**Classics of Social and Political Thought II**

Social Sciences (SOSC) 15200 – University of Chicago, Winter

Course Description

Classics of Social and Political Thought invites students to participate in a year-long conversation about human flourishing: through our readings of classic texts from Plato to Beauvoir, we will consider what it means to live a good and distinctively human life. We will also explore how we might pursue such a life. What role do our fellow human beings play in its attainment? How can our social and political arrangements support and hinder this pursuit?

In the second quarter of the course we will continue our conversations from the autumn about the nature and ends of political life. But we will also begin to focus on questions about the ways in which political communities are organized and ruled. For instance, what is the basis of our political obligations and rights? Should people play a role in their own governance? If so, how should they navigate conflicts between their individual interests and the common good? Furthermore, is it acceptable for certain individuals or groups to have more political power and rights than others? As we take up these questions, we will also examine the meaning of concepts such as sovereignty, freedom, and equality, as well as the relationship between politics and religion.

Learning Objectives

Students in the Classics of Social and Political Thought Core will develop an understanding of the long and contentious history of social and political thought in the West. This body of writing forms the basis for introducing students to a variety of styles of reasoning in the social sciences. But it is also the material that we will use to enable students to develop concrete skills, which will be important to their ability to flourish in the College, whether in other social sciences courses or in their wider studies. Specifically, students will learn:

1. How to read complicated and often controversial works of social and political thought, to identify the arguments that they are making as well as the reasoning and evidence used to support those arguments.
2. How to listen carefully to their claims of their peers and to engage them in productive and constructive scholarly conversations.
3. How to present their own argumentative claims in a coherent, sustained, and persuasive fashion in their writing. A series of progressively longer writing assignments over the course of the year-long sequence will encourage students to write with their reader in mind, and to develop new styles of reasoning adequate to the needs of rigorous social science inquiry.

Accessibility

The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring equitable access to our academic programs and services. Students with disabilities who have been approved for the use of academic accommodations by [Student Disability Services (SDS)](https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/) and need a reasonable accommodation(s) to participate fully in this course should follow the procedures established by SDS for using accommodations. Timely notifications are required in order to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented. Please meet with me to discuss your access needs in this class after you have completed the SDS procedures for requesting accommodations.

Phone: (773) 702-6000

Email: [disabilities@uchicago.edu](mailto:disabilities@uchicago.edu)

Required texts

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)

John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings* (Cambridge)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings* (Cambridge)

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman & A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (Oxford)

Reading Schedule

Week 1.1 Introduction

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Frontispiece (the image immediately following

p. lxxvii), Dedicatory Letter.

Week 1.2 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction, Chapters 1–6.

Week 2.1 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 7–11.

Week 2.2 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 12–15

Week 3.1 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 16–19

Week 3.2 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 20–21, 24, 25 (§§1–5), Chapters 26 (§§1–28)

Week 4.1 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 29 (§§1–12, 16–17), 30 (§§1–13), 31–32, 33 (§§1–2, 21–25), 37, 38 (§5), 46 (§ 32, 35–38 [not OL version]), Review and Conclusion

Week 4.2 Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 1–5

Week 5.1 Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 6–11

Week 5.2 Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 12–19

Week 6.1 Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men*, Preface,

Exordium, Part I

Week 6.2 Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men*, Part II

Week 7.1 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book I–Book II, chapter 5

Week 7.2 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book II, chapter 6–Book III, chapter 2

Week 8.1 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book III, chapter 3–end of Book III

Week 8.2 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book IV

Week 9.1Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Introduction, chapters 1 and 2

Week 9.2 Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, chapters 3 and 12