POLITICAL THEORY

Course Details
Classroom Hours: Monday and Thursday: (9:00h - 11:00h)
Compulsory: 4 Credits
Contact Hours: TBC

Instructor Details
Medha Bisht
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Course Description
The basic objective of this course is to facilitate and develop critical engagement with the fundamentals of political theory and International Relations. Concepts, debates and analysis relevant for the study of international relations have been emphasised upon. The course will underline an applied analytical approach and provide a theoretical prism to address challenges posed by issues in contemporary international relations. Case studies and concepts have been selected on the basis of their relevance to the twenty-first century.

The course is divided into three units. The first unit serves as an introduction to political theory. Its nature, scope, relevance and interaction with international relations discipline will be emphasised upon. The second unit emphasises on some fundamental concepts and theoretical terms associated with political theory. The third unit on applied political theory employs an applied prism, whereby four cases are selected--studied, explained and analysed on the basis of concepts elucidated through concepts enunciated by a team of political theorists. The class will be divided into four groups, who would work on their preferred case studies. This unit requires high level of interaction, participation and action from the students. Some initial classes will be devoted to the discussion on the recommended texts outlined in this syllabus.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Medha Bisht Political Theory
First Mid-Semester: 20%
Term Paper/Review Essay: 30%
Class Presentation/Attendance/Participation: 20%
End Semester Examination: 30%

(Review essay will require reviewing 2 books in minimum. The books have to be approved by the course instructor.)

COURSE STRUCTURE

Monsoon Semester 2012

Unit I: Introduction to Political Theory: Definition, Scope, Nature and Relevance to International Relations

I. This is an introductory unit. Several issues pertaining to political theory- its definition, nature, decline and significance for the international relations students will be studied.

Required Readings


David Held (ed), Political Theory Today, United Kingdom: Polity Press, 199. (Chapter 1)


Om Bakshi, The Crises of Political History: An Enquiry into Contemporary Thought, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987. (Chapter 2, 4, 5, 6)


Steve Smith, “The Forty Years’ Detour: The Resurgence of Normative Theory in


Brown, Nardin and Rengger, (eds.), International Relations in Political Thought, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Introduction

**Recommended Readings**


Andrew Linkater, Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations, Hongkong: Macmillan Press, 1982. (While the whole book should be read, part one will be particularly useful)

**Unit II: State**

II. In this unit different concept, theories and debate about the state will be covered. There is a change in the concept of state from ancient to modern times and these shifts will be underlined. Different perspectives regarding the state particularly Marxist, Gandhian and feminist will be studied.

*In this unit, select readings should be read by the students before coming to the class. Class participation and discussion on the readings is required. Readings are available in the library. Alternatively, the course instructor can be contacted. While this is an indicative bibliography, more readings will be added over time.*

**Required Readings**


Kantola, Johanna, Feminists Theorize the State, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. (Chapter 1)


Kaultilya, “A welfare State and Defence and External Affairs”. (Copy can be accessed from the course instructor)


**Recommended Readings**


**Sovereignty**

III Sovereignty is not only an important concept but several important discourses are associated with it. This unit will look into the concept of sovereignty and the debates related to the diffusion of sovereignty.

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**

Medha Bisht        Political Theory


**Liberty**

IV There is a debate on notion of liberty amongst the political thinkers. Emphasis will be laid on the positives and negatives of liberty—the contested terrain and its new dimensions. Mill’s notion of Liberty and redefinition of Liberty in identity politics will also be studied.

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Power**

V. Power is an important concept. For the political scientist it has different meanings. Power is also linked with authority, legitimacy and hegemony. This unit will cover concepts and theories related to power.
Required Readings


Recommended Readings


Democracy

VI. The question of democracy is very important and relevant too for the students of South Asian region. Different issues related to democracy like representation, public interests and citizenship are covered in this unit.

Required Readings


Joseph. A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, USA, George Ammen and Unwin, 1994. (Read the Section on Two Concepts of Democracy)


Recommended Readings


Civil Society

VII In the contemporary nation-state civil society is an important constituent. The role, activity and contribution of civil society is a matter of debate and analysis. In this unit different concepts, theories and debates related to civil society are covered.

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


(If time permits, the concept of Justice will also be included as a separate section. As for now it is not in the course structure).

Unit III: Applied Political Theory

While this unit will be open to selection of specific case studies, it intends to encourage the application of specific concepts to the same. Some key texts are recommended. However, there is no particular restriction apropos select readings on the subject. The attempt is to contextualise fundamentals of political theory to the evolving contours of contemporary international relations.

These cases can also be picked up the students for their term papers.

Select readings for this Unit

These are some mandatory readings, which the students are expected to familiarise themselves with.


Keck and Sikkink, Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics,


Case Studies

Case Study One: Global Environmental Politics

Case Study Two: Humanitarian Intervention and Use of Force

Case Study Three: International Human Rights

Case Study Four: Social Movements