Course Description:

The central issues of social and political philosophy are introduced via a quick survey of some classical theorists from ancient philosophy (Plato and Aristotle) and from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham, Mill, de Tocqueville, and Marx). Some of the issues that surface from this survey are the question of the moral foundation of political systems, the proper relation between the individual and the state, the justifications of social institutions (e.g., slavery or patriarchal property transfer), and which form of government is best. The survey is followed by an in depth examination of the original works of three major social and political philosophers of the late 20th century (Rawls, Nozick, and Nussbaum) and a sampling of criticisms of Rawls and Nozick.

Course requirements:

1. A research paper on an approved topic. The paper should be of standard conference length (12 - 20 pages; doubled spaced; standard margins, font, and font size). A prospectus is due the 5th week (October 2), a rough draft by the 10th week (November 6), and the final draft by the 15th week (December 11) of the semester. The paper should show evidence of independent research. Paper grade is 80% of the course grade.

2. Discussion questions. Each student should prepare at least two discussion questions based on the readings assigned for a given class meeting. Each question should be accompanied by a brief response (1 or 2 paragraphs, 1 page maximum). The discussion question/response sheets will guide class discussion. The discussion question/response sheets should be turned in at the end of the class meeting for which they are due. These sheets, together with class attendance and participation, constitute 20% of the course grade.

Texts:

Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia
Martha Nussbaum, Sex and Social Justice
John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, Revised edition
On Reserve:

Norman Daniels (ed.), *Reading Rawls*
William Ebenstein (ed.), *Great Political Thinkers*
Jeffrey Paul (ed.), *Reading Nozick*

Reading/Discussion Sequence:

August 28  Introduction to course
Overview of Political and Social Philosophy
Overview of moral theories, especially Kant
Overview of Rawls

September 11  Ancient political thinkers (Plato, Aristotle)
Ebenstein, pp. 1 - 13, 66 77

September 18  Social Contract theorists (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau)
Ebenstein, pp. 362 - 372, 390 - 400, 438 - 449

September 25  Utilitarians and Libertarians (Bentham, Mill, de Toqueville)
Ebenstein, pp. 505 - 515, 532 - 546

October 2  Rawls  Chapter 1, sections 1 - 4
Chapter 2, sections 10 - 13

October 9  Rawls  Chapter 2, sections 14 - 17
Chapter 3, sections 20 - 25

October 16  Rawls  Chapter 3, sections 26 - 30
Chapter 4, sections 33 - 35, 39 - 40

October 23  Rawls  Chapter 7, sections 66 - 67
Chapter 8, section 77
Chapter 9, sections 78 - 79, 82, 85 - 86
Chapter 5, sections 41 - 47

October 30  Rawls' Critics (in *Reading Rawls*)
Thomas Nagel, "Rawls on Justice"
Ronald Dworkin, "The Original Position"
David Lyons, "Nature and Soundness of the Contract and Coherence Arguments"

November 6  Nozick Part I

November 13  Nozick Part II, chapters 7 - 8
November 27  Nozick’s Critics (in Reading Nozick)
Bernard Williams, “The Minimal State”
Erick Mack, “Nozick on Unproductivity”
David Lyons, “The New Indian Claims and Original Rights to Land”

December 4  Nussbaum Part I

December 11  Nussbaum Part II

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