tradition, Princeton 1975. Large and
difficult, but has been highly influential.
account of English response to Machiavelli.
Ridolfi, R., The Life of Niccolo Machiavelli, translated by G. Grayson,
of Renaissance Philosophy, Cambridge 1988. Massive survey of the
intellectual background.
Skinner, Quentin, The foundations of modern political thought, 2 vols.
Useful discussion of Machiavelli and his background.
Skinner, Quentin, Machiavelli, Oxford 1985. The best brief modern
introduction.
Viroli, Maurizio, From politics to reason of state. The acquisition and
Interesting book, re-assessing Machiavelli’s relationship with
‘reason of state’ literature.

Questions: what were Machiavelli’s objectives in The Prince? how does
the teaching of that book cohere with the doctrine of the Discourses?
why was the reception of Machiavelli’s works generally so hostile?
how do his ideas relate to later Tacitism and ‘reason of state’?

III. Natural Law, scholasticism, and the nature and origins of government.

Read: Vitoria, Political writings, pp.xiii-xxviii, 1-44, 153-204.

Suggested reading:
Aquinas, St Thomas, Selected political writings, ed. A.P. d’Entrèves
and J.G. Dawson, Oxford 1970. Fundamental texts in European social
and political thinking.
Bowe, Gabriel, The origin of political authority: an essay in Catholic
D’Entrèves, A.P., Natural Law: an introduction to legal philosophy,
Grotius, Hugo, De Jure Belli ac Pacis (On the Right of War and Peace),
Oxford 1925, (Latin original and English translation). Of fundamental
importance.
Hamilton, Bernice, Political thought in sixteenth century Spain, Oxford
1963. Good, clear discussion.
Lewy, G., Constitutionalism and statecraft during the golden age of
Spain: a study of the political philosophy of Juan de Mariana, S.J.,
Luscombe, D. E., ‘Natural morality and natural law’, and ‘The state
of nature and the origin of the state’, in Norman Kretzmann et al.,
eds., The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy, Cambridge
Pufendorf, Samuel, On the duty of man and citizen according to natural
law, ed. James Tully, Cambridge 1991. Important late seventeenth-
century discussion. A much fuller treatment is:
Pufendorf, Samuel, De jure natuarae et gentium, ed. with English


Suárez, Francisco, *Selections from three works*, 2 vols, vol.2 (translation), Oxford 1944. Highly important and influential writings by one of the greatest Thomists.


**Questions:** how democratic is Vitoria’s thought? how significant are the differences between Vitoria and later (or earlier) natural law thinkers? how dependent are Vitoria’s arguments on religious ideas?

IV. Church and state in early modern Europe; the individual conscience and public religion.

**Read:** Vitoria, *Political writings*, 45-151.

**Suggestions for reading:**


Oakley, Francis, 'Almain and Major: conciliar theory on the eve of the Reformation', in *American Historical Review* 70(1964-5), 673-90. Introduction to two important figures.


**Questions:** what were the consequences of the Reformation on attitudes towards church-state relations? how convincing are the arguments for and against Vitoria’s theory of church-state relations? What is the relationship between Vitoria’s theory of natural law and his views on church-state relations?

V. Conquest, slavery, warfare, and the American Indians.
Read: Vitoria, Political writings, 205-351.

Suggestions for reading:
(in addition to works listed below, see also the list in Vitoria 383-7, and especially the writings by Pagden; many of the works listed under III above are also relevant - e.g. those of Grotius and Pufendorf).


Friede, Juan, and Keen, Benjamin, eds., Bartolomé de las Casas in history, De Kalb, 1971.


Keen M.H., The laws of war in the late middle ages, London 1965.


Muldoon, James, Popes, lawyers, and infidels; the church and the non-Christian world, Liverpool 1979. Important survey of late-medieval and sixteenth-century ideas.


Questions: are Vitoria's views on Spanish conduct towards the Indians coherent? to what extent do they arise from his natural law theory? how successful is Vitoria in showing that it can be just to go to war?

VI. Gender, the family, and political authority: patriarchalism.

Read: Filmer pp.ix-xxxvii, 1-68.

Suggestions for reading:

Bodin, Jean, On sovereignty, ed. and trans. by Julian Franklin, Cambridge 1992. Extracts from Bodin's highly influential Six livres de la république, which Filmer was very fond of quoting.


Daly, James, Sir Robert Filmer and English political thought, Toronto 1979. Fullest account, but use with caution.


Questions: what did Filmer and others hope to achieve by using patriarchal arguments for royal absolutism? how important is patriarchalism in Filmer’s system? what can be said for and against the ideas that Filmer’s patriarchalism is absurd or self-contradictory?

VII. History, custom, constitutionalism, and the English Civil War.

Read: Filmer pp.69-171.

Suggested reading:
Sanderson, John, “‘But the people’s creatures’: the philosophical basis of the English Civil War, Manchester 1989.
Wootton, David, Divine Right and Democracy, Harmondsworth 1986. Good anthology of seventeenth-century English writings, with commentary.
Questions: what principles (if any) underlay the English Civil Wars? how does the Freeholders cohere with Filmer's other writings? what, if anything, was the English doctrine of the ancient constitution? how successful was Filmer's attack on Hunton?

VIII. Hobbes, science, politics, and the state of nature.


Suggested reading:
Montaigne, Michel de, Essays, especially the Apology for Raimond Sebond (ii.12). Classic of Renaissance skepticism.

Questions: what was Hobbes' methodology? how (if at all) does it relate to the scientific revolution, skepticism, and Descartes? what are the most important and original features of Hobbes' state of nature, the right of nature and the law of nature? how convincing are Hobbes' arguments?

IX. Absolutism, royalism and sovereignty.

Read: Filmer 172-286.

Suggested reading:
(many items listed above are also relevant, e.g. works of Bodin and
Grotius

Questions: is the term 'absolutism' useful in describing early-modern theory or practice? how effective is Filmer's critique of Grotius, Hobbes and Milton? how successful is Filmer's defence of absolute monarchy and his attack on alternative theories?

X. Hobbes and the nature of the state.

Read: Hobbes pp.117-244.

Suggested reading:
(most of the items in list VIII above are relevant)
Hampton, Jean, Hobbes and the social contract tradition, Cambridge 1986. Approach similar to Gauthier's but reaches very different conclusions.
121-51.


Warrender, Howard, *The political philosophy of Hobbes: his theory of

**Questions:** how does Hobbes differ from Filmer and other absolutists?
in what sense is Hobbes a natural law theorist? what are the
functions of Hobbes’ discussion of covenant? in what ways (if any)
is Hobbes’ system dependent upon God? what can be said for the idea
that Hobbes’ absolutism is very mitigated/ moderated? is Hobbes a
liberal?

XI. Theories of property and John Locke.

**Read:** Locke pp.3-126, 267-302.

**Suggested reading:**
(many items on lists XIII and XV are also relevant, as are a number
of works in list III above, including books by Pufendorf and Grotius;
see also list in Locke 429-50)

Cherno, M., 'Locke on property', in *Ethics* 1957.
Difficult but worthwhile.
Macpherson, C.B., *The political theory of possessive individualism*,
Important.
Tully, James, *A discourse on property: John Locke and his adversaries*,
Cambridge 1980. Much important material, but to be used with caution.

**Question:** what is the purpose of Locke’s theory of property? how
convincing is it? how does it compare with rival theories?

XII. The religion of Thomas Hobbes.


**Suggested reading:**
Hobbes was an atheist.

Halliday, R.J., Kenyon, T., and Reeve, A., 'Hobbes's belief in God',
Hepburn, R.W., 'Hobbes on the knowledge of God', in M.Cranston and R.
survey of Hobbes' statements.
Johnson, Paul J., 'Hobbes's Anglican doctrine of salvation', in Ralph


**Questions:** was Hobbes an atheist? was he a Christian, and, if so, of what variety? why are there such extreme disagreements amongst the commentators about Hobbes' religion?

XIII. Limited government, resistance, and Locke.

**Read:** Locke 303-428.

**Suggested reading:**
(see also list XI above, and the lists at Locke 429-50)


Buchanan, George, *De jure regni apud Scotos*, 1579; translations available by Charles F. Arrowood, Austin 1949; and by Duncan H. MacNeill, Glasgow 1964. Very important sixteenth-century discussion.

Franklin, Julian, ed., *Constitutionalism and resistance in the sixteenth century*, New York 1969. Extracts from important writings by Hotman, Beza, and from Mornay/ Languet's *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*. For the complete version of Hotman see list VII.


**Questions:** how radical was Locke? in what ways do his views differ from those of earlier constitutionalists and resistance theorists? are
his arguments convincing?

XIV. Church, state, toleration and Hobbes.


Suggested reading:
(Other relevant items are in lists IV and XII)
- Hooker, Richard, *Of the lawes of ecclesiastical poltie*, many editions; most famous statement of Anglican theory of church-state relations.

Questions: how did Hobbes differ from such Anglican thinkers as Hooker in his theory of church-state relations? how tolerant was Hobbes? how convincing were seventeenth-century arguments for toleration?

XV. Locke and Filmer.

Read: Locke pp.135-263.

Suggested reading:
(See also lists XI and XIII)
- Schochet, Gordon, ed., *Life, liberty and property: essays on Locke's
political ideas, Belmont 1971.
Tully, James, An approach to political philosophy: John Locke in contexts, Cambridge 1993.

Questions: how convincing are Locke's arguments against Filmer? do they destroy Filmer's case, or can it easily be revived with a few adjustments? does Filmer's critique of democratic ideas destroy Locke's case?