

PSC 251 Modern Political Thought

Winter 2008

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Course Description:

A comparative analysis of modern political ideologies and the role these perspectives are playing in shaping public policy debates in the United States and other countries. Primary attention is devoted to the traditions of Liberal and Conservative thought, although the course also systematically examines political ideologies such as Christian and Islamic fundamentalism, Marxism, Democratic Socialism, and Feminism. Each perspective is analyzed in terms of its philosophical assumptions, substantive political principles, and public policy agenda.

PSC 251 is a three credit course which serves as an introduction to the subject of contemporary political ideologies. Hence, there are no prerequisites for the course and the instructor assumes that students possess little, if any, formal background in regard to the subject matter. Within the context of the general education curriculum, PSC 251 has been qualified as a Social Sciences course.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, a student will have demonstrated the following skills and aptitudes:

1. The ability to articulate and critique the key assumptions, normative principles, political objectives and public policy agendas underlying contemporary political ideologies.
2. The ability to compare and contrast ideological perspectives as they pertain to current public policy issues relating to state, society and economy.
3. The ability to interpret and apply ideological perspectives within the context of public policy issues that hold local, national and global significance.
4. The ability to write analytic essays using concepts, principles, intellectual frameworks, and empirical evidence consistent with the norms and conventions that characterize the field of applied political philosophy.

Assessment

Student performance in regard to the learning objectives will be evaluated on the basis of two, equally-weighted take-home assignments. There will not be a final exam in this course. Please note that students must earn a grade of "C" or better in order for the course to count toward the fulfillment of general education

requirements and/or a degree in the Political Science program. Take-home exercises will be evaluated on the basis of a rubric focusing upon a student's command of content.

Grade	Content Criteria
A	<input type="checkbox"/> Consistently addresses questions by explicitly drawing upon the key ideas, perspectives, interpretations and/or empirical evidence presented in the readings. <input type="checkbox"/> Consistently cites specific passages and/or evidence presented in the text to address questions; rarely relies simply upon personal experiences and/or anecdotal evidence.
B	<input type="checkbox"/> Tends to address questions by explicitly drawing upon the key ideas, perspectives, interpretations and/or empirical evidence presented in the readings. <input type="checkbox"/> Tends to cite specific passages and/or evidence presented in the text to address questions; relies somewhat upon personal experiences and/or anecdotal evidence..
C	<input type="checkbox"/> Tends not to address questions by explicitly drawing upon the key ideas, perspectives, interpretations and/or empirical evidence presented in the readings. <input type="checkbox"/> Tends not to cite specific passages and/or evidence presented in the text to address questions; tends to rely heavily upon personal experiences and/or anecdotal evidence.
D	<input type="checkbox"/> Rarely addresses questions by explicitly drawing upon the key ideas, perspectives, interpretations and/or empirical evidence presented in the readings. <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely cites specific passages and/or evidence presented in the text to address questions; relies almost exclusively upon personal experiences and/or anecdotal evidence.
F	<input type="checkbox"/> Fails to address the questions at all; submission is more than six days late.

Final submissions of all written work must be typed, double spaced, paginated and stapled together. Please use the APA format for all assignments. The following site constitutes a convenient place to find reliable information about this style: www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/. Students also are strongly encouraged to make use of the assistance and resources available through the Writing Center maintained by the Office of Academic Services (Curtis 109).

Students are expected to submit a hard copy of written work directly to the instructor at the designated due date and time. However, if this is not possible, exercises may be submitted electronically via e-mail (formatted as a Word attachment) or by fax (610-606-4614). In all cases, students bear full responsibility for ensuring that such submissions reach the instructor by the scheduled due date. Late submissions will not be accepted except in the case of an extenuating personal circumstance that can be verified by college personnel.

Plagiarism is a legally punishable offense, a serious breach of academic and professional ethics, and an egregious violation of the college's Honor Code. Documented cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of "zero" for the assignment in question.

Class Conduct

To maintain an environment conducive to learning, everyone is expected to arrive on time for class, act with respect toward other students and refrain from behavior that could serve to disrupt the class or infringe on the rights of other members of the class. Students also are expected to abide by the letter and spirit of the college's Honor Code

The instructor will adhere to the Code of Ethics established by the American Political Science Association, as these principles relate to a faculty member's responsibilities in the classroom and to his students. Given the nature of this course, the instructor is mindful of his obligation:

- To not impose partisan views, conventional or otherwise, upon students.
- To faithfully represent the normative values, policy positions, and academic work of others.
- To respect and defend the intellectual freedom and procedural rights of students.
- To evaluate the performance of students equitably on the basis of criteria which are applied uniformly and in a nondiscriminatory manner.

Students with documented disabilities who may need academic accommodations should discuss these needs with the instructor during the first weekend of classes. Students wishing to arrange an incomplete for the course should discuss this option with the instructor prior to the end of the semester.

Required Text: Schumaker, P. et al. (1996) *Great Ideas/Grand Schemes: Political Ideologies in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (McGraw-Hill, 0-07-055519-2).

Topical Outline:

Jan. 2: Political Ideology and Public Policy (S1)
Jan. 3: Classical Liberalism & Conservatism (S2 & 3)
Jan. 4: Contemporary Liberalism & Conservatism (S8 & 10)

Exercise #1 – Due January 12th

Jan. 9: Religious Fundamentalism (S11)
Jan. 10: Marxism & Marxism-Leninism (S 5 & 6)
Jan. 11: Feminism & Democratic Socialism (S13 & 7)

Exercise #2 – Due January 16th