

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
University Honors Program
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COURSE SYLLABUS

HON 408
Alternative Approaches to Political Understanding

Spring 2009

Catalog Description:

Prerequisite: acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor.

This course presents some classic works whose relevance continues in two traditions outside mainstream American intellectual currents -- Indian Vedic & Iberian -- challenging advanced undergraduate students to re-cast their understandings of political principles in light of these texts and their potential contemporary contributions to global society. (Offered as needed.) 3 credits.

Essential Equipment and Facilities: Seminar-style classroom with computer equipment.

Course Goals, Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

This course enables students to reason politically and make meaningful iterations between Euro-American and Indian and Iberian thought. A major purpose of this specialized course is to expose students to alternative subject matter to which they can apply their political tools of analysis, as well as important concepts and principles in political philosophy. Honors and Political Science majors whose area of emphasis is political philosophy and theory will gain a greater appreciation for the relevance and place of political analysis guided by theory and principle, even when these are presented and contested in very different contexts.

Learning Outcomes include:

- Students will be able to identify the political theory and political themes present in these works outside the typical Political Science canon;
- Students will develop a sharpened appreciation for important concepts in political philosophy and theory through analysis of their presence in these works written in a very different context than students are ordinarily exposed to;
- Students will hone their ability to detect, identify, and analyze the implications for political theory in these works outside the typical Political Science canon;

- Students will demonstrate their understanding of the political salience and continuing relevance of these alternative approaches through connecting them to contemporary political phenomena of interest, such as issues of globalization.

Content:

Study Unit 1: *The Laws of Manu*

- Vedic-style martial patriarchy
- Political laws of the Brahmins
- The classes of society
- Parallels to Plato and Aristotle

Study Unit 2: *The Arthashastra*

- the role and types of affluence in a polity
- Indian statecraft and military strategy
- Parallels to Machiavelli

Study Unit 3: Bartolomé de las Casas

- questions of Christian empire in the ‘New World’
- justifications for conquest, conversion, or not?

Study Unit 4: José Ortega y Gasset

- What is ‘modern’? What is ‘anti-modern’?
- Where do you find justice?
- How do societies develop?
- Parallels to Hannah Arendt

Study Unit 5: Bruce Rich, *To Uphold the World: The Message of Ashoka & Kautilya for the 21st Century* – recasting ancient Indian texts in the light of globalization

Study Unit 6: Contemporary appropriations and iterations of Indian and Iberian thought

Current Required Texts:

Required Readings:

- *The Laws of Manu (Mānava-Dharmaśāstra)*, c. 1500-200BCE (New Dehli: Penguin, 2000).
- Kautilya, *The Arthashastra*, c. 150AD (New Dehli: Penguin, 1992).
- Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, 1542AD (London: Penguin, 2004).
- José Ortega y Gasset,
 - *The Revolt of the Masses*, 1930.
 - *The Modern Theme*, 1931.
 - *Historical Reason*, 1940.
 - *Meditations on Hunting*, 1942.
 - *Man and Crisis*, 1958.
- Bruce Rich, *To Uphold the World: The Message of Ashoka & Kautilya for the 21st Century* (New Dehli: Viking/Penguin, 2008).

... and assorted essays by contemporary thinkers such as Eduardo Galeano, Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Luis Borges, Rabindranath Tagore, and Amartya Sen.

Recommended Readings:

- Gray, Rockwell Gray, *The Imperative of Modernity: An Intellectual Biography of José Ortega y Gasset* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
- Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture, and Identity* (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

Instructional Strategies:

The Instructor will guide students through course materials through lecture and text-based discussion, but rely on student input as well as guest lecturers from other fields of inquiry with expertise in a particular area so that students are given the context of these works.

Methods of Evaluation:

Students will write (1) short essays on each study unit and (2) a term paper on the nature of political society that reflects original research and argument and is grounded in course materials. In each case students will integrate more familiar Euro-American themes and approaches into their essays.

Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy:

The course syllabus should include the following statement:

Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university

Students with Disabilities Policy:

The course syllabus should include the following statement:

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Center for Academic Success, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Bibliography (optional):

Prepared by:

Gordon A. Babst, Spring 2009

Last revised:

Spring 2009

* Note to reviewers of this syllabus for inclusion in our University curriculum:

This course intentionally utilizes non-Euro-American political texts to teach lessons in political philosophy and theory, as well as approaches to understanding the art of politics. While these texts are not mainstream, they are increasingly utilized, and desire to be utilized in my field of political philosophy and theory. Earlier this year a colleague conducted a survey of 1,086 professors of political philosophy and theory across the United States, at a range of institutions of higher learning, regarding what they taught, how they taught, and so on. Of particular relevance here is the question "What non-Western thinkers do you teach?" Of the 52 thinkers ranked by 405 respondents to this question, Amartya Sen was ranked 10, Kautilya and his *Arthashastra* was ranked 17, and Bartolomé de las Casas and Rabindranath Tagore were both ranked 21. Hence, while these authors and texts are not in the mainstream, there is interest in them, and offering a course such as this will contribute to the University's curricular goal of preparing our students for a globalized world by exposing them through careful study to a couple of other important currents in political and social thought.