

Making Political Judgments: History, Morality, Power (NPOL 3404)

Fall 2010

Time: Wednesday 4.00 – 5.50 p.m.
Location: Room 734, 6 East 16 Street

Sanjay Ruparelia
Politics Department
New School for Social Research
Room 719, 6 East 16 Street
E-mail: ruparels@newschool.edu
Tel: (212) 229-5747 ext. 3084
Office Hours: Thursday, 2.00 – 4.00 p.m.

Introduction

As citizens, we recognize that an essential feature of political life is the exercise of judgment. We make judgments on a daily basis regarding what to do and how to achieve certain ends. We also assess the reasoning of others, both those who rule as well as those whose judgments will affect our interests. Indeed many of our daily conversations, and much of what we read, hear, and see in the media, concern the question of judgment. Yet what is political judgment? How should we balance moral considerations, historical knowledge and the realities of power in making our political judgments? What distinguishes individuals who possess good political judgment? Under what conditions does it matter? Is good political judgment an inherent talent of the few or can it be acquired and developed by everyone? This course engages such questions by examining the theory and practice of judgment in politics. The first part examines, compares and assesses the writings of several key thinkers that focused on the distinctiveness, necessity and difficulty of judgment in politics: Thucydides, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Max Weber, Hannah Arendt and Isaiah Berlin. The second part of the course analyses a range of historical events by evaluating the political judgments of significant actors. Topics include the Russian revolution, creation of Israel and end of apartheid in South Africa; the invasion of Iraq after 9/11, attempts at nation building in Afghanistan and the causes of the 2008 financial crisis; and the demands of judgment according to intellectuals and politicians. In doing so, the course seeks to bridge the study of judgment in various intellectual traditions with its practice in real world politics.

Requirements & Assessment

There are several course requirements:

1. Participation: The success of the course depends on your active and informed participation. Being active means contributing your insights to and asking questions in class; being informed entails carefully reading the set material before we meet. Class attendance and participation represents 15% of your final grade.
2. Brief written responses (approximately 100-200 words – worth 15% of your final grade) to be submitted *prior to each class* that identifies a question or an issue,

based on one or more of the readings for a given week, which you wish to discuss. You must circulate your statement to the entire class by email 24 hours before we meet, i.e. by 4.00 p.m. each Tuesday.

3. Short papers: You must write two short papers (approximately 6-8 pages, double-spaced, twelve-point font). The first paper must address the ideas of a particular thinker in Weeks 2 through 7. The second must address a particular debate in Weeks 8 through 13. Your papers are due at the beginning of the class in question. Each paper counts for 35% of your final grade.

Paper guidelines: Your first paper, which will engage the political thought of a key intellectual figure, should address the following questions: How do they define political judgment? What is the relative importance of moral considerations, historical knowledge and the realities of power in their conception of judgment? What traits distinguish good political judgment? How can we improve our ability to judge well? What is the importance of judgment in their understanding of politics?

Your second paper, which will engage a set of arguments to explain a particular empirical topic, should address the following questions: What role does judgment play in each account? What specific factors allowed the principal actors to judge well or poorly? How important were individual judgments in explaining the outcome vis-à-vis larger social interests, political institutions and historical forces?

Each paper will be assessed for its clarity of expression, comprehension of material and organization of argument. Strive to be clear, rigorous and to the point.

Course Material

There are several required books for the course. I have ordered paperback copies of each at Barnes & Noble, 105 Fifth Avenue (corner of 18 Street).

- Thucydides, *On Justice, Power and Human Nature: selections from The History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated and edited by Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993)
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by J.A.K. Thomson and Hugh Tredennick with an introduction by Jonathan Barnes (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004)
- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, edited by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, edited and with an interpretative essay by Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)
- David Runciman, *The Politics of Good Intentions: history, fear and hypocrisy in the new world order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)
- George Soros, *The Crash of 2008 and What It Means: the new paradigm for financial markets* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009)

I will also reserve these books at Fogelman Library. The other assigned readings will be distributed electronically.

Schedule & Readings

Week 1 (September 1): Introduction

September 8: Rosh Hashanah – No Class: Please Read Ahead

Conceptions of Judgment

Week 2 (September 15): Thucydides: prudence, leadership and understanding

Required:

- Thucydides, *On Justice, Power and Human Nature: selections from The History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated and edited by Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993)

Suggested further reading:

- Bernard Williams, “Possibility, freedom and power,” in his *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 130-167.
- Raymond Geuss, “Thucydides, Nietzsche, and Williams,” in his *Outside Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 219-233.
- Geoffrey Hawthorn, “Pericles’ unreason,” in Richard Bourke and Raymond Geuss (eds.), *Political Judgment: essays in honour of John Dunn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 203-228.

Week 3 (September 22): Aristotle: the cultivation of *phronesis*

Required:

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by J.A.K. Thomson and Hugh Tredennick with an introduction by Jonathan Barnes (New York: Penguin Classics, 2004), Books 1, 2, 3, and 6.

Suggested further reading:

- Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a study in moral theory* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1984)
- Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: luck and ethics in Greek tragedy and philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986)
- Jonathan Barnes (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Week 4 (September 29): Machiavelli: politics as practical truth

Required:

- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, edited by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Suggested further reading:

- Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978)
- Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viroli (eds.), *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (Cambridge University Press, 1993)
- Isaiah Berlin, “The originality of Machiavelli,” in his *The Proper Study of Mankind: an anthology of essays*, edited by Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer, with a foreword by Noel Annan (London: Pimlico, 1998), pp. 269-325.

Week 5 (October 6): Weber: passion, judgment and the ethic of responsibility

Required:

- Max Weber, “The nation state and economic policy”, “Socialism” and “The profession and vocation of politics,” in *Weber: Political Writings*, edited by Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-28, 272-303 and 309-369.

Suggested further reading:

- *From Max Weber: essays in sociology*, edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London, 1998)
- Raymond Aron, “Max Weber,” *Main Currents in Sociological Thought Volume II: Durkheim, Pareto, Weber*, translated by Richard Howard and Helen Weaver (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), pp. 219-317.
- Fritz Ringer, *Max Weber: an intellectual biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)

Week 6 (October 13): Hannah Arendt: judging as actors, judging as spectators

Required:

- Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, edited and with an interpretative essay by Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 3-85.

Suggested further reading:

- Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003)
- Richard J. Bernstein, “Judging – the actor and the spectator,” in his *Philosophical Profiles: essays in a pragmatic mode* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), pp. 221-237.
- Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (eds.), *Judgment, Imagination and Politics: themes from Kant and Arendt* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001)

Week 7 (October 20): Isaiah Berlin: foxes, hedgehogs and the sense of reality

Required:

- Isaiah Berlin, “The hedgehog and the fox,” in *The Proper Study of Mankind: an anthology of essays*, edited by Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer, with a foreword by Noel Annan (London: Pimlico, 1998), pp. 436-498.
- Isaiah Berlin, “The sense of reality” and “Political judgment”, in his *The Sense of Reality: studies in ideas and their history*, edited by Henry Hardy with an introduction by Patrick Gardner (London: Pimlico, 1997), pp. 1-39 and 40-53.

Suggested further reading:

- Perry Anderson, “The pluralism of Isaiah Berlin,” in his *A Zone of Engagement* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 230-250.
- Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: a life* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998)
- Ronald Dworkin, Mark Lilla and Robert B. Silvers (eds.), *The Legacy of Isaiah Berlin* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001)

Studies of Judgment in Practice

Week 8 (October 27): The Russian revolution

Required:

- Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: a comparative analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987 [1979]), pp. 3-19 and 206-235.
- John Dunn, “Russia,” *Modern Revolutions: an introduction to the analysis of a political phenomenon, 2nd edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 24-47.
- James C. Scott, “The revolutionary party: a plan and a diagnosis,” *Seeing like a State: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 147-179.

Suggested further reading:

- V.I. Lenin, *Revolution at the Gates: a selection of writings from February to October 1917*, edited and with an introduction and afterword by Slavoj Žižek (London and New York: Verso, 2004)
- Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution: a very short introduction, 3rd edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
- Orlando Figes, *A People’s Tragedy: the Russian revolution: 1891-1924* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996)

Week 9 (November 3): Israel, the Holocaust and Palestine

Required:

- Isaiah Berlin, “The origins of Israel”, “Jewish slavery and emancipation” and “Chaim Weizmann’s leadership” in *The Power of Ideas*, edited by Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 143-161, 162-185 and 186-194.
- Edward Said, “Isaiah Berlin: an afterthought,” in his *The End of the Peace Process* (London: Granta Books, 2002), pp. 216–22.
- Edward W. Said, “Zionism from the standpoint of its victims,” in Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (eds.), *The Edward Said Reader* (New York: Vintage, 2000), pp. 114-168.

Suggested further reading:

- Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel: from the rise of Zionism to our time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996)
- Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: the construction of modern national consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997)
- Avi Shlaim, *Israel and Palestine: reappraisals, revisions, refutations* (London: Verso, 2009)

Week 10 (November 10): Building democracy in post-apartheid South Africa

Required:

- Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Boston and New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1995), pp. TBD.
- John Kane, “Nelson Mandela: the moral phenomenon,” *The Politics of Moral Capital* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 118-146.
- Courtney Jung, Ellen Lust-Okar and Ian Shapiro, “Problems and prospects for democratic settlements: South Africa as a model for the Middle East and Northern Ireland?” *Politics & Society* 33, 2 (June 2005): 277-326.

Suggested further reading:

- Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: guilt, sorrow, and the limits of forgiveness in the new South Africa* (London: Vintage, 1999)
- Alec Russell, *Bring Me My Machine Gun: the battle for the soul of South Africa, from Mandela to Zuma* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009)
- Francois de Bois and Antje du Bois-Pedain, *Justice and Reconciliation in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Week 11 (November 17): The invasion of Iraq after 9/11

Required:

- David Runciman, “Part One: Tony Blair, history and risk,” *The Politics of Good Intentions: history, fear and hypocrisy in the new world order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 31-120.
- Michael Ignatieff, “Getting Iraq wrong,” *New York Times Magazine*, 5 August 2007.

Suggested further reading:

- *The 9/11 Commission Report: final report of the national commission on terrorist attacks upon the United States* (Washington, D.C., 2002)
- George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006)
- Rajiv Chandasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: inside Iraq's green zone* (New York: Vintage, 2007)
- Eric Herring and Glen Rangwala, *Iraq in Fragments: the occupation and its legacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006)

Week 12 (November 24): The failure of nation building in Afghanistan

Thanksgiving: No Class – To Be Rescheduled

Required:

- Ahmad Rashid, "Part three: the failure of nation building," *Descent into Chaos: how the war against Islamic extremism is being lost in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), pp. 171-261.

Suggested further reading:

- Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: state formation and collapse in the international system, second edition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002)
- Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: militant Islam, oil and fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001 [2000])
- Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: the secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004)

Week 13 (December 1): The great recession

Required:

- George Soros, *The Crash of 2008 and What It Means: the new paradigm for financial markets* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009)

Suggested further reading:

- Gillian Tett, *Fool's Gold: how the bold dream of a small tribe at J.P. Morgan was corrupted by Wall Street greed and unleashed a catastrophe* (New York: Free Press, 2009)
- Andrew Ross Sorkin, *Too Big to Fail: the inside story of how Wall Street and Washington fought to save the financial system – and themselves* (New York: Viking, 2009)
- Michael Lewis, *The Big Short: inside the doomsday machine* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010)
- Paul Krugman, *The Return of Depression Economics and the Crisis of 2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009)
- Robert J. Shiller, *The Subprime Solution: how today's global financial crisis happened, and what to do about it* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008)

Week 14 (December 8): Ideas, morality and realism in politics

Required:

- Timothy Garton Ash, "Prague: intellectuals and politicians," *New York Review of Books* (12 January 1995): <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1995/jan/12/prague-intellectuals-politicians/?pagination=false>
- Vaclav Havel, "The responsibility of intellectuals," *New York Review of Books* (22 June 1995): <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1995/jun/22/the-responsibility-of-intellectuals/?pagination=false>
- Perry Anderson, "Dreams of central Europe: Timothy Garton Ash," *Spectrum: from right to left in the world of ideas* (London and New York: Verso, 2007), pp. 60-100.

Suggested further reading:

- Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, with a new introduction by Harvey C. Mansfield and foreword by Daniel J. Mahoney and Brian C. Anderson (Piscataway, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2001)
- Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994)
- Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: intellectuals in politics* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2003)
- Philip E. Tetlock, *Expert Political Judgment: how good is it? how can we know?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)
- Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (London and New York: Verso, 2010)

Week 15 (December 15): Conclusion