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?
   OPTIONAL:

   Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, 43-57 (Heidegger’s title: *Gelassenheit*).
   Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, German pages 28-29 ................................... packet, 2


   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).

   Strauss, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, 29 to top of 34 (skip the last part on Husserl) (Blackboard).
9-23. Strauss on historicism and Heidegger. **SHORT PAPER due.**


**OPTIONAL:**


**SHORT PAPER due.**


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


**OPTIONAL:**


Strauss, first 17 ¶’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.


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.**


**OPTIONAL:**


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.


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.**


*Persecution*, end of chap. 4, 139-41.
10-16. Esotericism, persecution, and education.
   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.
   *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).

   *NRH*, last 2 pages of chap. 3, 118-119 (supposedly on premodern egalitarian natural right);
   first two pages of chap. 5A, 165-66.
Ronald Dworkin, Taking Rights Seriously, 272-78 .................................................... packet, 22

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:

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.

Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life, 1-12, 166-188 (Intro + “The
Camp as the ‘Nomos’ of the Modern”).

11-27. Thanksgiving.

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.

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


