

## **Political Philosophy**

### **Syllabus**

2018

#### **1. Course Description**

##### **a. Title of a Course**

Political Philosophy

##### **b. Pre-requisites**

Basics of philosophy, basics of logic and mathematics, basics of the history of political thought.

##### **c. Course Type (compulsory, elective, optional)**

Compulsory

##### **d. Abstract**

Given the partisanship of the contemporary schools of political theory, the course focuses on fundamental philosophical problems rather than specific theories and names. Political philosophy is understood as the only fundamentally meaningful way to change human reality. The two following ways of change are contrasted throughout the course: the radical way of change with purpose of creating a new form of life, which is typical for the “continental” political philosophy, and the incremental way of change with purpose of consistent and sustainable improvement of an existing political community, which is typical for “analytic” or “normative” political philosophy. Neither way has priority by default, the choice of change being dependent on the purpose of change. Therefore, the first task of political philosophy is a meaningful basic orientation within the political reality. Starting from the basics, such as meaningful usage of human speech and agency, the course proceeds through analysis of such concepts as the good, justice, freedom, law, community, friendship, citizenship, democracy, power, to discussions of actual real-life issues of the contemporary political landscapes.

## **2. Learning Objectives**

Students will learn the contemporary political philosophy, with purpose of getting meaningful philosophical orientation within the political reality. Development of the independent moral and political judgement, as well as engagement with visual and textual sources will be emphasized.

## **3. Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the course, students will master the key ideas, concepts and methods of the contemporary political philosophy. They will also have developed logical skills that will allow them to build arguments to discuss and eventually resolve moral dilemmas and political issues. They will also be able to use the introduced concepts and methods to present a solution in a written essay.

#### 4. Course Plan

1 session = 1 lecture class + 1 seminar class (4 academic hours total)

SESSION	TOPICS
1	Introduction. What is political philosophy? Elements of the classical political philosophy. Key notions: the good, justice, friendship etc. The main problem of the classical political philosophy. Plato's and Aristotle's solutions. Difference b/w the Ancient Greek and the Ancient Roman political life. Difference b/w the classical and the (Post-)Modern political philosophy
1s	Seminar: What do we want in life? What is good for me/us? What is good for everyone? Do we want the same in life? What is difference b/w humans and other animals? What is human speech?
2	Two competing tendencies in the Modern political philosophy and two main schools ("Normative" vs. "Continental") of contemporary political philosophy.
2s	Seminar: What is more important, power or security, social justice or human emancipation? Are we the same? Are humans equal?
3	Basics of the Normative Political Philosophy: Human consciousness, human agency, rationality, reasonability. The concept of common language. Foundations of common language. Free Will. Moral community
3s	Seminar: How to come to an agreement? What is the point of compromise?
4	Basics of the Continental political philosophy: The concept of "political". Political Subject. Friend-enemy distinction. Possibilities of being (non)-human. Criticism of rationality. Varieties of political languages. Arendt's theory of political action. Sources of self-knowledge: (false) consciousness, ideology, myth, psychoanalysis. The concept of proper language.
4s	Seminar: Who are my friends and my enemies?
5	Advanced topics in the Normative PPh. Natural condition vs. Social contract. Dual structure of political life: Individuals vs. State. Deontology. Consequentialism. Contractualism. The Rule of Law. Constitutionalism. Normal political process. Elements of the game theory.

SESSION	TOPICS
5s	Seminar: What is the purpose of the state? How to legitimate political authority?
6	Advanced topics in the Continental PPh: Political Aesthetics. Active and reactive forces. The concept, lifecycle, inner layers of political movement. Sympathizers, radicals (partisans), Führer. Subversion, revolution, sovereignty. Subversive and sovereign speech. Political creativity. Political theology. Utopia and reality.
6s	Seminar: What does it take to create a new form of life?
7	Comparison 1: Freedom (liberty). Negative, positive, political freedom. Principles of freedom. Metaphors of freedom. Measurements of freedom. Anomalous freedom.
7s	Seminar: What does it mean to be free?
8	Comparison 2: Justice. What is justice? What is equality? Principles of justice. Human rights. Social and political justice. Sovereignty vs. mixed constitution. Non-normative accounts justice.
8s	Seminar: What is the meaning of justice?
9	Comparison 3: What is democracy? Democracy vs. republicanism; democracy vs. liberalism; democracy vs. political representation
9s	Seminar: Democracy for whom? Democracy for me & my friends vs. democracy for everyone
10	Comparison 4: Power. State power. Institutionalism. Empire of laws. Power-Knowledge. Classical and Modern kinds of power: Sovereign, disciplinary, biopolitical power. Revolutionary power. Truth-force.
10s	Seminar: Security, territory, population.

<b>SESSION</b>	<b>TOPICS</b>
11	Inside Normative PPh: liberalism (Bentham, Mill, Berlin, Rawls) vs. republicanism (Pettit, Skinner) vs. libertarianism (Nozick) vs. communitarianism (Walzer, Taylor, Sandel). Challenges to Normative PPh.
11s	Seminar: What is political community? What is the common good?
12	Inside Continental PPh: Left/right distinction. Critique vs. revolution, subversive vs. sovereign politics. Positive vs. negative definition of political subjectivity. The New Left. Hegemony. Communist hypothesis. Accelerationism. Challenges to Continental PPh.
12s	Seminar: State, movement, people. The New Left.
13*	Current political issues and problems. Russian specifics.
13s*	Seminar: Discussion.
14	Course conclusion. What is the meaning of political life?
14s	Seminar: How to get oriented in the political reality?

(\* The content of the classes may vary; they may be left out of the program.)

## **5. Bibliography**

The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy. Oxford University Press, 2019

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## **6. Grading System**

- a. Essay (25%)
- b. Participation (25%, incl. attendance, seminar activity, home assignments)
- c. Final (50%)

## **7. Methods of Instruction**

Each weekly session consists of a lecture and then a discussion of course materials.

## **8. Special Equipment and Software Support (if required)**

Projector needed for PowerPoint presentations.