

**COURSE PLAN for Pol. 702, 20th and 21st Century Political Thought
Dr. Thomas West, Hillsdale College, Fall 2014**

8-28. Introduction. Is there a crisis of our time? If so, what is it?

Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, Introduction, 1-8.

Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," in *Question Concerning Technology*, 53-66 only.

Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* final paragraph of chap. 4, "Restatement on Xenophon's Hiero," 132-133 ("the Universal and Final Tyrant").

OPTIONAL:

Leo Strauss, "Living Issues of German Postwar Philosophy," in Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, 115-139 (the Meier book is on Blackboard).

9-2. Heidegger on the current crisis. **DISCUSSION due.**

Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, 43-57 (Heidegger's title: *Gelassenheit*).

Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, German pages 28-29 packet, 2

Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* 26-27, 245-48 (on Heidegger).

Strauss, "Existentialism," on Blackboard.

9-4. Heidegger, *Question Concerning Technology*, 3-23.

9-9. Heidegger, *Question Concerning Technology*, 23-35. **SHORT PAPER due.**

9-11. Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us," interview in *Der Spiegel* packet, 3

OPTIONAL:

Heidegger's 1933 Rector's speech ("Self-Assertion of the German University"), in Heidegger, *Philosophical and Political Writings*, ed. Stassen, 2-11 (Blackboard).

Harry Neumann, "Man on the Moon? Heidegger's Rector's Speech" (Blackboard).

9-16. Heidegger's *Being and Time* and Death as God. **SHORT PAPER due.**

Heidegger, *Being and Time*, German pages 274-78, 282-86 (English 319-323, 328-332)16

Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 26-33 (this contains a summary of *Being and Time*).

Heinrich Meier, "Death as God," chap. 3 of *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, 45-51 (Blackboard).

9-18. Strauss on Heidegger.

Strauss, "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, 29 to top of 34 (skip the last part on Husserl) (Blackboard).

Strauss, "The Problem of Socrates," 322-330 only, on Blackboard.

9-23. Strauss on historicism and Heidegger. **SHORT PAPER due.**

Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, Introduction and chap. 1 (1-34) (also read the Biblical quotations on the page facing p. 1). Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* 267 only (discussion of Burke and natural rights; the entire review of Vaughan, 264-67, is an illustration of the deleterious effects of vulgar historicism on scholarly accuracy).

OPTIONAL:

Richard Velkley, "Strauss's *Natural Right and History* as Response to Heidegger," in *Heidegger, Strauss, and the Premises of Philosophy*, 121-132 (Blackboard).

9-25. Strauss's surface teaching: the problem of Science and History.

Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* chap. 1, "What Is Political Philosophy?" Part I, 9-27.

9-30. Strauss's surface: the return to the ancients. **DISCUSSION due.**

Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* chap. 1, "What Is Political Philosophy?" Part II, 27-40.

OPTIONAL:

What Is Political Philosophy? chap. 9, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," 221-232.

Strauss, first 7 ¶'s of chap. 3, *Natural Right and History*, 81-93.

first 7 ¶'s of chap. 4, 120-126. Socratic "metaphysics" versus genealogical or teleological metaphysics.

10-2. Strauss's surface: ancients good, moderns bad, late moderns very bad.

Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* chap. 1, "What Is Political Philosophy?" Part III, 40-55.

Review of Löwith, 268-270 (compare to the last two pages of chap. 1).

OPTIONAL:

Strauss, "Machiavelli 1972" (Blackboard) (compare to the treatment of Machiavelli in WIPP chap. 1).

10-7. The case against AND for History: revising the surface teaching of chap. 1. **SHORT PAPER due.**

Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* chap. 2, "Political Philosophy and History." (22 pp)

OPTIONAL:

Leo Strauss, "Living Issues of German Postwar Philosophy," in Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, 115-139 (the Meier book is on Blackboard).

10-9. How thinking about politics leads to an ascent from law to lawgiving to moral virtue to the philosophic life. "How should one live?" as the core question of politics.

Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy?* chap. 3, "On Classical Political Philosophy," 78-94.

Chap. 4, "Restatement on Xenophon's Hiero," last ¶ of 125 to top of 127 ("philosophic politics").

10-14. Strauss's discovery of esotericism and the case against historicism. **DISCUSSION due.**

Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, chap. 1, 7-21.

Persecution, end of chap. 4, 139-41.

10-16. Esotericism, persecution, and education.

Strauss, *Persecution*, chap. 2, 22-37.

Read the footnote on 503 in Strauss, “Persecution 1941 original article” (Blackboard). (This footnote was omitted from the book version of the article, as noted by Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, 72, on Blackboard.)

10-21. Why should esotericism be unveiled instead of being kept hidden as it was in the past?

Persecution, 52 (Maimonides’s situation: “the age of philosophy . . . was drawing to its close”).

Persecution, 55-60 (why Maimonides and Strauss divulged the secret teaching, against the command of “the sages”).

Persecution, 153 (last paragraph) to 158 (why reading old books is *the* introduction to philosophy in our age).

Persecution, 181-86 (Spinoza’s art of writing resembles that of the classical philosophers).

OPTIONAL:

Michael and Catherine Zuckert have two books on Strauss, in both of which they deny that Strauss was an esoteric writer. One of these books is on Blackboard.

Melzer, Arthur. “Esotericism and the Critique of Historicism” (Blackboard) (arguing that Strauss’s rediscovery of esotericism implies that modern philosophers, who supposedly no longer practice esotericism in the classic sense, are not truly philosophic).

10-23. Fall break.

10-28. Strauss’s “repetition” of his account of Locke. **SHORT PAPER due.**

What Is Political Philosophy? chap. 1, 49-50 (remarks on Locke).

Natural Right and History, first half of chap. 5B (the Locke subchapter), 202-234.

NRH, Preface to the 7th Impression (“deepened my understanding”).

10-30. Strauss on Locke, continued.

Natural Right and History, the rest of chap. 5B, 234-251.

NRH, a passage from chap. 5A, 171-176.

11-2, Sunday. LONG PAPER DUE.

11-4. Strauss on Locke, continued. **DISCUSSION due.**

What Is Political Philosophy? chap. 8, 197-220, “Locke’s Doctrine of Natural Law” (discussing Locke and, unobtrusively, Aquinas).

Also read the passage on top of 299 (Plato’s gods—compare Locke’s interest in toleration).

11-6. Strauss on Locke, continued.

NRH, last 2 pages of chap. 3, 118-119 (supposedly on premodern egalitarian natural right); first two pages of chap. 5A, 165-66.

- 11-11. Post-1965 American liberal political theory.
 Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously*, 272-78 packet, 22
 Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 11-21, 60-66, 72-74, 100-108, 136-38, 178-179, 302-303.....26
- 11-13. Rorty, or postmodernism American style. **DISCUSSION due.**
 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xiii-xvi, 3-11, 44-53 (Intro and parts of
 “The Contingency of Language” and “Contingency of a Liberal Community”).
- OPTIONAL
 Rorty, 23-43 (“Contingency of Selfhood”).
- 11-18. Rorty continued. **DISCUSSION due.**
 Rorty, *Contingency*, pp. 53-69 (“Contingency of a Liberal Community”), 189-98
 (“Solidarity”).
 Slavoj Žižek, *In Defense of Lost Causes*, 6-7, 460-61..... packet, 46
- OPTIONAL:
 Rorty, “Self-Creation and affiliation: Proust, Nietzsche, and Heidegger,” 96-121.
- 11-20. Michel Foucault.
 Foucault, “Right of Death and Power over Life, *Foucault Reader*, 258-72.
 Foucault, Preface to *The Order of Things*, xxi-xxvi packet, 48
 Baskerville, *Taken into Custody*, 177-183 packet, 54
 Billingsley, “PC Kidnappers”58
- OPTIONAL:
 Foucault, “We ‘Other Victorians,’” *Foucault Reader*, 292-300.
- 11-25. Giorgio Agamben. **SHORT PAPER due.**
 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1-12, 166-188 (Intro + “The
 Camp as the ‘Nomos’ of the Modern”).
 Codevilla, “The Root of the Discretion to Kill,” Liberty Law Blog, May 26, 201465
- 11-27. Thanksgiving.
- 12-2. Agamben.
 Agamben, “The Two Ontologies,” in *Opus Dei*, 89-91, 118-123, 126-129 67-73
 Agamben, “Beyond Human Rights,” in *Means Without End*, 14-25.....74
 A passage from “The Face,” *Means without End*, 93-94.....81
- 12-4. Readings to be assigned later.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

40% of the grade: one paper, 3,500 to 5,000 words long, on some portion of, or theme or problem in, one or more of Strauss’s writings, whether assigned or not. Some suggested topics will be distributed. Another topic is acceptable, with the permission of the instructor. Students must say something in their papers about how their arguments might be situated with regard to the main lines of approach to the student’s theme in today’s scholarship. In this connection, the views of at

least three important or thoughtful scholars should be mentioned and briefly discussed somewhere in the paper. When you count words, include your name, paper title, and footnotes. Print the number of words at the end of the paper. You may print your paper double-spaced or 1.5-spaced, and you may print on both sides of the paper. Please hand in a *printed* copy and a copy *emailed to me* as an attachment. Send me the email copy as an attachment on the due date by 5:00 pm. The next day, put the printed copy in the mail slot outside my office in Kendall 313 by 5:00 pm. For footnotes, use Chicago format, described here:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

15%: final examination.

45%: participation, preparation, 6 short papers, and 5 “discussions.”

6 short papers (500 words max.) interpreting one or more passages assigned for that week.

5 “discussions” (200 words max.) elucidating one or more of the most important problems in a section of the text assigned for the week in which the discussion is due. Alternatively, the “discussion” may be a set of questions that would need to be answered to understand any portion of the text to be discussed that week.

The papers and “discussions” will not receive a formal grade, but their quality will be taken into account in determining this portion of the overall class grade. They should be submitted as an email (not an attachment) by midnight on the day before the due date. A printed copy with name, date, and title should be handed in at the beginning of class on the due date. You may print on one or both sides of the paper, and either 1.5 spaced or double spaced. No footnotes are needed for the short papers and discussions. Due dates are on the course plan.

For each class period, students should read not only the material assigned for that day, but also the material assigned for the previous day. We will usually be discussing both sets of readings on any given day.

Late work will be accepted, but the grade will typically be lowered. The amount is at the discretion of the instructor.

During the course, and especially in preparation for their papers, students are expected to read some of the scholarly literature on some of our authors.

TO CONTACT THE INSTRUCTOR:

Email: twest@hillsdale.edu. Cell phone 972-849-8515, 8:00am to 10:00pm. Leave a message or text me and I will respond. Office hours (Kendall 313): TuTh 11:00-11:15, 1:00-2:15, 3:45-4:00. I am often in the office at other times. Email, text, or phone for an appointment. Or come by and knock.

OTHER MATTERS

Work handed in late will be penalized at the discretion of the instructor.

Students are bound by all relevant College rules and regulations, including the Policy on Academic Honor.

Computers and other electronic devices must be silenced and put away. This article gives one of the reasons: <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/04/22/0956797614524581.abstract> (“Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking”).

Food and drinks are permitted if consumed silently and cleaned up afterward.

BOOKS TO BE PURCHASED:

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford

University Press, 1998. ISBN 0804732183.

Heidegger, Martin. *Discourse on Thinking*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969. ISBN 0061314595

Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2013. ISBN 0062290703.

Rabinow, Paul, ed. *The Foucault Reader*. Pantheon, 1984. ISBN 0394713400.

Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. ISBN 0521367816.

Strauss, Leo. *Natural Right and History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965. ISBN 0226776948.

Strauss, Leo. *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. ISBN 0226777111.

Strauss, Leo. *What Is Political Philosophy?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988. ISBN 0226777138.

West, Thomas G., ed. *Course Packet for 20th-21st Century Political Philosophy, Politics 702*.