

## **POLITICAL THINKERS: CLASSIC AND MODERN (BA-elective fall 2015)**

**Undervisningstidspunkt:** Wednesdays 8.30 - 10.30

**Undervisningssted:** Lokale: 20.2-009 (plenum)

**Indhold:** The course in Political Thinkers – Classic and Modern gives an introduction to central political thinkers and themes in political theory, such as autonomy, community, freedom, state-society, contractual theory, justice etc. The historical span goes all the way from Greek antiquity to modernity and recent thinkers and debates.

**Undervisningsform:** Oral presentations, students discussions.

**Bedømmelseskriterier:** The aim of the course is to give students a basic knowledge of central thinkers within political theory, and to be able to contextualize these in relation to central themes in political thinking, and the different author's different historical settings. Another aim is to introduce students to the reading of original texts from different historical periods.

**Eksamensform:** The course covers requirements from two different study programs.

**A) An Optional Course Exam:** The exam is an individual written essay. Possible essay subjects will be presented at beginning of the course. The paper discusses one subject, chosen by the student from the range presented at the beginning of the course. The essay is to be delivered the day after the course are finished. The essay must be 7 standard pages with 2400 characters per page corresponding to 16,800 characters, all inclusive. If the assignment differs from the page and character extent it will be rejected from assessment and one examination attempt will have been used.

Assessment: Passed/not passed.

Moderation: Internal.

**B) A Special Course ("Advanced Political Science") Exam:** To pass the course you must write an individual essay answering one question. The essay should be of max 2500 words.

Assessment: Passed/not passed.

Moderation: Internal.

### **Eksamenstidspunkt:**

**A) An Optional Course Exam:** Please look under "Examination type". The individual essay assignment must be uploaded no later than 13 November 2014 at 10.30 o'clock via the RUC online exam portal.

**B) A Special Course ("Advanced Political Science") Exam:** The questions will be given one week after the last lecture on Wednesday 19 November. The essay should be handed in 48 hours later on Friday 21 November at 12.00 (noon).

### **Undervisningsmateriale:**

Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. *Introduction to Political Thinkers*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.

The other texts will either be uploaded as PDF on Moodle or, if stated in the course description, downloaded from the web.

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## **Course plan and literature**

### **Lecture 1: Why and how to read the classics? Aristotle and Plato.**

In the first part of the session, we will briefly go through the contemporary relevance of classical political thinkers. We will also go through some basic issues in how to read the classics. Finally, we review the course structure and introduce the exam forms.

The second part of the session jumps back to the Greek City state and two of its key political thinkers: Plato and Aristotle. We examine how they dealt with fundamental questions, such as: What does politics entail? What is fair rule and how should it be exercised in order to achieve the good life? While these questions are very old, the course will show that they have kept boggling the minds of philosophers and politicians until today.

### **Literature**

- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. "Plato." In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 1–12 and 48–57. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.
- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. "Aristotle." In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 58–72 and 77–85. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.

### **Extra (Special Course)**

- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. "Plato." In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 12–22. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.
- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. "Aristotle." In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 85–94. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.

### **Lecture 2: Machiavelli and Weber: dilemmas in the art and practice of politics.**

What does it take to become a good politician or, more broadly, someone who wants to conquer and rule a state territory? This section focuses on some of the key dilemmas found in the art and practice of politics. We will examine how Machiavelli and Max Weber, though separated by almost four centuries, made some remarkably similar reflections on the dilemmas between Idealpolitik and Realpolitik, and between the logic of intentionality and the logic of consequentiality.

### **Literature**

- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. "Machiavelli." In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 143–161. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.
- Weber, Max. "Politics as a Vocation." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, 77–86 and 120–127. London: Routledge, 1991.

### **Lecture 3: Hobbes and Locke: Contractual understandings of State and Civil Society**

What is the relationship between the individual person and social order? Whereas Hobbes sees order as imposed by a sovereign (either a single ruler or authoritative assembly) upon the individual, for Locke it is formed as an agreement between individuals.

### **Literature**

- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. “Hobbes.” In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 162–184. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.
- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. “Locke.” In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 187–214. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.

### **Extra (Special Course)**

- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. “Hobbes.” In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 184–187. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.

### **Lecture 4: Rousseau and J. S. Mill: Democracy, Radical or Liberal?**

Rousseau also emphasises the idea of a contractual relationship between state and civil society. He gives it a radical form, which has inspired e.g. radical and participatory democratic thinkers. His ideas of complete submission under the “general will”, formulations such as “forced to be free” and his problematic views on e.g. censorship have led to criticisms of totalitarianism. J. S. Mill is one of the most influential liberal thinkers. We will be looking at his defence of individual liberty based on utilitarian moral theory, and we will in particular focus on his discussions of freedom of expression, toleration and “the harm principle”.

### **Literature**

- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. “Rousseau.” In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 215–234. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.
- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. “John Stuart Mill.” In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 246–253, 254–262, and 276–283. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.

### **Extra (Special Course)**

- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. “Rousseau.” In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 234–245. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.

### **Supplementary**

- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. “The Censorship.” In *The Social Contract*, book 4, chap. 7.

### **Lecture 5: Burke and Oakeshott: The Conservative Tradition**

As with liberalism, socialism and other political isms, conservatism comes in many shapes. Here we will be looking at one of the most influential conservative thinkers, Edmund Burke (1729–97), who has influenced generations of moderate conservatives. Particular emphasis will be given to the conservative resentment against the speculative ideologies of radicalism and rationalism in politics, and its insistence upon the cultural and political values of community traditions.

### **Literature**

- Adams, Ian, and R. W. Dyson. “Edmund Burke.” In *Fifty Major Political Thinkers*. 2nd ed., 83–87. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Burke, Edmund. *The Evils of Revolution*, 61–80. London: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Oakeshott, Michael. “On Being Conservative.” In *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*. 2nd ed., 407–437. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991.

### **Lecture 6: Hegel and Marx: Idealism or Materialism: State or Revolution?**

In this session we will be looking at the works of G. W. F. Hegel and Karl Marx – their continuities and divergences. Both thinkers sought to respond to the inequalities produced by capitalism, but ended up with radically different answers: state and revolution. We examine their philosophies to find out how and why.

#### **Literature**

- Patten, Alan. “Hegel.” In *Political Thinkers: From Socrates to the Present*, edited by David Boucher and Paul Kelly, 386–400. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Adams, Ian, and Robert W. Dyson. “Marx.” In *Fifty Major Political Thinkers*, 122–130. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Marx, Karl. “The Communist Manifesto.” In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, by William Ebenstein and Alan O. Ebenstein, 303–319. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001.

#### **Extra**

- Hegel, G. W. F. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, edited by Allen W. Wood, translated by H. B. Nisbet, 10–15 and 20–23. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Marx, Karl. “Theses on Feuerbach.” 1845. Marxists Internet Archive.

### **Lecture 7: Rawls: Political Liberalism, Justice and democracy**

John Rawls (1921–2002) is considered one of the most important political philosophers of the twentieth century. His core contribution to political theory/philosophy is his political conception of justice as fairness launched in *A Theory of Justice* (1971), which was elaborated over the next two decades and published in the series of lectures making up *Political Liberalism*. We will look at his later works in which he outlines a concept of public reason that aims to see how different and conflicting moral, religious, etc. “comprehensive doctrines” are able to coexist in modern democratic society.

#### **Literature**

- Adams, Ian, and R. W. Dyson. “John Rawls.” In *Fifty Major Political Thinkers*. 2nd ed., 221–225. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Rawls, John. *Political Liberalism*. Expanded ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. “Introduction to the Paperback Edition,” xxxvii–lvii.
- Rawls, John. “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited.” *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64, no. 3 (1997): 765–807.

#### **Extra (Special Course)**

- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. “Rawls.” In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 341–345. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.

### **Lecture 8: Hayek: Neoliberalism and Libertarianism.**

This session examines one of the major political ideologies of modern times, namely neoliberalism or libertarianism. This ideology comes in many shapes and the present session will focus on Hayek's views about how the relationship between the individual, the economy and the state should ideally be designed in a liberal democracy. We will also examine some of the impacts this kind of political thinking has had on current forms of politics and public administration.

#### **Literature**

- Ebenstein, William, and Alan O. Ebenstein. "Hayek." In *Introduction to Political Thinkers*, 320–340. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.
- Plant, Raymond. *The Neo-Liberal State*, 129–141. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

#### **Extra**

- Plant, Raymond. *The Neo-Liberal State*, 142–153. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

### **Lecture 9: Foucault and Habermas**

We will be looking at the later Foucault's studies of power, critique and freedom, and we will discuss them in relation to Habermas' criticism of Foucault. The idea is to contrast two interpretations of the enlightenment tradition so as to illustrate different views of the self, power in general and the power of political authority in particular. These discussions moreover link up with some of the themes raised in relation to Rawls's political liberalism, all of which deal with the nature of politics.

#### **Literature**

- Fleischacker, Samuel. *What Is Enlightenment?* Chap. 9, "Foucault, Habermas, Rawls," 135–156. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Foucault, Michel. "What Is Enlightenment?" In *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, edited by Paul Rabinow, 303–319. New York: The New Press, 1997.
- Habermas, Jürgen. "Taking Aim at the Heart of the Present: On Foucault's Lecture on Kant's 'What Is Enlightenment?'" In *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*, edited by Michael Kelly, 149–154. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994.

#### **Extra (Special Course)**

- Moss, Jeremy. "Foucault, Rawls and Public Reason." In *The Later Foucault*, edited by Jeremy Moss, 149–163. London: Sage, 1998.

### **Lecture 10: Round table debate**

Why should we engage with political thinkers? Questions and discussions.

#### **Extra (Special Course)**

- Connolly, William E. “Essentially Contested Concepts in Politics.” In *The Terms of Political Discourse*, 10–44. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1974.