Human, Social, and Political Sciences Tripos
2014-15

POL 1: Analysis of Politics I

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The modern state is the predominant basis on which political authority and power are constructed across the world today. Where there is no modern state, there tends to be civil war or occupation by other states. Where modern states are ineffective, politics is unstable and sometimes violent, and governments struggle to manage the economy. The first section of this paper looks at the origins of the modern state, the arguments that were first used to justify it, and the dangers and dilemmas that the power of the modern state created in politics.

Within modern states, representative democracy has become the predominant form of government in the world. It excites because it appears to offer equality, liberty and self-rule, but it also frequently disappoints in practice as it rarely does realise these values and the goods it promises frequently clash with each other. The second section of the paper looks at the origins of representative democracy in the United States, the paradoxes of representative democracy as a form of government that rhetorically invokes the 'rule of the people', the apparent historical success of representative democracy, and its relationship to the conditions of material prosperity and the distribution of wealth.

The final section of the paper examines the coherence and persuasiveness of critiques of the modern state and representative democracy and the nature of disagreement in politics. It considers the critique made by Marx of the democratic modern state as the capitalist state, Gandhi’s rejection of violence and alienated sovereignty, and Nietzsche’s assault on the moral civilization that had produced democratic ideas and the subjugation of the individual reach for greatness. It concludes by contemplating the nature of political disagreement itself in relation to human psychology.

**TEACHING**

The paper is taught by lectures, supervisions and classes.

**LECTURES**

Michaelmas 2014

1. Hobbes and the problem of order I:
   David Runciman

2. Hobbes and the problem of order II:
   David Runciman

3. Constant and modern liberty I
   David Runciman

4. Constant and modern liberty II
   David Runciman
5 Weber and political leadership I
David Runciman

6 Weber and political leadership II
David Runciman

7 Schmitt and the nature of the political I
David Runciman

8 Schmitt and the nature of the political II
David Runciman

9. Hayek and economic liberty I
David Runciman

10. Hayek and economic liberty II
David Runciman

11. Politics and violence I
David Runciman

12. Politics and violence II
David Runciman

13. The creation of the American Republic I
Helen Thompson

14. The creation of the American Republic II
Helen Thompson

15. Democratic society and democratic adaptability I
Helen Thompson

16. Democratic society and democratic adaptability II
Helen Thompson

Lent 2015

17. Representative democracy and the competitive struggle for power I
Helen Thompson

18. Representative democracy and the competitive struggle for power II
Helen Thompson

19. Parties and voters: democracy’s bads or the democratic political solution? I
Helen Thompson

20 Parties and voters II: democracy’s bads or the democratic political solution?
Helen Thompson

21 Representative democracy and material prosperity I
Helen Thompson

22 Representative democracy and material prosperity II
Helen Thompson

23 Representative democracy and the distribution of wealth I
Helen Thompson

24 Representative democracy and the distribution of wealth II
Helen Thompson

25: Communism I
David Runciman

26 Communism II
David Runciman

27 Self-rule I
David Runciman

28 Self-rule II
David Runciman

29 Morality as historical creation I
David Runciman

30 Morality as historical creation II
David Runciman

31 The persistence of politics I
David Runciman

32 The persistence of politics II
David Runciman

SUPERVISIONS

Director of Studies will organise supervisions. The paper organiser will provide a list of supervisors for them to use. Students should have three supervisions in each of the Michaelmas and Lent terms for which they should write an essay for each. Students should have 1-2 revision supervisions in the Easter term. Students should write at least one essay from each section of the paper.
CLASSES

There will be classes in the Easter Term to help students to see the connections between the different ideas and arguments examined in the paper. The classes run for two weeks. Students will be divided into four groups.

ASSESSMENT

There will be one three-hour examination. The examination paper will be divided into three sections. Candidates must answer three questions taking them from at least two sections.

SAMPLE EXAMINATION PAPER

Candidates must answer three questions, taking one from at least two sections.

Section 1

1. Why for Hobbes was the freedom the same whether a commonwealth be monarchical or popular?

2. Was Constant right that the circumstances of modern politics prescribe the limits of modern politics?

3. Why for Weber is political leadership mired in tragedy?

4. Why did Schmitt believe that politics was defined by decision-making in exceptional circumstances?

5. Why for Hayek is the individual prior to the state?

6. Does the decline of violence mean the decline of state power?

Section 2

7. How far is the separation of powers in the American constitution an effective remedy for the problems of republican government?

8. If Tocqueville was right and democratic success rests on adaptability, is democracy now failing?
9. What, if anything, is democratic about the electoral competition for power in modern states?

10. Are political parties good for politics?

11. Does representative democracy sustain economic development?

12. Who materially benefits from representative democracy?

**Section 3**

13. How far was Marx’s vision of politics anti-political?

14. Was Gandhi right that the price of the democratic modern state is too high?

15. If we live in a moral world we ourselves create, what politically follows?

16. Why are political disagreements so intractable?

**CAMTOOLS**

Handouts for lectures will be placed on CAMTOOLS in the HSPS-Part I section of HSPS CAMTOOLS after lectures.

Most of the individual chapters and articles listed in the reading below will be scanned and can be accessed through the Library CamTools portal. It is accessed: CamTools > SPS Library > Files (on the left bar) > Part I papers > Paper 1
READING AND SUPERVISION ESSAY QUESTIONS

The paper is organised around set texts. For any theme you study, you are expected to read and know the set text/s. Further required reading is marked with a •. The reading below that is additional reading, some of which you are encouraged to pursue when it comes to preparing for the examination. Under some of the themes, there are some more particular readings identified for pursuing particular issues that arise.

1-2: The problem of order

- Quentin Skinner, ‘What is the state? The question that will not go away’, http://vimeo.com/14979551


*Suggested essay question*

Why, according to Hobbes, should subjects obey the sovereign?
3-4: Modern liberty


Background to the French Revolution

Constant’s novel exploring the perils of modern liberty

Athenian democracy in practice

Suggested essay question
What challenge did Constant think that modern liberty posed to representative government?
5-6: Political leadership


• Raymond Geuss, History and illusion in politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch 1 (sections 3, 6).

Suggested essay question

Why, according to Weber, does politics pose specific ethical difficulties?
7-8 The nature of the political


Further writings by Schmitt

Secondary reading on Schmitt

Suggested essay question

How did Schmitt distinguish the political from other spheres of human activity?
9-10 Economic liberty


*Suggested essay question*

Why for Hayek was state planning the road to serfdom?

11-12: Politics and violence


*On Arendt*


On Pinker
Elizabeth Colbert, ‘Peace in our time: Stephen Pinker’s history of violence,’ New Yorker, 3 October, 2011.

Suggested essay question
Is terror self-defeating as a political strategy?

13-14: Representative democracy and the creation of the American republic


• Ross Harrison, Democracy (London: Routledge, 1993), ch. 5.

H. Storing, What the anti-Federalists were for: the political thought of the opponents of the constitution (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981).
Carl van Doren, The great rehearsal: the story of the making and ratifying of the American constitution, (Greenwood Press, 1982).


The continuing constitutional debate


Colin Campbell, ‘Clinton’s encounter with the separation of powers’ *Government and Opposition* vol 36 no 2, 2001.

*Suggested essay question*

Are representation and the separation of powers the ‘republican remedy for the diseases most incident to republican government’ that Madison supposed?

**15-16 Democratic society and democratic adaptability**


Democratic adaptability


• John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The fourth revolution: the global race to invent the state* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2014), Parts 2 and 3.

David Runciman, ‘Can democracy cope?’ *Political Quarterly*, vol 82, no 4, 2011, pp. 536-545.

The Economist, ‘What’s gone wrong with democracy?’ The Economist, 2014
Available at http://www.economist.com/news/essays/21596796-democracy-was-most-
successful-political-idea-20th-century-why-has-it-run-trouble-and-what-can-be-do
(1996), 39-55
Francis Fukuyama, The end of history and the last man (Harmondsworth: Penguin
1993).
Francis Fukuyama, ‘The future of history: can liberal democracy survive the decline of
the middle class?’ Foreign Affairs, 2012, vol.91, no. 1.
Charles Kupchan, ‘The democratic malaise: globalisation and the threat to the west,’
Matthew Flinders, Defending politics: why democracy matters in the twenty-first century

Secondary reading on Tocqueville
Harvey Mansfield, Tocqueville: a very short introduction (Oxford: Oxford University
Press, 2010).
Stephen Holmes, ‘Tocqueville and democracy’ in David Copp, Jean Hampton and John
E. Roemer (eds.), The idea of democracy (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1995).
Jon Estler, “Consequences of constitutional choice: reflections on Tocqueville,” in
Alan Ryan, On politics: a history of political thought from Herodotus to the present
(London: Allen Lane 2012), chapter 20
Debra Satz ‘Tocqueville, commerce and democracy’ in David Copp, Jean Hampton and
John E. Roemer (eds.), The idea of democracy Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1995).
Sheldon Wolin, Tocqueville between two worlds: the making of a theoretical life
A.S. Kahan, Aristocratic liberalism: the social and political thought of Jacob Burckhardt,
Jack Lively, The social and political thought of Alexis de Tocqueville (Oxford: Clarendon
Larry Siedentop, “Two liberal traditions,” in The idea of freedom: essays in honour of
Hugh Brogan, Alexis de Tocqueville: prophet of democracy in the age of revolution (New
Aurelian Craiu, Tocqueville on America after 1840: Letters and other writings

Suggested essay question
Can democracy still adapt?
17-18: Representative democracy and the competitive struggle for power


Bernard Manin, *The principles of representative government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chs 5-6
Gerry Mackie, ‘Schumpeter’s leadership democracy,’ *Political Theory* vol. 37, no 1, 2009, pp. 128-153.
John Dunn, *Setting the people free: the story of democracy* (New York: Atlantic Books)
Inside democratic politics

Suggested essay question
Is representative democracy rule by professional politicians?

19-20 Parties and voters: democracy’s b dưỡngs or the democratic solution to politics?


• John Ferejohn, ‘Must preferences be respected in a democracy?’ in David Copp, Jean Hampton and John E. Roemer (eds.), The idea of democracy Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).


**Suggested essay question**

Do voters choose bad policies?

**21-22 Representative democracy and material prosperity**


- John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The fourth revolution: the global race to invent the state* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2014), part IV.

John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The fourth revolution: the global race to invent the state* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2014), part IV.


Adam Przeworski, ‘Democracy and economic development’ in E. D. Mansfield and R. Sissons (eds), The evolution of political knowledge (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004
M. Mandelbaum, The Ideas that conquered the world: peace, democracy, and free markets in the twenty-first Century (New York: Public Affairs, 2002)
D. Rueschemeyer, E. Huber Stephens and J. D. Stephens, Capitalist development and democracy (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992)
David Landes, The wealth and poverty of nations: why some are so rich and some so poor (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999).

Suggested essay question

Does representative democracy create prosperity?

23-24: Representative democracy and the distribution of wealth


• Adam Przeworski ‘Democracy, equality and redistribution’ in Richard Bourke and Raymond Geuss (eds.) Political judgement (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Martin Gilens, ‘Affluence and influence’
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhCatZYsAqI

Francis Fukuyama, ‘The future of history: can democracy survive the decline of the middle class?’ Foreign Affairs, January/February 2012.


Daron Acemoglu et al, ‘Democracy, redistribution and inequality,’ NBER Working Paper Series 19746, 2013. Available at:
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w19746.pdf?new_window=1>


Ferdinand Mount, The new few: or a very British oligarchy (London: Simon and Schuster 2012)


Suggested essay question

Is representative democracy now the rule of the rich?

25-26: Communism


Further Marx writings


Socialism after Marx


Donald Sassoon, One hundred years of socialism: the west European left in the twentieth century (London: Fontana, 1997).


Terry Eagleton, Why Marx was right (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).


Suggested essay question

Does socialism rest upon an illusory optimism about the possibilities of politics?

27-28: Morality as historical creation


Other writings by Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond good and evil (Harmondsworth: Penguin 2003).


Secondary reading on Nietzsche

Bryan Leiter, Nietzsche on morality (London: Routledge, 2002).

Tamsin Shaw, Nietzsche’s political skepticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) Available at:
http://hooke.lib.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/bib_seek.cgi?cat=depfacoz&bib=456537


Giles Fraser, ‘On the genealogy or morality parts 1-8’ at http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/oct/27/religion-atheism

*Suggested essay question*

Are power and morality necessarily opposed?

**29-30: Self-rule**


Also at: http://www.orwell.ru/library/reviews/gandhi/english/e_gandhi


*Suggested essay question*

Is the ideal of ‘self-rule’ impossible in the modern world?
31-32 The persistence of politics


*Suggested essay question*

Is partisanship an inevitable feature of democratic politics?

*Further reflections*

We can learn about politics in different ways and we encourage you to read beyond the academic literature. To start you thinking, we suggest you might try: Gore Vidal’s novel about the beginnings of the American republic, *Burr*; Michael Frayn’s play about the political life of the former West German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, *Democracy*; Joe Klein’s novel about Bill Clinton’s first election campaign, *Primary Colours*; Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa’s novel about the collision of the new Italian state of the Risorgimento and the insistent particularities of Sicily; Joseph Conrad’s novel about political idealism and terrorism at the beginning of the twentieth century, *The Secret Agent*, and his novel about the price of utopian politics, *Under Western Eyes*; and Ursula La Guin’s very different kind of critique of the aspiration to utopian politics in *The Lathe of Heaven*. 