

Classics of Social and Political Thought  
The University of Chicago  
Gates Blake 321  
Winter 2024; 9:30-10:50 TuTh

Instructor:  
John Levi Martin  
312 Social Sciences Building  
Office Hours Thursdays 2:30-3:30 *and by appointment\**

Writing Advisor:  
Elena Schaffer  
elschafer@uchicago.edu

*Course:*

“What is justice? What makes a good society? And who the hell asked you, anyway?” This sequence examines such problems as the conflicts between individual interest and common good; between morality, religion, and politics; between liberty and equality; between teachers and students; between 9:30 and 10:50 AM.

*Readings:*

Most of the readings are books available at the Seminary Co-op Bookstore. Other readings will be posted to our CHALK site. If printing things out from this is a burden to you, let me know, and we'll work out another way. You do the reading *before* the class that it is associated with on the syllabus. Special note: I have followed Sankar Muthu's version of this class with a few changes in terms of the readings.

*Books ordered at the Seminary Cooperative Bookstore:*

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. E. Curley (Hackett)  
John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. P. Laslett (Cambridge University Press)  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourses and other early political writings*, ed. V. Gourevitch (Cambridge University Press)  
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and other later political writings*, ed. V. Gourevitch (Cambridge University Press)

*Requirements and Grading:*

Not surprisingly, a big part of the class is doing the readings, and perhaps re-reading if you realize after class that you missed a lot of what was going on. Regular and cheerful attendance is expected; that means and contributing not only about what you understand and appreciate, but also what you don't understand and/or hate. There are three five page papers. A “five page paper” is one that can be anywhere from a single word to five pages (double-spaced, 12 point, 1” margins) but not an n-dash more. You can put a cover page on if you want, or if you have the space, your name can be at the top. The idea is to work on expressing your thoughts in as direct and elegant a fashion as you can.

We are fortunate to be working with a writing advisor from the *SOSC Writer* program. She will conduct two mandatory workshops for everyone; you'll also need to meet with her before your first paper. This is only what you *must* do; you are encouraged to work with her in the way that will best support your writing. We will schedule the workshops as things settle down at the beginning of the quarter.

Note that this year, we will be sticking to a **strict, no AI policy**. When you turn in your essay, you will also need to turn in a signed honor pledge that you have not used AI (or humans other than the writing instructor) on your paper. Are you wondering why? The explanation of this policy is at the end of this syllabus. If this is not acceptable to you, **find another section soon**.

A word on laptops: if you have a learning issue that really requires the use of a laptop, please see me. Otherwise, please do not bring laptops to class. (Tablets on which readings are present are okay, but you should have a book for almost all of these and I urge printouts for the other. But if you want to read them on your phone, or your watch, or your google goggles, I won't prevent you.) They suck participation away from the class as a whole; we want you paying attention to one another, and not an illuminated screen. If you do bring a laptop any day, for that day, you start with a negative participation score, and will have to be unusually engaged and animated to overcome this.<sup>1</sup>

Your grade is computed 20% for each paper, 20% brute attendance (physical presence) and 20% participation. Some participation every day is some of that 20; more is more. Papers are to be turned in in **two** forms. First, a paper version which you bring to class, or, for the third (due after classes end), to my "box" in the sociology department main office. Do you not know where the sociology department main office is? Capacity to independently ascertain its whereabouts and successfully transport oneself there by 10:15 in the morning is necessary to earn a passing grade in this section. Second, an electronic version, same as the printed, emailed to me by the end of the day you turn in the physical paper.

On participation: It has been brought to our attention that many students don't think that teachers really grade on participation, but we do. We will actually keep track of who participates via saying something in class every day! That means that if you only say something half the time, you might get only half the participation points, which is like getting an F on a paper!

At the same time, making (1) irrelevant or (2) uninformed comments don't help: that is, if we are talking about the reading and you didn't do it, talking about your aunt's cabbage patch and nature instead of Locke on the state of nature doesn't help at all. So....if you aren't secure about just jumping in in the middle of a gab-fest, decide in advance something you want to say and toss it in, especially at the beginning ("I'd like to make sure we talk about Locke's weird idea about..."). You don't need to talk a lot every day, but you should be making a substantive contribution when you can.

A word on secondary sources: the texts we are reading are challenging. It is not uncommon for students to be unsure of their own interpretation. In some cases, editors/translators will be of great assistance. We hope that you will soon find your sea legs here, but if you do wish to turn to a secondary treatment as a scaffolding for your first reading, whether Wikipedia, Cliff notes, *Classics Illustrated*, or *The Enlightenment for Complete F\*\*\*\*\* Idiots*, make sure that you only use this to orient yourself, at which point you put the secondary treatment down, never to be picked up again, and read independently. If you do turn to a secondary source when writing your

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<sup>1</sup> Note that by "unusually engaged" I don't mean looking up when Aquinas was born on Wikipedia—I mean listening to and responding to other students.

paper, do make sure to cite it. We certainly want to discourage their use, but understand that sometimes it is better than the alternative. You are, however, always responsible for independently supporting any claim you make.

### Reading assignments

**Meeting #1** (Thursday, January 4): Introduction and beginning of **Hobbes**.  
Hobbes's Introduction (all: pp. 3-5)

**Meeting #2** (Tuesday, January 9): **Hobbes 2**.  
*Leviathan*, Review and Conclusion (paragraph 15) (pp. 495-6); Chp. 4 (paragraphs 3-13, 22-24); Chp. 6 (paras 1-7, 13-23, 34-41, 47-59); Chp. 8 (paras 1-2, 13-19); Chp. 10 (paras 1-3, 16-20, 53-54); Chp. 11 (all); Chp. 13 (all)

**Meeting #3** (Thursday, January 11): **Hobbes 3**  
*Leviathan*, Chp. 14 (all); Chp. 15 (paras 1-3, 6-17, 21, 34-41); Chp. 16 (paras 1-7); Chp. 17 (all); Chp. 18 (para 1); Chp. 19 (paras 1-8, 14-23); Chp. 20 (paras 1-15, 18-19)

**Meeting #4** (Tuesday, January 16): **Hobbes 4**  
*Leviathan*, Chp. 18 (all); Chp. 30 (paras 1-24, 27); Chp. 31 (para 41); Chp. 46 (paras 32, 35-36); Review and Conclusion (paras 16-17)

**Meeting #5** (Thursday, January 18): **Hobbes 5**  
*Leviathan*, Letter Dedicatory (pp. 1-2, esp. second para); Chp. 21 (all); Chp. 28 (paras 22-23); Chp. 29 (paras 1-12, 16, 19, 22-23); Review and Conclusion (paras 1-9)

**Meeting #6** (Tuesday, January 23): **Hobbes 6**  
*Leviathan*, Chp. 41 (paras 3-5); Chp. 42 (paras 4-11); Chp. 43 (paras 1-3, 22-24); Chp. 7 (para 7); Chp. 8 (para 27); Chp. 47 (all: pp. 477-484); Chp. 47 (Latin version) (paras 28-29) (pp. 487-488)

\*\*\*\*\* PAPER 1 IS ASSIGNED TODAY IN CLASS \*\*\*\*\*  
Due in 9 days! February 1<sup>st</sup>, in class. Paper only!

**Meeting #7** (Thursday, January 25): **Locke 1**  
*Second Treatise of Government* (note: page 267 onward), Chp. 1-5 (all); Chp. 6 (only paras 52-55, 57, 58, 61, 74-76)

**Meeting #8** (Tuesday, January 30): **Locke 2**  
*Second Treatise of Government*, Chp. 7-9

**Meeting #9** (Thursday, February 1): **Locke 3**  
*Second Treatise of Government*, Chp. 10-15

**Meeting #10** (Tuesday, February 6): **Locke 4**

*Second Treatise of Government*, Chp. 16-19

\*\*\*\*\* PAPER 2 IS ASSIGNED TODAY IN CLASS \*\*\*\*\*

Due in 9 days! February 15<sup>th</sup>, in class. Paper only!

**Meeting #11** (Thursday, February 8): **Rousseau 1**

*Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* ('*Second Discourse*'): Preface; Exordium; Part I (all); Part II (paragraphs 1-19);  
Rousseau's Notes: 9, 11, 15, 16

**Meeting #12** (Tuesday, February 13): **Rousseau 2**

*Second Discourse*, Part II (paragraphs 20-58)

**Meeting #13** (Thursday, February 15): **Rousseau 3**

*Of the Social Contract*, Book I (all); Book II, Chp. 1-3; Book IV, Chp. 1-2

**Meeting #14** (Tuesday, February 20): **Rousseau 4**

*Of the Social Contract*, Book II, Chp. 4-10

**Meeting #15** (Thursday, February 22) **Rousseau 5:**

*Of the Social Contract*, Book II, Chp. 11-12; Book III, Chp. 1-9, 16-17

**Meeting #16** (Tuesday, February 27): **Rousseau 6**

*Of the Social Contract*, Book III, Chp. 10-15, 16-17 (re-read), 18; Book IV, Chp. 1-2 (re-read), 3, 5, 6.1-6.5, 7-9

**Meeting #17** (Thursday, February 29): **Kant**

"Idea for a Universal History" (Propositions 4-6 only, pp. 6-9); "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (all, pp. 17-23); "Theory and Practice" (Part 3, pp. 60-66)  
Note: for comparison on the topic of progress, see also the following excerpts from two speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr., pp. 141-142, 277-278

\*\*\*\*\* PAPER 3 IS ASSIGNED TODAY IN CLASS \*\*\*\*\*

Graduating seniors; due in 7 days (March 7<sup>th</sup>)! **Note this may change, I am waiting for confirmation as to when grades for graduating seniors are due.** Everyone else, due March 9<sup>th</sup> 10:15 AM! Paper only! I mean it!

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### **Important words on the use of generative language models for writing.**

For this class, the use of these models is strictly prohibited. You should even turn off any auto suggestion in Microsoft Word. You will be required to sign a pledge when you turn in your papers affirming that you did not have assistance from any other entities, whether human, animal, divine, or computational, except for your instructor or writing tutor. This may seem somewhat strange and old fashioned, but it is really important. This isn't old fashioned – rather, this is a response to changes that many people, including students, haven't really processed yet. We'll get to that in a second.

Part of the idea of this class is to teach you to write, and it is believed that in so doing, we also help you learn to think analytically, or to get better at it. It should be pretty obvious that you won't learn that if you use a computer to do the writing. Think about taking a class to learn a foreign language: You could do all your homework assignments by asking a translation program to do them for you and get a good grade, but at the end, you won't be able to speak that language. You might wonder whether it's even worth learning that language when you can just use a machine translator. And it might *not* be, at least if you don't plan on interacting with humans, but even here, maybe you should: there's good reason to think that those who learn multiple languages can think in more sophisticated and complex ways; they can actually see the same issue in more than one way in a way that monolingual people often can't. Similarly, it is our belief that if you learn how to write well, especially in the specific way that the social sciences core at the University of Chicago prizes, you will learn to think, and to speak, more coherently and effectively than if you do not.

And now we get to the sad part of the new world that this policy is designed to confront. There might have been a day when simply going to a selective college meant that you were well set up to have a middle class job, and a stable life, so long as you weren't too picky. Those days may be over. You may not want that middle class job, at least, not *yet*, but probably, you do want to leave here with some skills that go beyond what a desktop computer can do for free. Because I suspect that in 2030 no company, no employer, and, very possibly, no romantic partner, is going to want to support you for life if you don't have those skills! So, your plan on getting through this school had better not involve *never doing anything that a computer can't already do*. That's gonna make for some very awkward job interviews.

And here's something that might make this less formidable: while I do correct your writing in many cases, you are not judged on the mechanics of writing. You *are* judged on the clarity of your exposition, but if you are using a computer to take a rough paper and make it smooth, because the thinking isn't actually clear to a reader, the chances that it's clear to the generative AI model are pretty small. Which means that what comes out is going to be different from what you were trying to say. Meaning that what comes out is someone else's work. Meaning that you have been plagiarizing. So spend your time working with the writing tutors or with me, and you can leave the computer part alone.

So that's the reason for this policy. If this isn't what you want, you should switch sections as soon as possible.

**Other little things....**

\* Office hours “by appointment” are usually best for you, though you are always welcome to drop by during my scheduled hours. The way to do it is to email me a set of times you can meet in order of preference, and then I’ll choose the one I can do. This shortens the number of back-and-forth emails and allows us to set something up quicker.

\*\* Of course we run on the honor system here, but the internet has changed the nature of academic misconduct in such a way as to lead to more “borderline cases.” As you are responsible for knowing where this line is, if you have any doubts, definitely talk to me and advisors here. Please hand in papers on time; late papers go down .5 grades for every day late.

\*\*\* Your grade average is 60% papers, 20% non electronicized attendance, 20% participation. Coming late means you get  $\frac{1}{2}$  the attendance point for that day. But don’t sweat it. It’s not going to matter much.