Political Science 3020:  
Utopia, Power and Sovereignty

Instructor:  Paul Mazzocchi  
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Lecture:  Wednesdays, 7-10pm  
Room:  Ross North, Room 145

Course Description:  
This course introduces students to key texts in 16th century political thought, with special attention being given to the concepts of utopia, power and sovereignty. The epoch saw the emergence of a number of formative shifts in western political thought, including the beginning of the Protestant Reformation (which challenged a number of previously accepted theological and social/political ideas) and the beginning of an elaboration of a “modern” politics in the work of Machiavelli and, arguably, Thomas More. In particular, the course seeks to understand the developments in political thought in this era through the tension between two conceptions of “the political” and human community. One approach is rooted in a metaphysical thinking that aims to settle the very meaning, nature and being of human community via reference to a transcendent source of authority/legitimacy – a static point outside of human societies that aims to fix the community once and for all. Against this, a second approach aims to open up the realm of political community to contingency and transformation, reconfiguring the very contours of the political by dissolving the markers of certainty. In this fashion, the legitimacy of the exercise of power and sovereignty is no longer derived from a transcendent point outside of society, but from the immanent movement and transformation of the community via mechanisms of conflict/plurality and creativity. It is in this context that the course aims to consider the work of Martin Luther, John Calvin, Jean Bodin, Thomas More, Niccolò Machiavelli and Étienne de La Boétie, as well as the events of the Radical Reformation/Peasant Revolts.

Required Texts


Additional readings are available via the course Moodle page.

**Course Assignments:**
- **In-Class Midterm:** 25% (February 12)
- **Interpretation Assignment:** 20% (Due on or before March 5; see below for details)
- **Term Essay:** 40% (Due April 2)
- **Attendance/Participation:** 15%

**In-Class Midterm**
This will take place in lecture on February 12. Details about the midterm will be given in lecture several weeks in advance.

**Interpretation Assignment**
Students are to select a passage of text and write a 3-4 page paper (double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman Format) explaining that passage. A passage may be as short as a word or phrase, or as long as a paragraph. The point is to explain what is meant (or possibly meant) by that passage, in the context of the overall work and the themes of the course. Students can write on any text up to, and including, Thomas More’s *Utopia*, but excluding the reading from Dick Howard (though it may be used for insights in elaborating on passages from other texts). *The paper is due at the beginning of the lecture on the reading that the assignment covers, with the last possible date of submission being March 5 (Book II of Thomas More’s Utopia).*

**Term Essay**
The term essay will be an 8-10 page paper (double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font). Specific parameters for the essay assignment will be given well in advance of the due date.

**Participation**
This grade will be comprised of both attendance and active participation/engagement during the 3-hour seminar. Attendance requires that you SIGN the weekly attendance sheet, and you will be responsible for making sure you do so; no email confirmations of attendance will be accepted.

**Late Policy for Assignments**
For the midterm, you MUST provide medical documentation in order to be eligible to write a make-up exam on a different date; otherwise, failure to write the midterm will result in a ZERO for the assignment.
Late submissions of the interpretation assignment will not be accepted. They must be handed in at the beginning of the lecture for the reading that the assignment covers. If you have not submitted an assignment by March 5, you will receive a ZERO for the assignment.
For the term paper, a penalty of 5% per day will be deducted in the absence of medical documentation or permission from the instructor. Any term papers not handed in within one week of the due date will receive a ZERO.

**Important Notes on Submission of Assignments**
1. Emailed assignments WILL NOT be accepted. For the Interpretation Assignment you must hand in a paper copy to the instructor at the beginning of lecture. The Term Essay must be submitted to the instructor, or submitted via the drop box in the Political Science Department.
2. Any assignments placed under my office door will receive a ZERO.

**Academic Honesty**

**Policy Regarding Cell Phones, Laptops and Tablets**
Cell phones are to be turned off during class, and only used during breaks. Students using cell phones during class will be subject to deductions from their participation mark. Students are welcome to use laptops and tablets for class purposes (which does not include viewing movies, watching sports or online chatting). Students abusing proper use of laptops/tablets will be subject to deductions from their participation mark and/or barred from using them in lecture.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: January 8**
Topic: Course Introduction

**Week 2: January 15**
Topic: Thinking Politics and the Political

**Week Three: January 22**
Topic: The Politics of the Sword and the Word
Reading: Martin Luther, ‘On Secular Authority,’ *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority*, pp 1-46, and Höpfl, ‘Glossary: Luther,’ pp xxxii-xxxvii.

**Week Four: January 29**
Topic: Obligation and ‘Resistance’ to Civil Authority

**Week Five: February 5**
Topic: From the Radical Reformation to Absolutism
Reading: Luther Blissett, _selections_. Available via Moodle.
Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty*, pg. 1-59 (up to paragraph 496), 110-126.

**Week Six: February 12**
*In-Class Midterm Exam.*

**Week Seven: February 19**
Reading Week – No Classes
Week Eight: February 26
Topic: Utopia and Shipwreck
Reading: Thomas More, Utopia, pp 1-41 (Book I).

Week Nine: March 5
Topic: The Education of Desire
Reading: Thomas More, Utopia, pp 41-111 (Book II).

Last week to submit the Interpretation Assignment

Week Ten: March 12
Topic: The Prince and the Place of Politics

Week Eleven: March 19
Topic: Republicanism and the Politics of Conflict/Division I
Reading: Niccolò Machiavelli, Discourses on Livy, selections (TBA).

Week Twelve: March 26
Topic: Republicanism and the Politics of Conflict/Division II
Reading: Niccolò Machiavelli, Discourses on Livy, selections (TBA).

Week Thirteen: April 2
Topic: Servitude, Emancipation and the Politics of Friendship

Term Paper Due