

POLITICAL JUDGMENT (GPOL 6491)

Fall 2009

Time: Tuesday 2.00 – 3.50 p.m.

Location: Room 1108, 6 East 16 Street

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Introduction

What is political judgment? What is the relationship between moral, political and historical judgment? What constitutes good political judgment? How can it be developed? Under what conditions does it matter? How should we seek to explain politics – the possibilities, limits and outcomes – in light of its importance? This course seeks to raise these fundamental questions. The first part examines the writings of several key thinkers in the history of Western political thought that focused on the distinctiveness, necessity and difficulty of judgment in politics. We examine, compare and assess the ideas of Thucydides and Aristotle, Machiavelli and Lenin, and Hannah Arendt, Isaiah Berlin and John Dunn, both how they define political judgment and, where possible, how they analyze it in practice. The second part of the course focuses on empirical inquiries of political judgment in the tradition of comparative politics, development studies and international affairs. We consider attempts to explain different historical events through the political judgments of key social actors. Topics include the establishment of social democracy in western Europe; possibilities of modern Indian democracy; failures of high modernist planning in the twentieth century; functioning of local government in contemporary Denmark; and invasion of Iraq after September 11, 2001. In doing so, the course seeks to bridge the study of judgment in theory with its practice in real world politics in a manner that enriches our understanding of both domains.

Requirements & Assessment

There are several course requirements:

1. Participation: The success of the seminar 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. Class participation represents 25% of your final grade.
2. Short paper and presentation: You must submit one short paper (four pages, double-spaced, twelve-point font) that engages the readings of a particular class and present its main ideas at the start of the class in question (there will be an extension for students willing to lead the discussion in the first two weeks). The papers should engage the set material in some way: evaluating the validity, coherence and strength of an argument, elaborating a line of thought you find interesting, highlighting an issue that bears on the

problem under study but received inadequate attention. The purpose of each paper is to respond critically to the material – it is *not* to write a summary of the readings. Since these assignments are brief, strive to be clear, rigorous and to the point. Your response paper counts for 15% of your final grade.

3. Research paper: Finally, you must write a research paper (approximately 25 pages, double-spaced, twelve-point font). You are free to choose any topic within the framework of the course. However, you are required to submit a proposal for your paper that states the issue/question you wish to address, indicates how you plan to tackle it and provides a working bibliography. Your proposal is due October 20. Your final paper, which is worth 60% of your final grade, will be assessed for its clarity of expression, organization of material and originality of argument. It is due December 15.

Course Material

The reading for this course is extensive. There are eleven required books. I have ordered 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)
- Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, translated and edited with an introduction by Robert Service (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992)
- Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, edited and with an interpretative essay by Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)
- John Dunn, *The Cunning of Unreason: making sense of politics* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000)
- Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
- James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)
- Bent Flyvbjerg, *Rationality and Power: democracy in practice* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998)
- David Runciman, *The Politics of Good Intentions: history, fear and hypocrisy in the new world order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)
- Philip E. Tetlock, *Expert Political Judgment: how good is it? how can we know?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)

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

Schedule & Readings

Week 1 (September 1): Introduction

Conceptions of Judgment

Week 2 (September 8): 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)
- 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 15): 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)
- D.S. Hutchinson, "Ethics," in Jonathan Barnes (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 195-232.
- C.C.W. Taylor, "Politics," in Barnes, *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, op. cit., pp. 233-258.

Week 4 (September 22): Machiavelli: politics as practical truth

Required:

- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, edited by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- 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.
- Leo Strauss, "Machiavelli's intention: The Prince," in his *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 54-84.

Week 5 (October 6): Lenin: strategy, crisis, revolution

Required:

- V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, translated and edited with an introduction by Robert Service (New York: Penguin Classics, 1992)
- V.I. Lenin, “Revolution at the gates,” in *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), pp. 15-165.
- Theda Skocpol, “Imperial Russia: an underdeveloped great power”, “The revolution of the *Obshchinas*: peasant radicalism in Russia” and “The emergence of a dictatorial party-state in Russia,” in her *States and Social Revolutions: a comparative analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987 [1979]), pp. 81-99, 128-140 and 206-235.

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.
- _____, “Reflections on Little Rock”, “The Deputy” and Auschwitz on Trial” in *Responsibility and Judgment*, edited and with an introduction by Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), pp. 193-256.
- Ronald Beiner, “Hannah Arendt on judging,” in *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, op. cit., pp. 89-156.
- 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.
- Seyla Benhabib, “Judgment and the moral foundations of politics in Hannah Arendt’s thought,” in Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky (eds.), *Judgment, Imagination and Politics: themes from Kant and Arendt* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), pp. 183-204

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

Due: Research Paper Outline

Required:

- 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.
- _____, “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.
- Perry Anderson, “The pluralism of Isaiah Berlin,” in his *A Zone of Engagement* (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 230-250.
- Steven Lukes, “The unfashionable fox,” in *The Legacy of Isaiah Berlin*, edited by Ronald Dworkin, Mark Lilla and Robert B. Silvers (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), pp. 43-58.
- Edward Said, “Isaiah Berlin: an afterthought,” in his *The End of the Peace Process* (London: Granta Books, 2002), pp. 216–22.

Week 8 (October 27): John Dunn: the partiality of judgment and necessity of rule

Required:

- John Dunn, *The Cunning of Unreason: making sense of politics* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000)

Studies of Judgment in Practice

Week 9 (November 3): The road to social democracy in western Europe

Required:

- Adam Przeworski, *Capitalism and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

Week 10 (November 10): The possibilities of modern Indian democracy

Required:

- Pratap Bhanu Mehta, *The Burden of Democracy* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2003)
- Sunil Khilnani, "Nehru's judgment," in Richard Bourke and Raymond Geuss (eds.), *Political Judgment: essays in honour of John Dunn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 254-278.
- Sudipta Kaviraj, "Marxism in translation: critical reflections on Indian radical thought," in *Political Judgment*, op. cit., pp. 172-200.
- Sanjay Ruparelia, "How the politics of recognition enabled India's democratic exceptionalism," *International Journal of Culture, Politics and Society – special issue on the work of Charles Taylor*, (21) 2008: 39-56.

Week 11 (November 17): Metis and the failures of high modernist planning

Required:

- James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)

Week 12 (November 24): The rationalities of power in local planning

Required:

- Bent Flyvbjerg, *Rationality and Power: democracy in practice* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998)

Week 13 (December 1): The politics of good intentions after 9/11

Required:

- Max Weber, "The profession and vocation of politics," in *Weber: Political Writings*, edited by Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 309-369.
- David Runciman, *The Politics of Good Intentions: history, fear and hypocrisy in the new world order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)

- Michael Ignatieff, “Getting Iraq wrong,” *New York Times Magazine*, 5 August 2007.

Week 14 (December 8): Testing the expertise of foxes and hedgehogs

Required:

- Isaiah Berlin, “The hedgehog and the fox,” in *The Proper Study of Mankind*, op. cit., pp. 436-498.
- Philip E. Tetlock, *Expert Political Judgment: how good is it? how can we know?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)

Week 15 (December 15): Conclusion

Due: Final Research Paper