

INTRODUCTION TO MODERN POLITICS: NATION-STATES AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES

In a radical departure from prior political thought and practice, early modern political philosophers asserted the natural liberty and equality of the individual, and, with the hope of liberating human beings in manifold ways, sought to found political life on the principles of individual rights and consent that followed from these premises. The distinctively modern *regime* that follows from this theoretical foundation is liberal democracy.

At roughly the same time, a new form of political community emerged in Europe, which was to become the most typical modern *political arrangement* (sometimes regarded as having a normative or ideal status, the status of a right *i.e.* the right to “self-determination”): the nation-state.

This course will introduce students to the study of modern politics with particular attention to the fundamental principles and inherent tensions of liberal democratic nation-states. Concrete examples from the United States, France, Israel, Canada, and the European Union will be used to consider how those principles and tensions play out on the ground. The concern throughout will be not to judge particular policies or decide particular conflicts, but to see as clearly, fully, and precisely as we can what the issues are.

Students who are prepared to enter into this spirit of inquiry, and to devote the necessary time and attention to a range of demanding readings involving both general theoretical considerations and the details of particular political circumstances, should acquire (1) a basic vocabulary for thinking and speaking about modern politics and a basic understanding of the distinctive character, possibilities, challenges, and limits of the modern liberal democratic nation-state, (2) greater clarity about the roots and complexity of contemporary political issues such as security, immigration, religion, nationalism, multiculturalism, and (3) some skill in following and making complex arguments.

Required Texts (readings marked with an asterisk will be found in the Course Pack)

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

John Locke, *Second Treatise and Letter Concerning Toleration*

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Hackett abridged)

Laurence and Vaise, *Integrating Islam: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France* (available online through BC Libraries)

Pierre Manent, *A World Beyond Politics: A Defense of the Nation-State*

Alexander Yacobson and Amnon Rubinstein, *Israel and the Family of Nations*

POLI104201 Course Pack

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Background: Pre-Modern Politics

- Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
- Opello & Rosow, *The Nation-State and Global Order*, Introduction and ch. 1-3*
- Manent, *A World Beyond Politics: A Defense of the Nation-State* ch. 9, 10

Modern Politics I: Liberal Democracy

Principles and Characteristic Institutions

- Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, selections
- Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*
- U.S. Declaration of Independence, Constitution, *Federalist 1, 10, 51**
- France “Declaration of the Rights of Man;” O’Neil, *Cases in Comparative Politics*, ch. 4*
- Israel “Declaration of Establishment of the State of Israel;” Basic Laws [selections]; Lust, *The Middle East*, ch. 14*

Tensions

- the “natural defects of democracy”
 - Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* – selections on individualism, materialism, race, religion
 - Shariati, “Critical Attitude Toward the West and the Idea of Western Decadence;”* interview with Mahmud Zahhar: “Waiting for Secular Nationalism to Self-Destruct” (excerpt)*
- consent vs. rights (majority tyranny):
 - U.S. – selections from the Lincoln-Douglas debates*
- religion:
 - U.S.
 - Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* ch. 17; * Washington, “Letter to the Hebrew Congregation at Newport”*
 - Volokh, *The Religion Clauses and Related Statutes: Problems, Cases, and Policy Arguments* (selections)*
 - France – Laurence & Vaisse, *Integrating Islam: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France*, ch. 5, 6 [additional readings on *laïcité* TBA]
 - Israel – Benyamin Neuberger. “Religion and State in Europe and Israel;”* Status Quo letter; * [additional readings TBA]
 - Khomeini, *The Necessity of Islamic Government*”*

Modern Politics II: The Nation-State

Background

- Hutchinson & Smith, *Nationalism* pp. 3-46*
- Pierre Manent
 - “What Is a Nation?” *The Intercollegiate Review* Fall 2007, pp. 23-31*
 - *A World Beyond Politics: A Defense of the Nation-State* ch. 4, 5
- UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*

Tensions

Transcending the Nation-State? The European Union

- Davies, *Understanding European Union Law* Introduction, ch. 1-5, 8 (available online through BC Libraries) [other EU source?]
- Issues: *A World Beyond Politics: A Defense of the Nation-State* ch. 6, 7
- Issues [readings TBA]: the Euro crisis, the migrant crisis, Brexit*

Defining the Nation and National Minorities in Liberal Democratic Nation-States

- U.S.:
 - Gary Jacobsohn, *Apple of Gold: Constitutionalism in Israel and the United States*, Chapter Two, “Alternative Pluralisms”*
- France:
 - *Integrating Islam* Introduction, ch. 2, 7, 10; [additional readings on *communautarisme* TBA]
 - Bohlen, “France Fears Becoming Too ‘Anglo-Saxon’ in Its Treatment of Minorities” (*New York Times* 9/20/2016)*
 - Packer, “The Other France” (*New Yorker* 8/31/2015)*
- Israel:
 - Peel Commission Report (selections), UN Partition Resolution, Law of Return*
 - Jacobsohn, *Apple of Gold*, Chapter Three, “The Who and the What of Civic Identity”*
 - Elie Rekhess, “The Arab Minority in Israel: Reconsidering the ‘1948 Paradigm,’” *Israel Studies* 19:2 (Summer 2014), 187-217*
 - Yacobson and Rubinstein, *Israel and the Family of Nations*, Introduction, ch. 1, 4-6, Appendix 1
- Canada:
 - Jacques Parizeau, “The Case for a Sovereign Quebec,” and Daniel Johnson, “The Case for a United Canada,” in *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1995, no. 99, pp. 69-88*