

Poli 4082: Makers of the Modern World

Tu-Th: 130-250. Tureaud 109.

Instructor: Alexander Orwin

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Teaching Assistants: TBD

Content and Objectives

The human world as we know it was not made in a day: it did not, like the forests and bayous, sprout spontaneously from the earth. It was the result of a conscious human effort by some of the greatest minds to transform the world for the betterment of man. The purpose of this class is to explore these efforts, of which we are meant to be the beneficiaries. They can be divided into roughly three domains: the conquest of nature through science and technology, the establishment of political order through the powerful modern state, and the unification of the world through the common interests of trade and economics. As the syllabus shows, one third of the class is dedicated to each of these themes. It is designed to help us better appreciate the possibilities opened up by these new discoveries, as well as the dangers posed by them.

The course will also emphasize skills in reading, writing, and speaking, all of which are required to approach these classic texts.

Bibliography

Please use the assigned editions, available for purchase at the LSU bookstore. Aside from providing accurate translations, they will allow you to follow the references I make in class, and allow me to check the references you make in your papers. If a book is merely recommended, it means that we are reading less than half of it, so that I am willing to make copies for the students who request it. In my humble opinion, spending a few dollars to own a work by a great thinker like Smith or Montesquieu is definitely worth it!

Required

Francis Bacon. *The Great Instauration and New Atlantis*. Ed. Jerry Weinberger, 2nd paperback edition. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2017.

Rene Descartes. *Discourse on Method*. Trans. Richard Kennington, eds. Frank Hunt and Pamela Kraus. Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing, 2007.

Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. Ed. Edwin Curley. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Major Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Trans. John Scott. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Recommended:

Montesquieu. *The Spirit of the Laws*. Ed. Anne Cohler et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Adam Smith. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Ed. R.H. Campbell et al. Liberty Fund, 1982.

Karl Marx. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. Richard Tucker. 2nd edition. New York: Norton 1978.

Additional Readings:

Jonathan Swift. *Gulliver's Travels*. I will provide handouts. If you like what you get, buy any edition of the whole book afterwards!

Syllabus

Aug. 24: Introduction, Bacon, *The Great Instauration*, 2-7

Aug. 26: Bacon, GA, 8-32

Sep. 7.: Bacon, GA, 33-56 (synopsis on 56-60 is also helpful)

Sep. 9: Bacon, *New Atlantis*, 62-87

Sep. 14: Bacon, NA, 87-110

Sep. 16: Bacon, *Essays*, 113-32

Sep. 21: Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, 15-32

Sep. 23: Descartes, DM, 32-47

Sep. 28: Descartes, DM, 48-57, Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, 167-80

Sep. 30: Swift, GT, 181-208, 212-13, 221-30

Oct. 5: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 74-100

Oct. 7: Hobbes, L, 101-135

Oct. 9: Hobbes, L, 136-64

Oct. 12: Hobbes, L, 210-244

Oct. 14: Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, 154-86

Oct. 19: Montesquieu, SL, 187-212

Oct 14: Midterm paper due.

Oct. 21: Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Bk. 1 (all), Bk. II, ch. i-iv (class entirely online).

Oct. 26: Rousseau, SC, Bk. II, ch. v-xii, Bk. III, i-vi

Oct. 28: Rousseau, SC, Bk. III, vii-xviii, Bk. IV, viii

Nov. 2: Montesquieu, SL, 337-64

Nov. 4: Montesquieu, SL, 364-97

Nov. 9: Montesquieu, SL, 427-56

Nov. 11: Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, “Of Propriety” (handout)

Nov. 16: Smith,

Nov. 18: Smith,

Nov. 23: Smith,

Nov. 25: Happy Thanksgiving

Nov. 30: Marx, *Marx-Engels Reader*, 26-52

Dec. 2: Marx, 70-105

Dec. 11: **Final Exam**

Grading

15%: Attendance

Attendance is essential to overall success in the course, so all enrolled students are expected to sign in every class. **Attendance will become mandatory after the final drop date has passed.** Only one unexcused absence is permitted for each student: if you are able to honestly excuse your absences, please do so! **A failing attendance grade (i.e. more than eight unexplained absences) will automatically result in a failing course grade.**

15%: Participation

Participation is mandatory, as a sign of alertness and preparedness in class. Half of the mark depends on your responses on the Forum, expected every session, half on your performance in class.

30%: Mid-term paper

This seven-page paper on a topic of your choice will be due on Oct. 14. You are encouraged to formulate your own topic, and may come to office hours in order to do so.

40%: Final exam

This ten-page paper on a topic of choice will be due in the exam period. Comparisons of two authors are encouraged.

Grading scale:

90-100: A 97-100: A+ 93-96: A 90-92: A-

80-89: B 87-90: B+ 83-86: B 80-82: B-

70-79: C 77-80: C+ 73-76: C 70-72: C-

60-69: D 67-70: D+ 63-66: D 60-62: D-

Under 60: F

Class Rules

For attendance, see the official policy at <https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/policiesprocedures/policies-procedures/22/>

Bring your books to class. They will be the primary focus of the lectures, which might be difficult to follow without them.

Both neuroscience and common sense teach that the growing array of electronic devices can be distracting. **Please turn off all such devices in class. Those who refuse to comply may be asked to leave.** Exceptions will be granted only for medically-confirmed disabilities.

Please do not eat during class: however, drinking non-alcoholic beverages is permitted. Do not leave in the middle of class except for an emergency.

Dozing or talking to classmates is forbidden.

Violation of class rules might cost you attendance and participation marks.

