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REVISION APPROVAL COVER SHEET FOR CONTINUATION OF W-DESIGNATION

TYPE III PROFESSOR MAKES INDIVIDUAL COURSE APPLICATION

Professor John F. Sitton

Department Political Science

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Course Number/Title PLSC 361/561 Modern Political Thought

Please provide answers to these questions on the next page:

1. Specific Course: include the most recent syllabus for the Type III course.
2. Specific Professor: discuss what the writing activities are intended to accomplish in this course. You do not need to describe the amount of writing, frequency of assignments or fill out the summary chart for writing assignments.

| Approvals: | Signature | Date |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| Professor (s) | John F. Sitton | 3-20-2014 |
| Department Chair | John F. Sitton | 3-20-2014 |
| College Dean | [Signature] | 4/3/14 |
| Director of Liberal Studies | [Signature] | 4/21/14 |
| UWUCC Co-chair(s) | Gail Sechrist | 4/22/14 |

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 Liberal Studies

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PROFESSOR John F. Sitton

DEPARTMENT Political Science

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2. **Specific Professor:** discuss what the writing activities are intended to accomplish in this course. You do not need to describe the amount of writing, frequency of assignments or fill out the summary chart for writing assignments.

Writing assignments are particularly appropriate for political theory courses and serve two major purposes. First, they require a student to think through and clearly state the various steps by which a political theorist constructs her or his argument. Therefore the student has to select the relevant parts of the work, logically order the specific aspects of the argument, and quote brief passages from the primary sources which support the interpretation. Reproducing an argument in this way allows the student to see for herself or himself how it was all intended to fit together. However it also puts the person in a position to see which steps in the argument appear weak and provoke additional questions. Further, the process helps reveal the key assumptions of the theorist, allowing them to be examined more critically. After this process, the student "knows" the argument, meaning that she or he has had to reconstruct the argument in her or his own mind in order to formulate it through writing. It should therefore have more staying power than other sorts of assignments.

Second, besides this more instrumental purpose, writing assignments on whatever topics are intrinsically good. Writing well is important and there are no shortcuts: it requires practice. Only through practice does one begin to feel the rhythms of a language, the way phrases fit together. Of course these assignments provide an occasion to reinforce spelling and grammatical rules. But they also provide opportunities for more stylistically pleasing work, for a student to find her or his own voice. Hopefully through these exercises students may discover that writing something longer than an email or Facebook post can actually be very satisfying.

**MODERN POLITICAL THOUGHT
PLSC 361/561-W01**

SPRING 2014

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 11 - 12 and 1 - 4:00
Tuesday and Thursday 1 - 2 and 3:30 - 4:00

If I am not there, please see the department secretary. As Chair, she always knows where I am and when I will be back.

******NOTE: Please turn off all cell phones before class begins. No calls or texting are allowed during class time.**

What is the state? Is it a weapon to be wielded by a resolute “prince” who understands that the world is one in which “the strong do what they will and the weak suffer what they must,” a natural world that is “red in tooth and claw”? Or is it a set of institutions the purpose of which is to stabilize natural rights, a natural moral order ordained by God, “deriving [its] just powers from the consent of the governed”? Or, alternatively, should it be conceived as an instrument of an exploitative social class, necessary for maintaining its control over other social classes, that will “wither away” when class struggle is ended through the establishment of communism?

This course is an exploration of the answers to this question given by major political theorists since the Renaissance. In many respects their formulations differ strikingly from the perspectives that were considered “natural” by ancient and medieval thinkers. By expanding or narrowing our focus regarding what purposes government serves or should serve these thinkers have helped define what we mean by the “modern age” itself. If Max Weber is even partly right in saying that ideas are the “switchmen” that determine “the tracks along which history runs,” then understanding history requires engaging the major works of modern political thought.

The ideas expressed in the readings for this course have shaped the political discourse of our age. In fact, it is very difficult for us to think about politics in any terms other than the framework erected by Machiavelli, the 'contractarians', and Marx. This is not to deny that there are substantial differences of opinion among the thinkers that are explored in Modern Political Thought. There is a considerable distance between considering the state as a “Leviathan” sent to “humble the children of pride,” as Hobbes put it, and regarding the state as one more step away from a golden age of mankind, as Rousseau argues in places. The differences must be brought out along with the assumptions these thinkers share. Only this will allow us to appreciate the contentious, and all too often bloody, age of modernity.

This course requires considerable demanding, thought-provoking reading. To do well you must spend the time on the readings and on reflection.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To encourage knowledge of modern political theory through the exemplars of these theories.
2. To overcome any intimidation on the part of students to reading primary works in political theory.
3. To teach students to become comfortable in appropriating knowledge through writing, to 'think by writing', even if ungraded.
4. To show the relationship between political and ethical theory, a relationship that is excluded on principle by some present-day social scientists.
5. To encourage reflection on the political/ethical crises of earlier ages and their relevance to our own.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

Hobbes, *Leviathan*.

Ernest Barker, *Social Contract: Essays by Locke, Hume, and Rousseau*.

John F. Sitton, *Marx Today: Selected Works and Recent Debates*

EVALUATION:**I. ANALYTICAL PAPERS:**

There will be three Analytical Papers, 7 to 10 pages (typed), which will demonstrate the student's comprehension of various arguments. Each paper will constitute one-third of the course grade. The last paper will be in lieu of a final.

On all papers the substantive part of the response will be the primary basis for evaluation. However, this is a writing-intensive course. Therefore on all papers grammar, logical structure, spelling, and style will also form an important part of your grade.

Late papers may be accepted for documented illness, work schedule conflicts, or pressing family responsibilities. Any other late papers, if accepted, will be automatically reduced by at least one letter grade. **Be cautioned in advance: No exceptions.**

II. QUESTION SHEETS:

When each new theorist is introduced in class, I will distribute a question sheet with space for brief answers. These will be collected a week after distribution, examined, and returned. The primary purpose of these sheets is to direct your attention and reflection to certain topics and to begin to formulate a response to them. These topics anticipate aspects of issues that will reappear on the Analytical Paper questions.

Evaluation of the question sheets will be a plus or minus. These will be used in deciding borderline course grades at the end of the course, in the way mentioned below. Hopefully they will also encourage students to think about difficult issues by trying to write brief responses to them.

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is not mandatory but strongly encouraged. Many of the concepts and arguments covered in this course are quite difficult and will be more deeply explored in class discussion. Also much information, **for which you will be held responsible**, will be given in class lectures.

GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY:

Besides the above requirements, graduate students will be required to write a five page paper on a modern theorist not covered in the regular class, e.g. Montesquieu, Hume, Adam Smith, or Hegel. See instructor.

COURSE GRADE CALCULATIONS:

I want to anticipate any ambiguities concerning how I will calculate your course grade. As stated, there are three papers, each counting one-third of your grade. In grading each paper I assign a letter of grade of A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, or F. In calculating your overall course grade, I assign a numerical equivalent for each of these as follows:

| | | | | | | |
|----------|---------|----------|---------|--------|---------|------|
| A+ = 12; | A = 11; | A- = 10; | B+ = 9; | B = 8; | B- = 7; | |
| C+ = 6; | C = 5; | C- = 4; | D+ = 3; | D = 2; | D- = 1; | F=0. |

At the end of the course I add the numbers for each of the papers and divide by three. This final number determines your course grade. For example, if your average is '6' you receive a 'C' for the course. If your average is 6 and 1/3, you receive a 'C' for the course. If your average is 6 and 2/3, I may or may not round up to a 'B'. I will do so if you have shown extra effort by

satisfactorily completing the occasional 'Question Sheets' I distribute in class.

Note: It is possible for you to receive two grades of one letter and still receive a lower course grade. For example, two 'B-'s and a 'C-' equal 7 points, 7 points, and 4 points, respectively. This is 18 points total, or an average of 6 points which is a C+. This would be a recorded course grade of 'C'.

On the other hand, it is possible to receive two grades of the same letter and receive a higher course grade. For example, two 'B+'s and an 'A+' equal 9 points, 9 points, and 12 points, respectively. This is 30 points total, or an average of 10 points which is an A-. This would be a recorded course grade of 'A'.

IMPORTANT: You must turn in at least two of the three Analytical Papers in order to pass the course. If only one is turned in, regardless of points, the course grade will be F.

If there are remaining ambiguities, please raise them immediately in class.

ORDER OF TOPICS AND ORDER OF CLASS READINGS:

I. First Three Weeks: Machiavelli's "New Route"

A. 'Murd'rous Machiavell', the 'Founder' of Modern Political Thought

B. Politics, Ethics, and Raison d'etat

C. Obstacles to Foundation

D. The Theory of the 'Hero-Founder'

READINGS: *The Prince*, all; selections from *The Discourses* and commentaries.

QUESTION SHEET ONE DISTRIBUTED AROUND SECOND WEEK.

***** FIRST ANALYTICAL PAPER:** Distributed about February 13; **Due February 20.**

II. Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Weeks: Thomas Hobbes

A. Hobbes's Methodology

B. Hobbes on Human Nature

C. Laws of Nature and the Contractarian Argument

D. The Power and Limits of the Sovereign

READINGS: *Leviathan*, "The Introduction"; Part I Chapters 10-16; Part II Chapters 17-18, Chapter 21, Chapters 26-31; "A Review and Conclusion."

QUESTION SHEET TWO DISTRIBUTED AROUND FIFTH WEEK.

III. Seventh and Eighth Weeks: John Locke

A. Locke's Version of the State of Nature

B. The Natural Right to Property and the Theory of Natural Rights

C. The Compact and Powers of Government

D. The Limits on Government and the Right to Rebel

READINGS: *Second Treatise on Government* (in Barker), all.

QUESTION SHEET THREE DISTRIBUTED AROUND EIGHTH WEEK.

***** SECOND ANALYTICAL PAPER:** Distributed about March 25; **Due April 1.**

IV. Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Weeks: Jean-Jacques Rousseau

- A. Rousseau on Natural Man
- B. Rousseau's Version of the Social Contract
- C. The General Will
- D. Rousseau as Totalitarian Democrat

READINGS: *Social Contract* (in Barker), all.

QUESTION SHEET FOUR DISTRIBUTED AROUND TENTH WEEK.

V. Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Weeks: Marx and Marxism

- A. Marx's Theory of History
- B. Capitalism and Its Contradictions
- C. The Role of Social Classes
- D. Marx's Political Thought
- E. Problems of Marxism

READINGS: *Marx Today*, all.

QUESTION SHEET FIVE DISTRIBUTED AROUND THIRTEENTH WEEK.

***** FINAL ANALYTICAL PAPER:** Distributed around April 29.

Due Wednesday, May 7, 4:00 PM, in my office or in my mailbox in the department office, Keith Annex 103E.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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