

**Honors Seminar in Great Books and Ideas II (What Sustains Liberty?)**  
**HONP 101-05, Spring 2013**  
**Syllabus (Revised 1/22)**

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Monday and Thursday, 2:30-3:45, College Hall 121  
Office Hours: Mondays 4-5:15 pm and Thursdays 4-5:45 pm at Café Diem

**Course Description**

Sponsored by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, this section of great books and ideas focuses on the question “What Sustains Liberty?” By framing a class around this issue, I hope to stimulate wide-ranging discussions that grapple with varying accounts of the origin, preservation, and future of liberty. This course will have four parts. The first part focuses the students’ attention on problems of sustaining democratic liberty in Ancient Athens, and the lessons we might learn from this for today. In the second section, we will turn to Machiavelli and Shakespeare for insight into the way virtues and vices might threaten liberty. In the third set of readings, the students will read about the possible tensions between sustaining liberty and achieving equality. The course would conclude with a look at what might help sustain liberty in the future, through two works of science fiction. “What Sustains Liberty?” will aim at cultivating intellectual excitement and critical reflection on the nature of politics—a vital task today.

**Course Goals**

Students will improve their ability to interpret texts as well as enhance their written and verbal expression. They will also acquire a basic understanding of the most important issues concerning the maintenance of liberty and various prominent attempts to grapple with the dilemmas this idea presents for politics, economics, and culture. The course will prepare students for more advanced studies in the humanities and social sciences. Moreover, knowledge of these ideas and their consequences will help prepare students for life as active citizens in a republic devoted to the notion of liberty.

**Course Expectations**

***First and most importantly: Read this syllabus carefully. Clearly understanding the class requirements will save us all trouble later.***

I will conduct the class primarily as a discussion. I will also post a powerpoint-based lecture on Blackboard each week to further your understanding of the readings. Some students get a great deal from participating in class discussions; others do not. For this reason, class participation will count for extra credit only. Questions count as a form of participation. Class discussions should be respectful and considerate of others’ views and opinions. Expect to be challenged, but look on it as an opportunity, not a threat.

Students should come to class with the assigned texts in hand and read, and your participation in class should directly reference the readings. In order to be prepared for this, you should take notes on the readings that identify key passages for discussion, or which you do not understand. Under each class meeting, I have listed one or two questions designed to guide your reading of the texts. You should come prepared to talk about these.

In terms of notes on the class readings, I recommend all students both mark up their books and take extensive notes with page references that essentially index the readings. You should type these up so that they are searchable. This is time-consuming, but will benefit you tremendously for the writing assignments.

Regarding note-taking in class, I have noticed that once some time has passed, most students have a very difficult time following their notes from a discussion based class like this. Because of the circuitous nature of most discussions, you will not leave class with a neat outline. This means that if you want decent notes you can use to help you with papers and the final, within a day or so of each class, you should rewrite or type up the class notes and attempt to provide a structure for them that you will understand later in the class.

Silence all cell phones, pagers, or other communication devices while in class. Keep distractions from the class conversation to a minimum, especially side-conversations. You may bring food, but please note that opening plastic food wrappers usually cannot be done quietly, so just tear it open and get the noise over. I will ask anyone who is consistently disruptive to leave.

This syllabus is subject to change, but I will always provide advance notice both in class and via email. You can always find a copy of the most up-to-date syllabus on Blackboard.

### **Assignments and Grading**

Because we will discuss the sections listed in class on the corresponding day, you must keep up with the reading and be ready to talk about it. You must complete three take-home essays over the course of the semester. The final exam will be comprehensive, but at least two weeks prior to the exam date, you will receive the questions. All late essays will be marked down one minus step per day until I receive them.

I will determine your grades using the following breakdown:

First Paper:	10%
Second Paper:	25%
Third Paper:	25%
Final Exam:	40%

Active participation in class discussions may increase your grade by up to two + steps.

Both the individual components and final grade will be calculated on and entered into the gradebook under the slightly more generous 4.0 scale. So, A = 3.71-4.0, A- = 3.31-3.70, B+ = 3.01-3.3, and so on.

### **Textbooks**

Please purchase the following books from a source of your choice. They should all be at the bookstore by the first week of the semester. Other readings and all course documents, may be always found online at our course website on Blackboard. As class discussions will frequently refer to the text and our discussions will be hard to follow without the right page numbers, you *must* use these editions for the course.

Some students put off buying books or don't buy them at all because of financial concerns. The Dean of Students Office runs a program where you can get a loan to purchase course materials. They are located on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Student Center. You can also find contact information for them at their website:

<http://www.montclair.edu/deanstudents/contact.html>

Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, ed. Thomas Crofts, Dover Thrift Edition, ISBN: 0486282252

Robert A. Heinlein, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, Orb, ISBN: 0312863551

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, Harper, ISBN: 9780060512750

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C.B. Macpherson Hackett, ISBN: 9780915144860

Niccolò Machiavelli, *Mandragola*, trans. Mera J. Flaumenhaft, Waveland Press, ISBN: 0917974573

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, University of Chicago Press, ISBN: 0226500446

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon, Hackett, ISBN: 0872202186

Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl, Hackett Publishing, ISBN: 0872200167

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract*, trans. Donald A. Cress, Hackett Publishing, ISBN: 087220068X

William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Mark Eccles, Signet Classic, ISBN: 0451526953

Sophocles, *Antigone*, trans. George Young, Dover Thrift Edition, ISBN: 0486278042

## **Course Schedule and Readings**

I will post all texts listed as pdfs to blackboard. Before the first meeting, you should download and read these two handouts on writing and outlining off of Blackboard. You should reference them for all future courses and writing assignments with me and anyone else:

Colburn and Uphoff, "Common Expository Problems in Students' Papers and Theses," in *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 2012), pp. 291-297

Budziszewski, "Course Handout on Analytical Outlining"

### 1/24: Course Introduction; Piety, the Duty to the Truth, and Liberty

Read: Plato, *Euthyphro*, pdf

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does Euthyphro define "holiness"? How does Socrates question his logic?
- 2) What role does the idea of "approval" play in the dialogue?

### 1/28: Human Law, Natural Law, and Tyranny

Read: Sophocles, *Antigone*, all

Discussion Questions:

- 1) On what grounds does Antigone justify her defiance of Creon's edict?
- 2) What place does Creon appear to believe human law has in relation to morality, religious or otherwise?

### 1/31: Oratory and Citizenship

Read: Plato, *Gorgias*, pp. 1-32 (to 469c)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What does Gorgias believe teachers of oratory actually convey to their students? How does Socrates question this?
- 2) What is the difference between a "craft" and a "knack," as Socrates explains it?

### 2/4: The Morality of Persuasion

Read: Plato, *Gorgias*, pp. 32-57 (from 469d to 486d)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Why does Socrates believe it matters that oratory as it is usually practiced "conviction-persuades" the emotions against the listener's reasoning power?
- 2) Why ought politicians care for the souls of those in their cities? How do Socrates' questions suggest that orators (sophists) fail to do this?

2/7: Why Relativism Doesn't Work

Read: Plato, *Gorgias*, pp. 58-85 (from 486e to 505c)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) By introducing questions of quality (good/bad, better/worse), what does Socrates hope for the audience to understand about Callicles' use of these words?
- 2) What role does Socrates suggest pleasure ought to play in our moral judgments?

2/11: Soulcraft and the Character Traits of Citizens

Read: Plato, *Gorgias*, pp. 85-113 (from 505d to end)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What problems does Socrates suggest follow from the idea that law ought to be what the stronger in society desire? How does he question this position?
- 2) If we believe life is just about the "maximum flow" of pleasure or good things into oneself, what does Socrates imply are the logical and practical consequences of this belief?

2/14: Persuasion and the Non-Citizen

Read: Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, all

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How might Socrates respond to Lysistrata's mode of "persuading" the men of Athens to sue for peace?
- 2) What does the play suggest about the role those without official power hold in a democracy or republic?

Essay 1 on Sophocles, Plato, and Aristophanes assigned – due via email on Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>

2/18: The Nature and Form of Principalities, and their Threat to Liberty

Read: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Dedicatory Letter and Chs. 1-9, pp. 3-42

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What lessons does Machiavelli suggest we might learn from the Romans about politics? How does he use their example to show this?
- 2) On what basis does Machiavelli measure the effectiveness of political decisions?

2/22: On Praise, Blame, and Political Morality

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chs. 11-12, 15-19, and 25, pp. 45-53, 61-82, and 98-101

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is “effectual truth”? How does Machiavelli’s analysis of politics rest upon this concept?
- 2) How must an effective leader approach the common people’s morality and religion? What does Machiavelli think their private attitude toward those beliefs must be?

2/25: A Comedy of Deceit in the Republic of Florence

Read: Machiavelli, *Mandragola*, Introduction and Text, pp. 1-55

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What role does deception play in *Mandragola*?
- 2) To what degree does Machiavelli’s accept conventional morality?

2/28: The Winter of Discontent

Read: Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Act 1, pp. 3-42

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does Richard explain his motives for destroying his own family?
- 2) To what extent does Richard’s early conduct line up with a Machiavellian ethos?

3/4: Ambition and the Price of Power

Read: Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Acts 2-3, pp. 43-91

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Who understands what Richard is becoming? How do they see through the deception?
- 2) How does Richard manipulate those who would give him power?

3/7: Richard’s Glory and Fall

Read: Shakespeare, *Richard III*, Acts 4-5, pp. 92-145

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What differences in moral vision do you see between Shakespeare and Machiavelli?
- 2) What is Richmond’s purpose in his speech at the end? Does it differ with what Machiavelli might recommend in similar circumstances?

Essay 2 on Machiavelli and Shakespeare assigned – due via email on Saturday, March 30<sup>th</sup>

3/11, 3/14: No class meetings, Spring Break

3/18: Life, Liberty, and Property

Read: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chs. 1-5, pp. 1-30

The U.S. Declaration of Independence, online here:

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?documentprint=1>

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Discuss the rules Locke believes men live under in the state of nature. How does this natural state differ from the state of war?
- 2) What Locke think the natural limits of political power are? What role does property play in this?

3/21: How Civil Society Limits Government

Read: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chs. 6-8, pp. 30-65

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What role does equality between citizens play in Locke's theory of limiting government?
- 2) Why does Locke believe that government ought not be absolute? What dangers does he see in having a "protector" of that kind?

3/25: The Means and Ends of Good Politics

Read: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chs. 9-15, pp. 65-91

Discussion Questions:

- 1) In what ways does Locke limit the scope of political power? What functions do you think the modern state could not undertake if they followed his theory?
- 2) What is prerogative power? How does Locke attempt to circumscribe it?

3/28: Constraining Violence and Dealing with Tyrants

Read: Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chs. 16-19, pp. 91-124

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does Locke attempt to categorize and limit the uses of violence by the state, and by citizens attempting to reclaim their rights taken by the state?
- 2) What sorts of actions dissolve government and return people to the state of nature? Why does Locke think "revolution" counts but "rebellion" does not?

4/1: Sovereignty as a Guarantee of Liberty

Read: Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Books I-II, pp. 17-48

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What is the General Will? How does Rousseau believe the people join to create it?
- 2) Why does Rousseau believe that a real republic must remain small?

4/4: Legislation, Forms of Government, and the People

Read: Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book III, pp. 49-79

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Who or what is the “legislator”? How does this person or office relate to the rest of Rousseau’s ideal republic?
- 2) What does Rousseau understand law to do? In what sense is it a limit on the republic?

4/8: Civil Religion and the French Revolution

Read: Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Book IV, pp. 79-103

The French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, online here:  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/rightsof.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does reading Rousseau change or enhance your understanding of the French Declaration?
- 2) What is “civil religion”? How does Rousseau expect it to aid in the maintenance of the republic’s liberty?

Essay 3 on Locke and Rousseau assigned – due via email Saturday April 27<sup>th</sup>

4/11: Civil Liberty and Political Science in the Scottish Enlightenment

Read: David Hume, “That Politics May Be Reduced to a Science” and “Of Civil Liberty,” in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, revised edition, ed. Eugene Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), pp. 14-31 and 87-96 (pdf’s)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does Hume’s defense of liberty differ from Locke’s mode of thinking?
- 2) What kind of political science is Hume willing to defend? What does he mean by “science”, anyway?



4/15: Anti-Utopian Liberty and the Promise of Commerce

Read: Hume, “Of Commerce” and “Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth,” in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, pp. 253-267 and 465-487 (pdf’s)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What effects does Hume believe trade will have? How does he refine or extend Locke’s ideas concerning trade and property?
- 2) How does Hume criticize the notion of “perfecting” politics? Why does he do so?

4/18: Marx and the Problem of Liberty

Read: Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” in *Selected Writings*, pp. 1-26

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What does Marx mean by “emancipation”? How does it differ from other authors’ conceptions of liberty?
- 2) What arguments does Marx deploy concerning religion?

4/22: Alienation and the Allure of Wealth

Read: Marx, “Excerpt – Notes of 1844,” and Selections from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* in *Selected Writings*, pp. 40-79

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What role does money play in Marx’s account?
- 2) How does Marx’s concept of alienation undermine real liberty?

4/25: Ambiguous Utopianism

Read: Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, Chs. 1-6, pp. 1-191

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Is anarchy as presented in the novel plausible?
- 2) What do you believe her vision of real liberty entails?
- 3) How does Le Guin criticize Marx?

4/29: Is Anarchy a Path to Liberty?

Read: Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, Chs. 7-13, pp. 192-387

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Why did Le Guin end the novel the way she did?
- 2) In what sense does Shevek’s ideal ultimately support liberty?

5/2: A Free Culture without Political Liberty

Read: Heinlein, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, Book I, pp. 11-184

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Is Heinlein's depiction of how society might adapt and retain its liberty plausible? Why or why not?
- 2) Is Mike a person that deserves rights? Why or why not?

5/6: A Libertarian Revolution

Read: Heinlein, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, Books II and III, pp. 187-382

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What lessons do you believe Heinlein hopes to convey by depicting Earth the way he does?
- 2) What character traits do you believe Heinlein sees as most essential to protecting liberty?

*Final Exam due on Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup> in my mailbox in Dickson 204 by 4:30 pm*