

George Mason University
Schar School of Policy and Government
PUBP 860-001: Social Theory and Public Policy (DRAFT)

Fall 2020

Professor Jack A. Goldstone

FH 607 Email: jgoldsto@gmu.edu

CLASS MEETS in Arlington: *Van Metre Hall, Rm. 476, Mondays 7:20-10:00 pm*

This course introduces students to some of the major works in classical and contemporary social theory, drawn from sociology, political theory, and economics, with a particular emphasis on culture and values as elements shaping public policy. We will also read some contemporary works to help put classical ideas in perspective. It is a course for people with a list of books that they feel they *should* read, and *want* to read.

The class focuses on the topics of power, inequality, and economic development, particularly as they help to understand the current shift to populist politics in Europe, Asia, and the United States.

Learning Objective: You will be able to discuss public policy issues with reference to the major thinkers and arguments in the intellectual history of the West.

There are two required papers. Both are analytical exercises designed to improve your critical reading and written expression. The first is a short (4-6 pages) paper analyzing some of the readings. The second is a more substantial paper (18-20 pages) in which I ask you to compare and contrast viewpoints of two or more authors on a specific theme of your choosing.

Grading will be 30% based on the first paper, 60% on the second paper, and 10% on class participation. All work will be graded on the basis of the clarity, relevance, and logic of your arguments.

MOST OF THE READINGS ARE BOOKS. Those that are articles or selections will be emailed to you. Those readings (noted with a star below) that are complete books (or major portions of them) are books that can be easily purchased on Amazon. I prefer if you purchase them as KINDLE ebooks to save the environment, but the choice of regular books or ebooks is up to you.

LIST OF READINGS:

*Linda Martin Alcoff – *The Future of Whiteness*

*Robert Axelrod – *The Evolution of Cooperation*

*Angus Deaton and Anne Case – *Deaths of Despair and the Future of Capitalism*

*W.E.B. Du Bois – *The Souls of Black Folk*

Richard Florida – *The Rise of the Creative Class*

Thomas Hobbes – *Leviathan*
 *Samuel Huntington – *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking World Order*
 *Daniel Kahneman – *Thinking, Fast and Slow*
 John Locke – *Second Treatise on Government*
 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels – *The Communist Manifesto*
 Niccolo Machiavelli – *The Prince*
 Douglass C. North – “Economic Performance through Time”
 Plato: *The Republic*
 Joseph Schumpeter – *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*
 Adam Smith – *The Wealth of Nations*
 *Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein – *Nudge*
 Alexis de Tocqueville – *Democracy in America*
 Thucydides – *Peloponnesian Wars*
 *Thorstein Veblen – *Theory of the Leisure Class*
 *Kenneth Waltz – *Man, the State and War*
 *Duncan Watts, *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age*

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

I. POWER AND GOVERNANCE

Week of August 24	Plato – <i>Republic</i> I-II, IV-V, VII. Thucydides – <i>Peloponnesian Wars</i> , Book One Chapters II-IV, Book Two Chapter VI
August 31	Machiavelli – <i>The Prince</i> , Chapters I-X Hobbes – <i>Leviathan</i> , Chapters XIII-XV
September 7	Labor Day -- Holiday
September 14	Locke – <i>2nd Treatise on Government</i> , Chapters I-XIII, XVIII-XIX Marx – <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> , Chapters I, II
September 21	Tocqueville – <i>Democracy in America</i> , Volume 1, Part II, Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8, 9.

II. STATUS AND INEQUALITY

September 28	Veblen – <i>Theory of the Leisure Class</i> , Chapters 2, 4 Florida – <i>Rise of the Creative Class</i> , Chapter 15 Alcoff – <i>The Future of Whiteness</i>
October 5	Du Bois – <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>
October 13	Deaton and Case – <i>Deaths of Despair</i> NOTE TUESDAY DATE

NOTE: FIRST PAPER WILL BE DUE OCTOBER 20th

III. BEHAVIOR

October 19 Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

October 26 Thaler and Sunstein, *Nudge*

IV. THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

November 2 Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*

November 9 Waltz, *Man, the State and War*

IV. ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CRISES

November 16 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book 4, Chaps 1 and 2
Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*,
Chapters 5-8
Douglass North – “Economic Performance Through Time”

November 23 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

November 30 Robert Axelrod: *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Chaps. 1,2 and 6,7
Duncan Watts – *Six Degrees*

FINAL PAPER IS DUE DECEMBER 14th

STATEMENT ON DISABILITIES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Faculty in the Schar School have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code. Papers will be checked for plagiarism. Minor cases of plagiarism may require you to redo and revise your work with reduced credit; major cases of plagiarism may result in failing the course and in extreme cases in dismissal from the program.