

Critiques of Domination: An Introduction to Political Theory

Eugene Lang College, The New School for Liberal Arts.
LPOL 2500 –A, Spring 2011
Tuesdays and Thursdays, Room 518, 66th W 12th St.
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Course description:

This course serves as a broad introduction to political theory. The course has three aims. First, the course will introduce students to the main texts, ideas, and figures in political theory. Second, the course will introduce students to the major interpretative frameworks

and methodological paradigms deployed by political theorists including realism, idealism, economic determinism, political sociology, and genealogy. Third, in order to provide continuity as well as a point of reference for comparative analysis this course will focus on the concepts of domination and freedom found in each text. Students will learn how to critically evaluate different conceptions of domination and freedom and identify the conceptual origins of competing definitions. Finally students will critically evaluate the political implications of adhering to one position as opposed to another.

The tradition of political theory is marked by intense periods of political and philosophical upheaval and disarray separated by long periods of torpidity stretching decades, or centuries until the next upheaval. Each period of upheaval sees a critique of the old order, and the establishment of a new one. Yet the past is never lost; what is new becomes old, and what was old can become newly important. Ideas that were first deployed to emancipate become dated and oppressive and ideas that once oppressive are deployed to emancipate. Throughout this tumultuous history certain themes reoccur and certain problems are revisited. What is the nature of freedom? What is the nature of domination? What is the relationship between freedom and politics? What is the relationship between domination and violence? What is the nature of the state? What is the nature of the citizen?

There are broadly three periods of political thought that we will address: ancient, early modern, and modern. We begin at the beginning: Greece. Through readings of Thucydides, Plato and Aristotle we consider some of the foundational texts in political theory with an eye to how politics is understood, how philosophy is deployed to temper political uncertainty, how different regime types are evaluated and judged and, of course, on how freedom and domination are understood and practiced by the Greeks. Then, starting with Machiavelli, we turn to the early moderns in order to uncover how the rise of the state and early Enlightenment thinking compelled a fundamental rethinking of what freedom and domination are. The main theorists we will read are Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. Following this we will turn to the moderns and consider the contributions Marx and Gramsci, Max Weber, and Michel Foucault. We conclude with Hannah Arendt and specifically with Arendt's attempt at rejuvenating the politics of the ancients.

Every Thursday the class will be in a lecture format. The point here is to highlight the major points of interest and to draw out some of the consequences of the arguments in each week's readings. Students should have read all of that week's readings before this Thursday class. On the following Tuesday the class will discuss the previous Thursday's readings. Students are expected to have thought about the arguments and are encouraged to take a stand either for or against the arguments being made. During the Tuesday sessions we will try to clarify any points that didn't make sense in the previous lecture and as the class progresses we will try to link the weeks readings to those of the earlier weeks. Some of the authors we will be reading will require two weeks and we will adjust our schedule accordingly.

Requirements:

1) Response papers: 30% of your final grade

For the Tuesday session students are required to submit a short 1 page response to the weeks readings. There are no 'correct' answers here, what I am looking for is that you

have read the texts closely, engaged with the ideas in them and thought about them critically. Always ask your selves: is this true? Does this make sense? Are these arguments based on sound premises? What's being left out? You are asked to highlight points of confusion, points of interest, and points that require further discussion or explanation. What doesn't make sense? What seems strange in the texts? If you miss class in any given week you must still submit a response paper. All papers must be submitted on the Sunday after the Thursday lecture and before the Tuesday discussion. All response papers should be emailed to me at hoyej38@newschool.edu.

2) Final Paper: 40% of your final grade

Finally, students must submit a final paper. The paper should be 8-10 pages long. I will assign paper topics mid-way through the semester. In general the paper will ask you to compare and contrast two of the works we have read in the class. If you want to write on something other than the assigned topics you may, but I need to approve of the idea first. No late papers will be accepted and no incompletes will be given. The paper should be 12 point, Times New Roman, normal margins, etc... We will spend sometime talking about how to write a paper on political theory. Please read the attached warnings on plagiarism as defined by the New School:

<http://www.newschool.edu/nssr/subpage.aspx?id=9256>

http://www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter/documents/Plagiarism%20and%20how%20to%20avoid%20it_NSSR_GWC.pdf).

A good draft of the paper is due on April 26th. I will comment on the papers and send them back to you. Good copies are due on May 12th (the last class). No extensions or incompletes will be given. I do not want hard copies of your papers, email them to me. I will confirm that I have received your paper. If I do not confirm that I have received your paper then I have not received it. Keep sending it to me until I do confirm. The good draft paper should be saved as: LPOL 2500A draft –LAST NAME, FIRST NAME. The final copy should be saved as: LPOL 2500A final –LAST NAME, FIRST NAME. Of course, that is your last name and your first name.

3) Attendance and participation: 30% of your final grade

Class size is capped to facilitate discussion about the readings, hopefully these discussion will be both enjoyable and helpful. Everyone can miss two classes without getting docked any grades. After two absences you will be docked 5 percentage points from your attendance grade. I have no interest in punishing you, and what you do with your time is of course up to you. I do have an interest in ensuring that everyone is up to speed with the reading materials and contributing to the class discussion. There is a lot of ambiguity in assigning marks to students, sometimes a mark can go either way, it could be an A paper or it could be a B paper. I will use attendance as a rough guide to making that decision. If the students showed up for every class contributed to the discussion and submitted an almost-A paper, I will probably give them the A. If the Student does not attend and does not participate, I will give that paper a B.

What is expected of you:

- 1) You should have done all the readings every week. I have kept the readings to a minimum so this shouldn't be a problem.

- 2) You should have thought about the discussion questions ahead of class.
- 3) You must submit each weeks reading response as well as the term paper.
- 4) Regular attendance.
- 5) Active participation.

What is expected of me:

- 1) Accessibility both during class as well as after class. I will be available for office hours on or near campus following class. The best way to do this is to go to a coffee shop somewhere. If you want to meet me email me ahead of time and let me know so that I don't schedule something else. If you want to meet at a different time email me and we can figure something out.
- 2) Reasonably fast feedback on assigned work or when queried about class related matters. I will give you feedback on your final paper if you give it to me with plenty of time to spare before the deadline.
- 3) You should expect me to make this stuff accessible and comprehensible to you, and hopefully interesting. It is difficult material, it all requires time and hard work to understand it, but it should not be an overly burdensome or especially overwhelming task.

Readings:

My goal is to set this up so that you don't have to pay for any books at all although you will be asked to use up quite a bit of your printing credits. I will post the readings on the class blackboard site. You are expected to print them and to bring them to class (and, of course, read them). Hopefully you will not have to buy any books (although, they are all worth owning). In some cases I will post an entire work, students should only print out the required readings therefrom. It will take some time to find everything, but it should all be available two weeks before the lecture at least.

Other:

Turn off your cell phones. Turn off your computers. Don't eat. Be civil to your classmates.

Week 01 → Pericles and Thucydides (431b.c.-427b.c.)

“The strong do what they have to do and the weak accept what they have to accept.”
-Thucydides

Readings:

- 1) Thucydides, “Pericles’ Funeral Oration” and “The Mytilenian Debates”

Main Concepts:

- 1) Political realism
- 2) Freedom as political action
- 3) Deliberation vs. Decisionism
- 4) Democratic Citizenship
- 5) Democracy and Domination
- 6) Democracy and Empire
- 7) Interests vs. Ideals
- 8) Ideology

Discussion questions.

- 1) How can we define the concepts freedom and domination in Pericles’ Funeral Oration?
- 2) What was the relationship between the city and the citizen in 5th C. Athens?
- 3) What is the public/private divide? Why is it so important?
- 4) What do the Mytilenian debates tell us about democracy? Do you side with Diodotus or Cleon?
- 5) What is Diodotus’ main argument?
- 6) What is Cleon’s main argument?
- 7) Who isn’t represented in these texts? Who is not represented? What does this tell us about freedom? Domination?
- 8) How are slaves/women understood by Pericles? How does this relate to the public/private divide? What does this mean for how the Athenian understood freedom and domination?
- 9) If the democratic assembly passes a law are the people who are subject to it dominated? Or are they free?
- 10) What is the status of the individual in an Athens? What is the status of the community?

Methods Note #1

- 1) What is Realism?

Week 02 (399 B.C.) → Democratic Excess? The Death of Socrates and the turn to Philosophy

“I am the wisest man alive, for I know one thing, and that is that I know nothing.”

-Socrates

Readings

- 1) Plato, “*Apology*” and “*Crito*”

Main Concepts:

- 1) Ideology
- 2) Justice
- 3) Freedom
- 4) Domination
- 5) The relationship between the city and the citizen
- 6) The Socratic Method
- 7) Early Social Contract Theory

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is Socrates accused of in *Apology*?
- 2) How does Socrates respond to these accusations? Is this a defense?
- 3) What is Socrates’ critique of the gods?
- 4) What does Socrates think the relationship between philosophy and politics?
- 5) What was the role of norms (‘gods’) in democratic life?
- 6) How does this challenge Pericles and Thucydides characterization of democracy?
- 7) How did Socrates undermine the ideological order of Athens?
- 8) What does Socrates mean when he says that “when you kill me, you will only be making yourself suffer?”
- 9) What does the trial of Socrates tell us about power in Athens?
- 10) What is freedom? Are Athenian’s ‘free’ in Socrates’ eyes?
- 11) Should, in your opinion, Socrates have been found innocent or guilty?
- 12) What is the relationship between the philosopher and the city? Are they necessarily mutually destructive? Or, do they require each other?
- 13) Is philosophy possible outside of a democracy? Is philosophy possible inside a democracy? What does this tell us about freedom and domination in a democracy?
- 14) Was Socrates a democrat? If not, what?
- 15) Do you agree with the sentence? Why?
- 16) How can we juxtapose this weeks readings to Pericles’ Funeral Oration?

Methods Note #2

- 1) Socratic Method

Week 03 (380 b.c.) → Plato: Philosophy against Politics

The society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed, my dear Glaucon, of humanity itself, till philosophers are kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands, while the many natures now content to follow either to the exclusion of the other are forcibly debarred from doing so. This is what I have hesitated to say so long, knowing what a paradox it would sound; for it is not easy to see that there is no other road to happiness, either for society or the individual.

-Plato, *Republic*

Readings:

- 1) Plato, *The Republic*. Selections.

Main Concepts:

- 1) Domination and the Body/Politics
- 2) Freedom and the Mind/Philosophy
- 3) “The Good” vs. “The Great”
- 4) The Allegory of the Cave
- 5) The myth of the metals/Noble Lie
- 6) Philosopher Kings

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is the Allegory of the cave? What does it tell us about Plato’s conception of politics? Of freedom? Of domination?
- 2) Who are the captors? Who is the Philosopher? What is its significance?
- 3) Who are the ‘image makers’? What is the role of ideology in Plato’s ideal city?
- 4) What is the Noble Lie?
- 5) What is the purpose of the Noble Lie?
- 6) Does every polity require a noble lie? Is there a modern equivalent? What is it?
- 7) What is Plato’s critique of Periclean and pre-Socratic Politics?
- 8) How is something like a ‘noble lie’ justifiable? Does the ‘noble lie’ only serve power? Or, does the ‘noble lie’ also serve to keep the peace and thereby serves the non-philosophers as well?
- 9) Compare and contrast the early Plato to the later. What has changed? Could Socrates be a ‘philosopher king’? Could Socrates of the early dialogues live in the ideal polity proposed by Plato?

Methods Note #3

- 1) Philosophical Realism

Week 04 → Aristotle (340 B.C.) Between Philosophy and Politics

Readings:

- 1) Aristotle. *Ethics*. Selections
- 2) Aristotle. *Politics*. Selections

Main Concepts:

- 1) Practice (*phronesis*)
- 2) Virtue Ethics
- 3) Regime Types
- 4) Majoritarian Tyranny

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is the relationship between ethics and politics for Aristotle?
- 2) What is the Golden Mean?
- 3) What does hylomorphism mean? What are the four causes? How does this relate to how Aristotle analyses political institutions?
- 4) What are the virtues? What is the relationship between Virtue and the mean?
- 5) How does practical wisdom (*phronesis*) relate to Aristotle's doctrine of the mean?
- 6) How do the virtues relate to questions of Justice and domination?
- 7) What would be Aristotle's critique of Plato? What would be Plato's critique of Aristotle?
- 8) What are the implications of this critique in terms of politics?
- 9) Aristotle's understanding of Democracy
- 10) The Problem of Majoritarian Tyranny.

Methods Note #4

- 1) What is hylomorphism
- 2) What is *phronesis* or practical wisdom?

Week 05 → Machiavelli (1469-1527 A.D.), Violence and Politics

“Politics have no relation to morals.”

-Machiavelli

“Above all else, go armed.”

-Machiavelli

Readings:

- 1) Machiavelli, *The Prince*, selections

Main Concepts:

- 1) The autonomy of the political
- 2) Politics as domination, the problem of ‘dirty hands’
- 3) Politics as freedom
- 4) Ideology
- 5) Republican freedom
- 6) Agonistic politics

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is Machiavelli’s critique of religion? How is this a critique of Plato as well?
- 2) How does Machiavelli understand politics?
- 3) What is Machiavelli’s relationship to Thucydides? To Aristotle?
- 4) Why is Machiavelli’s understanding of politics considered “instrumental”?
- 5) Is politics only about domination?
- 6) What does Machiavelli mean when he says that the prince must learn how to be evil? Does this mean that the Prince must always do evil?
- 7) What is the highest ideal for Machiavelli?
- 8) Machiavelli and the return to Republicanism?
- 9) Republican freedom?
- 10) How do we reconcile the two readings of Machiavelli?

Methods Note #5

- 1) Realism 2
- 2) Phronesis 2

Week 06 → Hobbes (1588-1679 A.D.), Sovereignty and the State

“Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man.”

-Thomas Hobbes

Readings:

- 1) Hobbes. *Leviathan*, selections.

Main Themes

- 1) The State of Nature
- 2) The Social Contract
- 3) Sovereignty
- 4) Liberalism
- 5) The State

Discussion questions:

- 1) How does Hobbes describe the state of mankind outside of the commonwealth?
- 2) What is Hobbes' conception of the state of nature?
- 3) Why does Hobbes say that the state of nature is defined by equality?
- 4) What is the social contract for Hobbes? Does this concept make sense?
- 5) How does the social contract come about?
- 6) What is the role of the Sovereign?
- 7) What is the role of violence in Hobbes in the commonwealth?
- 8) What is the role of fear?
- 9) What is freedom for Hobbes?
- 10) How does the notion of freedom from outside interference differ from freedom from arbitrary power?
- 11) What are the limits to state power in Hobbes?
- 12) Is there a right to resistance in Hobbes?
- 13) Is Hobbes foreclosing politics? Is Hobbes' system necessarily an authoritarian one?
- 14) What is Hobbes' understanding of freedom?
- 15) Is Hobbes an early liberal theorist? Or an early Conservative theorist?
- 16) How does Hobbes understand politics? Is there anything left of the pre-Socratic understanding?
- 17) What is the significance of the shift from virtù to rights?

Methods Note #6

The Scientific Method

Week 07 → Locke (1632-1704 A.D.) and Liberalism

Readings:

- 1) Locke, John. *Two Treatises on Government*. Selections

Main Concepts:

- 1) The State of nature
- 2) Property and Freedom
- 3) Domination and arbitrary power
- 4) The right of resistance
- 5) Social Contract Theory
- 6) Legitimacy

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is Locke's conception of the state of nature?
- 2) What is the role of reason in the social contract?
- 3) In what sense does Locke stand as a critique of Hobbes?
- 4) In what sense does Locke follow Hobbes?
- 5) What is Locke's definition of Freedom? Is he Hobbesian in this regard? Does the republican notion of freedom from arbitrary power still linger?
- 6) Is there a right to revolution in Locke?
- 7) Why is property so important for Locke?
- 8) How does Locke represent a continuity of the ancient tradition?
- 9) What is the importance of the individual for Locke?
- 10) How is Locke's thought influenced by Hobbes?

Week 08 & 09 → Rousseau (1712-78 A.D.): The Social Contract Continued.

Readings:

- 1) Rousseau. *Discourses on Inequality*. Selections.
- 2) Rousseau. *Social Contract*. Selections.

Main Concepts:

- 1) Ideology and Civil Religion
- 2) Property as domination
- 3) The General Will
- 4) The Particular Will
- 5) Alienation
- 6) The 'Noble Savage'
- 7) Popular Sovereignty
- 8) Natural Inequality vs. Political Inequality

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is Rousseau's critique of Hobbes?
- 2) What is Rousseau's conception of the state of nature?
- 3) What is Rousseau's conception of the social contract?
- 4) What does Rousseau mean by 'particular will'?
- 5) What does Rousseau mean by the 'general will'?
- 6) What are the limits of state power in Rousseau? Relate this to Hobbes.
- 7) What is domination for Rousseau?
- 8) How is Rousseau's concept of freedom similar/different than that of the ancients?
- 9) Is there a right of resistance in Rousseau?
- 10) Is Rousseau a democratic theorist or an authoritarian theorist?
- 11) Why is domination 'scarcely felt' in the state of nature?
- 12) How is 'civil society' started for Rousseau?
- 13) What is the role of vanity in the creation of interpersonal relationships?
- 14) What is Rousseau's criticism of Hobbes?
- 15) Where does Rousseau agree with Hobbes?

Week 10 & 11 → Marx (1818-83) & Gramsci

Readings:

- 1) Marx, Karl. *The Communist Manifesto*.
- 2) Marx, Karl. *Philosophical and Economic Manuscripts*. Selection
- 3) Gramsci. *The Modern Prince* in the Prison Notebooks. Selections
- 4) Gramsci, *Freedom and Discipline* in the Pre-Prison Notebooks

Main Concepts:

- 1) Economic Determinism
- 2) Communism
- 3) Alienation
- 4) Hegemony

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is economic determinism?
- 2) What is the base?
- 3) What is the super structure?
- 4) What is false consciousness?
- 5) What is a capitalist? What is a proletariat?
- 6) What is alienation? What are the four types of alienation?
- 7) How is Marx indebted to Rousseau?
- 8) How does Marx relate to Pericles?
- 9) Does Marx have a concept of freedom? What is it?
- 10) What is the relationship between alienation and domination?
- 11) Where is politics? Does Marx have any place for politics in his theory?
- 12) What does Gramsci mean by hegemony? Is he consistent?
- 13) What is the role of Hegemony in domination?
- 14) What is the role of hegemony in freedom?
- 15) How is Gramsci a Machiavellian?
- 16) Is Gramsci's turn to politics convincing?

Methods Notes #7

- 1) Economic Determinism
- 2) Dialectics

Week 12 → Weber (1864-1920) and the Problem of Freedom and Domination in the Modern State

Readings:

- 1) Weber, Max. *Politics as a Vocation & Science as a Vocation*. Selections
- 2) Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic*, Selections.

Main Concepts:

- 1) The modern bureaucratic 'Iron Cage'
- 2) Bureaucratic Rationality
- 3) Charismatic Authority
- 4) The ethics of responsibility
- 5) The ethics of ultimate ends

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is the main thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*?
- 2) What is Weber's critique of Marx and economic determinism?
- 3) What is the crisis of modernity for Weber?
- 4) What does Weber mean by the 'iron cage'?
- 5) How does this relate to Hobbes? To Gramsci? To Machiavelli?
- 6) What is politics for Weber?
- 7) What is the purpose of the charismatic leader?
- 8) Is Weber's notion of the charismatic authority a democratic concept?
- 9) Freedom and Politics
- 10) What is Weber's understanding of the difference between the ancients and the moderns?
- 11) What does Weber say about Plato?

Methods Note # 8

- 1) Political Sociology

Week 13 & 14 → Foucault (1926-84), Modern Forms of Domination

“For millennia...man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with an additional capacity for political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.”

-Foucault

Readings:

- 1) Foucault, ‘Society Must Be Defended’, *Chapter 1; Power: Question of Method*.
- 2) Foucault, ‘Discipline and Punish’, *Introduction & Panopticism*
- 3) Foucault, ‘Society Must Be Defended’ *Chapter 11*: Then take a look at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>
- 4) Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Chapter 4*

Main Concepts”

- 1) Genealogy
- 2) Disciplinary power
- 3) Biopower
- 4) Governmentality

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is perspectivism?
- 2) What is disciplinary power? Give an example.
- 3) What is biopower? Give an example.
- 4) What is governmentality? Describe it.
- 5) What is Foucault’s understanding of power? Domination? Freedom?
- 6) If power is everywhere can there be freedom anywhere?
- 7) Does Foucault implicitly presume a Hobbesian/liberal definition of freedom? What would be a republican critique of Foucault?
- 8) Does Foucault take a normative position? Does he propose any remedies? Is there any room for ethics in Foucault?

Methods Note #9

- 1) Genealogy

Week 15 → Hannah Arendt (1906-75) and the Return of the Political

Readings:

- 1) Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. Selections
- 2) Arendt, Hannah. *Between Past and Future*. Selections

Recommended Readings:

- 1) Villa, Dana. *Public Freedoms*. Chapter 9: “Autonomy of the Political”

Main Concepts:

- 1) The Political Sphere
- 2) The Public Sphere
- 3) The Social
- 4) Political Freedom

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What does it mean that for Arendt politics is a “end in itself”.
- 2) How does Arendt relate to the pre-Socratics?
- 3) How does Arendt relate to Plato? What is Arendt’s critique of Plato?
- 4) What is Arendt critique of Marx?
- 5) What is ‘the social’ for Arendt?
- 6) What is freedom for Arendt?
- 7) What is domination?
- 8) What is the relationship between politics and violence for Arendt?
- 9) Does Arendt have a methodology? What is it?
- 10) Where does Arendt get her definition of politics?
- 11) What is Arendt’s definition of Politics?
- 12) Where does Arendt get her understanding of the public/private divide?
- 13) Can a modern citizen leave the ‘private realm’?
- 14) What is Arendt’s evaluation of Marx?
- 15) Is this a viable project? Or, is it absurdly antiquated?
- 16) Can we abstract ‘social’ issues from ‘political’ ones? Is this a antiquated conceptual distinction?
- 17) Who gets to ‘do’ politics for Arendt? Is Arendt an elitist?