

Classics of Social and Political Thought—III

SOSC 15100-14

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Course Description & Aims

This sequence of the Classics core delivers classical ‘social and political thought’ to the 20th Century. We will ask after this question, What does it mean to ‘think’ politically and socially as an activity that we may undertake and as exemplified in ‘classic’ texts like those we will engage? To extend the reach of these texts into the more recent historical present, we couple classic texts with classic films from the 20th Century. In this way, we are challenged to think these classic texts through modern media (i.e., cinema and soundtracks or scores) to ask how the conceptual analytics we examine in the thinkers we read become articulated in mass-mediated cultures. With these questions in mind, this sequence will focus on developing and refining analytical skills such as close-reading practices, elegantly structured argumentation, and interpretive generosity. Our shared purpose is to develop these skills in relation to a variety of very complex and stylistically varied historical texts. As this is a collaborative effort participating in class discussion is essential. The same interpretative generosity we cultivate in relation to our texts we will exercise in relation to one another. The fruition of this sequence will be a “final discussion” (in lieu of a final term paper).

Required Texts

These books are all available for purchase from the Seminary Cooperative Bookstore. You are required to use these editions of the texts; other editions may use very different translations, which make it difficult for us to coordinate discussion. All additional readings are available via Chalk in PDF format. You should *print hard copies* of these readings and bring them with you to class.

- o Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Library of America)
- o John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. Gray (Oxford)
- o Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Tucker (Norton)
- o Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, eds. Clark and Swenson (Hackett)
- o W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, eds. Blight & Gooding-Williams (Bedford)

Overview of Course Requirements

Writing Requirements

You will be expected to write five (5) 2-3-page (no more than 500 words) response papers during the course. These response papers will be due one week after each screening. Writing prompts will be distributed at the screening so the film can be viewed

with the questions in mind. These will be graded and returned with comments. These response papers will serve as the basis for our Final Discussion.

Response papers must establish formal arguments, i.e., stake claims based on textual interpretation. These claims will serve as the starting point for our final discussion.

Final Discussion, or: Oral Exam

Attached below you will find a rubric that establishes the standards by which our final discussion will be graded.

The final discussion will be structured around three (3) response papers of your choice. The conversation will begin by following-up on the claims established in these response papers.

Over the span of 30-40 minutes, you will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the material we have covered in class, and a critical understanding of the theories and concepts we will have analyzed together.

You may bring notes and readings—it is an “open-book” exam, however, as a conversation, the emphasis is on maintaining a more or less uninterrupted discussion.

Optional Final Written Paper:

The final written assignment will be 1250 - 1500 words in length (approximately 5 – 6 double-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font, and **margins justified** pages. Papers either over or under this range will not receive full consideration. The goal of this essay is to critically construct an original argument informed by engagement with readings in the class. A specific grading rubric for the final paper will be circulated in advance of the assignment.

Participation in Class Discussion

You must attend every class and be an active participant in discussion. Being prepared to participate means that you need to do the assigned reading, of course, but it also means that you must bring your copy of the text and your notes on it to each class. Participating actively in class means contributing your own comments and questions to the discussion. Everyone should be contributing every week. Don't be afraid to say something that might be wrong or that you're unsure about; what you say will likely advance the discussion anyway. If, after a couple weeks, you find that you are uncomfortable participating in group discussions, please let me know so that we can discuss possible remedies.

Posting Reading Questions

To facilitate participation, you will be required to post a question about the day's reading on your section's Chalk discussion board by midnight before each class session. Reading questions should explicitly engage with some part of the text by citing a particular passage or concept (along with relevant page numbers) and asking something specific about it.

Though we will all surely be confused in places, simply noting some difficulty is not enough. In other words, “What does the author mean here?” is not a good question; a better question takes a form like “When the author says X, does he mean this?” where you provide a candidate interpretation.

To facilitate discussion, four of your posts this quarter should be responses to a question posed by another student.

You can skip any two days of posting/responding before it affects your class participation grade.

Grades

Reflecting the importance of the seminar format, 40% of your grade will be class participation, which includes the quality of your posted discussion questions.

The response papers are worth 25% of your grade. The final discussion makes up the final 35%.

Response papers will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late (i.e., a B+ becomes a B). Extensions will be granted only in the case of documented illnesses or personal emergencies. I do not accept papers more than 3 days late.

Attendance

Because of the importance of attendance, absences will be excused only in documented cases of illness, personal emergency, or religious observance. I expect *prior notification* of your absence (via email), and reserve the right to request documentation. After the first unexcused absence, each additional unexcused absence will result in a deduction of *one full letter grade* from your participation grade.

Obligatory Notice about Plagiarism (with additional notes about the Internet)

Simply: *do not* plagiarize. If you have any questions whatsoever about the proper way to cite a source, please consult me, or refer to Charles Lipson's *How to Do Honest Work in College* (2004). Proven plagiarism can lead to automatic failure of the course and will be referred to the University administration for additional sanctions.

Even those of you who have no intention of plagiarizing will sometimes use Google and Wikipedia to do some preliminary reading before writing your papers. I strongly recommend that you *do not do this* since it will lead you to write less interesting papers. Drawing your understanding of the thinkers we read from such secondary sources leads to papers that are marred by poor use of the actual text and that do not engage fully with the particular question asked.

Laptop Policy/Scribe

The convenience of computer use is subordinated to the aims of the course. To the extent that your laptop helps you to participate in class discussion, you are welcome to use it. Of course, that means *Internet use of any kind is prohibited*.

In addition, students who use their computers in class will be required to post the notes taken during class onto Chalk immediately following class. If you are not willing to do this, please do not bring a computer with you.

The exception to this policy is the rotating position of class scribe.

Spring Quarter Reading Schedule

Week One

Monday: 3/31 Intro.

Wednesday: 4/2 Tocqueville, *Dem/America*: Vol. I, Pt. 1: Ch. 2-4; Pt. 2: Ch. 1; 3-4.

Week Two

Monday: 4/7 Tocqueville, *Dem/America*, Vol. I. Pt. 2: Ch. 7; Vol. II. Pt. IV: Ch. 1-7.

Wednesday: 4/9 Tocqueville, *Dem/America*, Vol. II. Pt. 1: Preface-Ch. 2; Ch. 8-9; Pt. 2: Ch. 1-8.

Screening: “Night of the Living Dead” (G. Romero, 1968) Time & Place TBD.

Week Three

Monday: 4/14 Mill, *On Liberty*: Intro-Chapter II (pp. 1-61).

Wednesday: 4/16 Mill, *On Liberty*: Chapter III-V (pp. 62-128).

Screening: “Mean Girls” (M. Waters, 2004) TBD

Week Four

Monday: 4/21 Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Pt. 3, Section 2: “Civil Society” (pp. 220-273). Available on Chalk as a PDF.

Wednesday: 4/23 Marx and Engels, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, pp. 70-81, 93-105; “Wage Labor and Capitalism,” pp. 203-217.

Week Five

Monday: 4/28 Marx and Engels, *Capital, Vol. 1* (pp. 295-329; 344-361); *Crisis Theory*, pp. 443-465

Wednesday: 4/30 Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (pp. 469).

Screening “Battleship Potemkin” (S. Eisenstein, 1925) TBD

Week Six

Monday: 5/5 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1st Essay)

Wednesday: 5/7 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, (2nd Essay)

Week Seven

Monday: 5/12 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (3rd Essay)

Wednesday: 5/14 Nietzsche (“On Reading and Writing”)

Screening “Rope” (A. Hitchcock, 1948)

Week Eight

Monday 5/19 Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folks* (pp. 34-81)

Wednesday 5/21 Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folks* (pp. 82-132)

Week Nine

Monday 5/26 Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folks* (pp. 133-171)

Wednesday 5/28 Du Bois *The Souls of Black Folks* (pp. 172-195)

Screening “The Birth of a Nation” (D. W. Griffith, 1915)

Week Ten

Monday 6/2 Emma Goldman, Selections, TBD

Wednesday 6/4 Open/Buffer Session.

Week Eleven

Monday 6/9–**Final Discussion, 1st Session**

Tuesday 6/10- **Final Discussion, 2nd Session**

Grading Rubric for Oral Exams: Developed by Claire McKinney, University of Chicago (as a modification of Susan Ambrose, Carnegie Mellon University)

	A Exemplary	B Competent	C Developing	D/F
Dimensions:				
Overall Understanding	Shows a deep/robust understanding of the topic with a fully developed argument per the categories	Shows a limited understanding of the topic, not quite a fully developed argument per the	Shows a superficial understanding of the topic, argument not developed enough per the categories	Shows no understanding of the topic and no argument per the categories below

	below	categories below	below	
Argument	Clearly articulates a position or argument	Articulates a position or argument that is incomplete or limited in scope	Articulates a position or argument that is unfocused or ambiguous	Does not articulate a position or argument
Conceptual Analysis and Support	Original, often insightful ideas that go beyond what was discussed in lecture and class; well-chosen examples; ideas develop, becoming increasingly complex in response to questions presented in discussion	Shows a good understanding of the texts, ideas and methods of analysis covered in lecture and section that goes beyond the obvious; appropriate supporting detail with adequate explanation; ideas develop in response to questions presented in discussion	Shows an understanding of the texts and ideas covered in lecture and section; some ideas unsupported; some minor factual or conceptual errors; some ideas develop in response to ideas presented in discussion	Shows inadequate command of course materials or has significant factual and conceptual errors; insufficient or inappropriate evidence; few ideas develop in the course of discussion
Implications	Fully discusses the major implications of the argument or position	Adequately discusses some of the major implications of the position	Discusses minor implications (missing the major ones) OR does not discuss major implications adequately	Doesn't discuss the implications of the argument or position
Structure	There is logic in the progression of ideas	There are a few areas of disjointedness or intermittent lack of logical progression of ideas	Ideas are somewhat disjointed and/or do not always flow logically, making it a bit difficult to follow	Ideas are disjointed and/or do not flow logically, hence argument is very difficult to follow