ICIR 203 Foundations of Political Thought

Course Description & Aims:
This course consists of a historical survey of the major paradigms in the Social Sciences (History, Political Science, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Geography, Psychology) during the twentieth century. Emphasis will be on the political aspects of such areas of activity as economics, sociology, etc. Students will understand; analyze; assess schools and paradigms of political thought. They should also be able to understand the relationship between politics, economics and social phenomena. The primary aim is to introduce students to foundational political and social theories, and to enable them to apply these to contemporary problems.

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Assessment

Midterm exam 30%
Final Exam 30%
Paper and quizzes 40%

Course Learning Outcomes

At the completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Describe and explain the evolution of political and social thought
2. Critically evaluate the key concepts in these traditions
3. Compare and contrast the key theories and arguments, explaining their strengths and weaknesses
4. Analyze and apply these theories to a range of contemporary issues and problems
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<th>Topic No.</th>
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| 1        | Introduction: courses goals  
Nature of paradigms; Distinction between natural science and social science in formulating paradigmatic thought. The scientific method. |
| 2        | What is political theory? Examination of various kinds of theories: Democracy, Egalitarianism, Feminism, Liberalism and neo-liberalism, social contract.  
How does theory relate to practice? |
| 3        | The nature of the state. Description of necessary characteristics and distinction between quality and quantity of freedom  
Justification of the state. Essential characteristics of the state. Organization of force |
| 4        | The nature and essence of freedom  
Limits to freedom |
| 5        | Political equality  
Difference between equality and uniformity |
| 6        | MID TERM EXAM |
| 7        | The History of feminism  
Distinction between goal-oriented and process-oriented feminism |
| 8        | Weber: The concept and forms of authority  
Durkheim: Political use of socialization. |
| 9        | Resurgence of Anthropology. Racial, cultural and ethnic divisions and the political implications.  
Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict |
| 10       | The Frankfurt School and Karl Mannheim.  
Lukacs and Fromm: Class and the politics of class |
| 11       | Structuralist theory: Mead and Cooley: Self as social. Democracy and individualism  
New Radical reaction: Chomsky and the rejection of institutionalism. |
| 12       | Neo-liberalism  
Critics of neo-liberalism: Chomsky, Klein, Roy |

**Assessment Methods & Criteria**

Midterm exam 30%  
Final Exam  30%  
Paper and quizzes 40%

**Introduction & Nature of Paradigms**

**Topic description:** Scientific and social scientific paradigms and how they relate to social and political theory. How political theory relates to political systems.

**Expected learning outcomes:** Students should be able to understand what paradigms are and how they differ to theories. They should be able to distinguish political theories from social theories.

**Readings and activities:** Introduction to Thomas Khun (on web). Stone, Pp.1-18

**What is Political Theory?**

**Topic description:** Explanation and political theory in general. How it differs but is related to political systems and political movements.

**Expected learning outcomes:** Students should be able to understand and explain various types of political theories in general terms. They should also be able to understand how theory fits with paradigm.
Readings and activities: McClelland, Pp. 171-1993. Students can examine their own political system and try to find theories that are behind it. 277-295 and 315-337 Compare Asian and Western ideas of freedom in class.

Nature & Justification of the State

Topic description: Why “state” is so difficult to define. Introduce the three necessary characteristics of the state and discuss each.

Expected learning outcomes: Students should develop a deeper understanding of the state. They should be able to describe what a state is. Students should also be able to understand how the existence of the state is justified.

Readings and activities: McClelland; Pp. 277-293. After lecture ask students to describe different models of the state and provide a justification for each.

Freedom: Nature, Limits and Essenes

Topic description: Introduction to the concept of “freedom”. Distinction to four levels of freedom. Explain political ideas of liberty and independence as different types of freedom.

Expected learning outcomes: Students should learn the distinction between the nature of freedom and various types. They should be able to compare and contrast different ideas of freedom. They should be able to distinguish political freedom from moral freedom.

Readings and activities: Read excerpts from Erich Fromm, “Escape from Freedom” discuss the idea of authority as an avoidance of the responsibility of freedom with the class.

Political Equality

Topic description: What political equality is. How political equality differs from economic equality. The difference between political equality and uniformity.

Expected learning outcomes: Students should not only understand political equality and how it is applied in Western “Democracies” but also understand how it differs from economic equality as advocated by socialists.

Readings and activities: McClelland, Pp. 543-566. Divide students into three groups. Group one discusses the advantages of political freedom; Group two presents the advantages of economic freedom. Group three will try to provide a theoretical synthesis.

Mid-term Examination

Topic description: Mid-term exam

Expected learning outcomes: N/A

Readings and activities: N/A

Feminism

Topic description: The history and progress of feminism. Introduce the concepts of goal-orientation and process-orientation and how feminism developed through goal-orientation into process orientation. Introduce distinction between gender and sex.
Expected learning outcomes: Students should gain some idea of feminism and its history, they should know the difference between gender and sex and they should be able to distinguish between goals, objectives and processes.

Readings and activities: Read excerpts from Simone de Beauvau, “Second Sex” and from Mary Daly’s “Gyn/ecology”. Be able to compare and contrast the women’s liberation view of de Beauvau from the radical feminism of Daly.

Weber & Durkheim


Expected learning outcomes: Students should be able to apply Weber’s idea of authority to Durkheim’s analysis of suicide as resulting from too much or too little authority.

Readings and activities: Stone, Pp. 34-59. Show part of Michael Moore, “Bowling for Columbine”. Have students discuss it and apply the idea of authority and of deviance found in Weber and Durkheim.

Anthropology: Mead

Topic description: Present the discipline of Anthropology. Distinction between physical and social anthropology. Focus on social anthropology. Discuss the works of Mead and Benedict and their basis in the ideas of Franz Boas.

Expected learning outcomes: Students should be able to understand the differences between Social Anthropology and Sociology. They should be able to apply the ideas of a national-type and to criticize it.

Readings and activities: Excerpts from Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. Show Movie “Hotel Rwanda” and have students find descriptions in the movie that fit the idea of cultural determinism and national type.

The Frankfurt School: Mannhiem, Lukas and Fromm

Topic description: Explain “neo-Marxism” and how it differs from political Marxism. Review history of Frankfurt school. Discuss Mannheim’s social ontology, Lukac’s concept of reification and Erich Fromm’s idea of authoritarianism. Compare them with the ideas of Frankfurt scholars Habermas and Marcuse.

Expected learning outcomes: Students should be able to apply the process of neo-Marxist social (dialectical) criticism to the ideas of Frankfurt scholars, Lukacs, Mannheim and Fromm.

Readings and activities: McClelland, Pp. 775-581; Excerpts from Frankfurt scholars. Apply social criticism and the idea of authority and freedom of Fromm to the movie “Pleasantville”.

Structuralist and New Radical Critiques


Expected learning outcomes: Students should be able to use the methods of neo-Marxists, Mannheim and Chomsky to criticize the theories of structuralism. They should be able to point to examples of failure in the theory.

Neoliberalism


Expected learning outcomes: Students should be able to see the effects of neo-liberalism in their own lives and to be able to criticize it.

Readings and activities: Roy Essay, “The Lonliness of Noam Chomsky, excerpt from Klein, “No Logo”. Watch TV advertisements and have students identify neo-liberal lifestyles. Then have students discuss how to avoid losing their individuality to neo-liberalism.