

COURSE OUTLINE

Course Code / Title : HA2029 Left, Right, and Center

Pre-requisites : HA1002

No. of AUs. : 3

Contact Hours : 39

Course Aims

This course explores three of the dominant theoretical traditions in contemporary politics: liberalism, conservatism, and socialism. We will begin by reading classic historical statements of these traditions – the works of John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith (liberalism), Edmund Burke (conservatism), and Karl Marx (socialism). We will consider what they stand for, and their attitudes towards reform and revolution. Afterwards, we will examine contemporary articulations of these traditions – modern liberalism, social democracy, the New Left, and libertarianism – and ask whether they should be considered part of the traditions they each purport to be a part of. To conclude, we will grapple with two broad perspectives which both claim, in drastically different ways, to transcend the divisions between left and right: the centrist ‘Third Way’ and populism.

Throughout, we will investigate these different political theoretical perspectives by considering how they each respond to practical political problems. For instance, how do liberals, conservatives, and socialists understand the relationship between the individual and the state, as well as between the individual and society? How involved do they believe the state should be in the pursuit of distributive justice? Should the ‘left’ focus on economics or identity politics (or both)? Does it still make sense to think in terms of ‘left’ and ‘right’?

In other words, this course will deepen your understanding of the ‘left-right’ spectrum, one of most ubiquitous frames of reference in popular political discourse – and ask you to think hard about whether it makes sense to think in terms of the spectrum at all.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Read and analyze complex texts.
2. Engage with key methodological tools in philosophy, political science, and economics.
3. Apply the tools offered by philosophy, political science, and economics to analyze key social problems and questions.
4. Develop sustained written arguments.
5. Listen well and engage in respectful debate.

Course Content

1. TBD (Short Reading)
2. Selections from John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1689)
3. Selections from John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859)
4. Selections from Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776)
5. Selections from Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790)
6. Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto* (1848)
7. Selections from John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935)
8. Selections from Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism* (1899)
9. Selections from Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990)
10. Selections from F.A. Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society" (1945); Charles Murray, *What It Means to be a Libertarian* (1996)
11. Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way* (1998)
12. Patrick Deneen, "After Liberalism: Can We Imagine a Humane, Post-Liberal Future?" (2014)
13. Discussion on TBD [Film]

Course Assessment

Essay 1	: 40%
Essay 2	: 40%
Pop Quizzes	: 10%
Class Participation	: 10%
Total	----- 100%