

**CRITICS OF MODERN LIBERALISM (GOV 351G/CTI 322, UNIQUE #37945/29815)**

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Spring 2022

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**Course Description**

Liberalism is a revolutionary political philosophy associated with a cluster of ideas – the maximization of individual liberty, limited government, the division between public life (the realm of the state) and private life (the realm of civil society), the unleashing of commerce, the separation of church and state, toleration, progress, the scientific conquest of nature, the morality of compassion, human rights, representative government, global citizenship, pluralism, meritocracy – whose goodness we tend to take for granted, living as we do in a *liberal* democracy. This course is intended to introduce you to a range of the most perceptive and challenging critics of that political philosophy. We will begin by studying two authors who are both tough but somewhat friendly or sympathetic critics of modern liberalism, Jonathan Swift and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. We will then move on to a set of more hostile critics: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, on the one hand, and Friedrich Nietzsche, on the other. Finally, we will turn to two contemporary writers, Pierre Manent and Christopher Lasch, each of whom expresses grave doubts about the health of liberal democracy today.

**Required Texts**

Please make sure you purchase physical copies of the exact editions listed below. E-books or different editions are not acceptable substitutes.

1. Jonathan Swift. *Gulliver's Travels*. Edited by Albert J. Rivero. Norton Critical Editions. ISBN 9780393957242.
2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Major Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Edited by John T. Scott. University of Chicago Press. ISBN 9780226151311.
3. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *Marx-Engels Reader*. Edited by Robert C. Tucker. Norton. ISBN 9780393090406.
4. Friedrich Nietzsche. *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. Edited by Walter Kaufmann. Random House/Vintage. ISBN 9780679724629.
5. Pierre Manent. *A World Beyond Politics? A Defense of the Nation-State*. Translated by Marc A. LePain. Princeton University Press. ISBN 9780691125671.
6. Christopher Lasch. *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*. Norton. ISBN 9780393313710.

**Grades**

Your grade will be calculated by one of the following methods.

Without the optional paper:

First exam (30%)

Final exam (45%)

Participation (15%)

Quizzes (10%)

Bonus for responses to reading questions (up to 2 points on your final grade)

With the optional paper:

Paper (25%)

First exam (20%)

Final exam (30%)

Participation (15%)

Quizzes (10%)

Bonus for responses to reading questions (up to 2 points on your final grade)

Plus and minus grades will be used as follows: A (94-100); A- (90-93); B+ (87-89); B (84-86); B- (80-83); C+ (77-79); C (74-76); C- (70-73); D (60-69); F (below 60). Note that a grade of F for any portion of the course (participation, quizzes, either exam) will result in an F for the course as a whole.

## **Course Policies**

**Books.** You are required to have a physical copy (rather than an e-book version) of every book. Used copies are fine, but please try to get the particular editions ordered for this class, and always bring the book we are reading to class.

**Reading.** This is a course that requires careful reading of difficult texts. You are responsible for budgeting enough time each week to absorb the assigned readings without rushing (and, I would strongly recommend, while taking notes).

**Optional Paper.** You have the option of writing a paper. If you choose this option, you will write an analytical essay on a theme in one or two of the books. I will provide options periodically throughout the semester with staggered due dates. You would be wise not to wait until the last set of topics, since the end of semester is a busy time and you might find one of the earlier topics more interesting. To encourage you to write the optional paper and to reward those who put in the extra effort, your paper grade will be factored into your final grades only if it will be to your advantage. No late papers will be accepted.

**Reading Questions.** I will send out questions to help guide your reading each week. You are not required to write responses to these questions, but you may find that a useful way to help prepare for class anyway. As an extra incentive, if you send me your responses to the reading questions *in advance of class* at least five times over the semester, you can add 1 or 2 bonus points to your final grade, based on the thoroughness of your answers.

**Participation.** Your participation grade will reflect the consistency and quality of your contributions in class over the semester as a whole. You will need to be in class on time, and you should be prepared to discuss the readings in detail. If you are reluctant to speak up in class,

remember that you can boost your final grade by submitting responses to the reading questions in advance of class at least five times over the semester (see above).

***Excused Absences.*** You will be excused from attendance if you: have flu- or Covid-like symptoms (notify me at least an hour before class); have a documented illness or family emergency; have a religious holiday (notify me at least two weeks in advance). Classes will not be recorded, but if you have the flu or Covid and still feel well enough to attend online, you should email me as soon as possible and let me know so that I can open my Zoom meeting room and you can listen to what we cover. If you have no unexcused absences at the end of the semester, you will get a 5-point bonus for your participation grade.

***Unexcused Absences.*** You are allowed two unexcused absences – no explanation expected or required. After that, your participation grade will fall by one letter grade (10 points) for each additional unexcused absence. This means that you will be allowed a maximum of six unexcused absences in total. (Students who join after the first week of class will be allowed four unexcused absences in total.)

***Quizzes.*** To encourage you to do the reading before class, there will be unannounced quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes should not be very hard if you have done the reading, and they can be a nice way of boosting your grade. Any quizzes missed due to *unexcused* absence (including lateness) cannot be made up, though quizzes missed due to *excused* absence will not lower your grade. Your two lowest quiz grades will not be counted.

***Exams.*** Information about the format of the exams will be sent out as the dates approach.

***Office Hours.*** I will hold office hours in person. If you would like to talk to me outside class time but you are not free at the scheduled times, please send me an email with a couple of possible times to talk either over Zoom or in person. If you just have a brief question that could be answered in a sentence or two, feel free to email me any time.

***Electronic Devices.*** The use of laptops, tablets, cell phones, and other electronic devices is not permitted during class time.

***Academic Integrity.*** Academic dishonesty will be treated extremely seriously. Plagiarism will result in an F. The university's Honor Code, with information on the meaning of academic integrity, can be found online (<http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/>).

***Disabilities.*** If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). You may refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations.

## **COURSE READING SCHEDULE**

I may adjust the specific reading assignments for each class as we go along, but this is the provisional plan:

- January 18-20: Introduction; Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 253-57 (Letter from Capt. Gulliver to his Cousin Sympson"), 5-6 ("The Publisher to the Reader"), 15-47 ("A Voyage to Lilliput," chaps. 1-5)
- January 25-27: Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 47-66 ("A Voyage to Lilliput," chaps. 6-8), 69-125 ("A Voyage to Brobdingnag")
- February 1-3: Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 129-85 ("A Voyage to Laputa, etc.")
- February 8-10: Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, pp. 187-250 ("A Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms")
- February 15-17: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 38-39 (frontispiece and title page), 51-56 (Preface), 61-63 (introduction), 65-90 (First Part), 119-47 (Notes II-XV)
- February 22-24: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 91-117 (Second Part), 147-51 (Notes XVI-XIX); Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, pp. 1-36
- March 1-3: *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 472-500 (*Communist Manifesto*), 70-93 (from the 1844 Manuscripts), 3-6 (Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*), 144-45 (Theses II, III, and XI), 163-75 (from *The German Ideology*)
- March 8: *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 53-54 (beginning of "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction"), 26-52 ("On the Jewish Question")
- March 10: First exam provisionally scheduled for 2.00-3.20
- March 15: No class (Spring break)
- March 17: No class (Spring break)
- March 22-24: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 15-57 ("Preface," First Essay)
- March 29-31: Manent, *A World beyond Politics*, pp. vii-ix ("Preface to the American Edition), 1-41 (Introduction, chaps. 1-3)
- April 5: Manent, *A World beyond Politics*, pp. 42-69 (chaps. 4-6)
- April 7: No class

- April 12-14: Manent, *A World beyond Politics*, pp. 70-120 (chaps. 7-10)
- April 19-21: Manent, *A World beyond Politics*, pp. 121-70 (chaps. 11-15)
- April 26-28: Manent, *A World beyond Politics*, pp. 171-206 (chaps. 16-18); Lasch, *Revolt of the Elites*, pp. 25-49 (chap. 2)
- May 3-5: Lasch, *Revolt of the Elites*, pp. 50-114 (chaps. 3-5)
- May 11: Final exam scheduled for 9.00-12.00