GOVT 346W: Liberalism and the Left
Hamilton College, Spring 2021
W 1:10-4:10 pm, SCHA 201

Professor Gregory Koutnik
Zoom Office Hours M 1-4:30 pm, T 9:30 am - Noon
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Course Description
What foundational debates have shaped (and divided) progressive liberalism and the radical left, and what ideas do these debates offer to progressives and their opponents going forward? This seminar helps students answer these questions with an eye to such schools of progressive political thought as left-liberalism, social democracy, democratic socialism, communism, left-anarchism, environmentalism, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and feminism, as well as key thinkers such as Rawls, Dewey, Rousseau, Marx, Goldman, Leopold, hooks, Du Bois, and Fanon. Active reading, writing, and in-class discussion will help students explore debates over the nature of democracy, justice, equality, freedom, emancipation, class, race, gender, empire, and capitalism that lie at the heart of progressive political thought.

Teaching During COVID-19
My goal is to lead an engaging and rewarding seminar while making student health and well-being my top priority. With that in mind, any student can attend class remotely at any time and for any reason, no questions asked. I only ask that students let me know in advance by email when they switch to attending class remotely. The class meetings for this course will be blended and synchronous—that is, students will attend in person and/or remotely, and all students will interact with me and with one another live and simultaneously. As was the case in the fall, flexibility is the name of the game this semester. There will be unforeseen challenges, and especially technical difficulties, that we will have to work through together. I also recognize that my general plan for the course may not meet everyone's individual needs during this time, so please get in touch with me early if you want to discuss special arrangements, especially for international students and others attending remotely from different time-zones. For those of you on campus, *remember that the Student Code of Conduct applies inside as well as outside this class.* Accordingly, students are required to maintain six feet of physical distancing, wear appropriate face coverings, and attend class remotely from their rooms whenever they feel unwell. Above all, I will rely on student feedback to inform the way I teach this semester, so please do not hesitate to get in touch with me early and often about what I can do to improve the course experience.

Participation: This promises to be a rich and engaging seminar, but you will only get out of it what you and your classmates put in. Come to class having read the texts closely and be ready to discuss them. And do not hesitate to ask questions—I'm here to help!

Course Texts and Laptop Policy: Students are not required to purchase any books for this course. Readings will be posted on Blackboard under "Documents." Given the technological requirements of teaching during COVID-19, and because all of the readings are digital, I recognize the need for laptops in the classroom. However, laptops and other devices are to be used for class-related purposes ONLY. <u>I will not hesitate to mark students absent whom I suspect are using their devices for purposes unrelated to the course during class time</u>.

Disabilities and Accommodations:
Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are eligible to receive accommodations and would like to request them for this course, be sure to discuss it with me during the first two weeks of class. You will also need to

provide Allen Harrison, Assistant Dean of Students (aharriso@hamilaton.edu), with appropriate documentation of your disability.

Writing-Intensive Course: This is an official Writing-Intensive (WI) course per Hamilton College guidelines. Special emphasis will be placed on effective strategies for written argumentation. No matter how strong your writing may be now, it can and will improve over the course of this semester. The bulk of your course grade will be determined by your performance on five written assignments that are outlined below under "Assignments." I will provide extensive feedback not just on content but also on argumentation, structure, style, and grammar for every writing assignment, and students will have the opportunity to participate in one-on-one and group writing workshops with me if they choose. Students will also receive feedback from their peers on the initial draft of their research paper and will have the option of re-writing their midterm paper after they receive their initial grade from me, provided that they turn in a written statement summarizing the revisions they make in response to my feedback. Finally, all students are *strongly* encouraged to bring drafts of the research paper and other assignments to the Writing Center for workshopping and feedback.

Attendance, Office Hours, Assignments, and Grades

Attendance Policy: Attendance will be taken and students are expected to attend class, either in person or remotely via Zoom. However, every student gets one free absence, no questions asked, provided the student notifies me by email in advance. Unexcused absences will result in reductions to your participation grade reflecting the number of absences. If you need to miss more than one class session this semester, talk to me *in advance* and we will discuss options. This includes any absences related to COVID-19.

Office Hours: Due to COVID-19, all office hours will be held remotely via Zoom (link posted on Blackboard). Students are expected to attend office hours *at least* once, and I strongly encourage every student to meet with me within the first few weeks of the semester. Whenever possible, please schedule an appointment with me at least one hour in advance on YouCanBook.me (link posted on Blackboard). My regular office hours are on Mondays (1-4:30 pm) and Tuesdays (9:30 am – Noon), but do not hesitate to schedule an alternative time to meet if you cannot attend those hours.

Assignments: The political autobiography (750-1000 words) is a short, low-stakes opening writing assignment that gives students the opportunity to reflect on their own political identities. NOTE: If you took GOVT 344W last semester, you should focus your political autobiography on your personal relationship to, and present understanding of, progressivism and the political left. The midterm (1500-1750 words) and final (2250-2500 words) take-home papers assess students' ability to analyze the course texts and write a persuasive argument about them. The research paper (at least 3500 words) is an ongoing and iterative writing assignment requiring multiple drafts, revisions, and rounds of feedback from me and from your peers. It requires students to develop a research question and to answer it through work beyond the assigned texts. Finally, students will rewrite their political autobiographies from scratch as an autobiographical reflection paper (1000-1250 words) focused on how the course texts and themes have influenced the student's own political thinking. I will provide more details regarding these assignments once the course begins.

Components of Course Grade: Your grade in this course will be determined by the following:

- Seminar Participation: 10%
- Political Autobiography: 5%
- Midterm Paper: 20%
- Final Paper: 25%
- Research Paper (Memo, Proposal, Annotated Bibliography, Outline, First Draft, and Final Draft): 35%
- Autobiographical Reflection Paper: 5%

Academic Integrity: Breaches of academic integrity—including cheating and plagiarism—will not be tolerated in this or any other course at Hamilton. If you have any doubt about the details of the honor code you signed before registering for your first courses at Hamilton, review it now at https://www.hamilton.edu/student-handbook/studentconduct/honor-code. **Ignorance of the honor code is not a legitimate excuse for breaches of academic integrity.**

Course Schedule (Readings are to be completed prior to the seminar for which they are listed)

2/3, Week 1: Introduction – What is Progress?
French National Assembly, "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen"

****Sunday, 2/7: Political Autobiography DUE 11:59 pm via Blackboard****

2/10, Week 2: Liberal Democracy and the Liberal Tradition
Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of Illiberal Democracy"; Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (excerpt); Rogers M. Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America" (OPTIONAL)

****Monday, 2/15: Informal Research Memo DUE via email to Professor****

2/17, Week 3: Rousseau on Equality and Democracy
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*; Rousseau, *Social Contract* (excerpt); Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (excerpt)

2/24, Week 4: Left Liberalism
John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness* (selections); John Maynard Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion* (selections)

****Sunday, 2/28: Research Paper Proposal DUE 11:59 pm via Blackboard****

<u>3/3: WELLNESS DAY (NO CLASS)</u>

3/10, Week 5: Social Democracy and Democratic Socialism
John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*; Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (excerpts)

****Sunday, 3/14 Annotated Bibliography DUE 11:59 pm via Blackboard****

3/17, Week 6: Marx and Marxism
Karl Marx (various writings); David Harvey, "The Right to the City"

****Midterm Prompts Posted on Blackboard on Thursday, 3/18****

3/24, Week 7: Communism
TBD (tentatively: Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci)

****Sunday, 3/28: Midterm Paper DUE 11:59 pm via Blackboard****

3/31, Week 8: Left Anarchism
Mikhail Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy* (excerpt); Emma Goldman, "What is Anarchism?"; David Graeber, "The New Anarchists"

4/7, Week 9: Environmentalism
Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (excerpts); Barry Commoner, The Closing Circle (excerpts); Naomi Klein, "Capitalism vs. the Climate"

****Friday, 4/9: Research Paper Outline DUE 11:59 pm via Blackboard****

4/14, Week 10: Gender, Sexuality, and Feminism
Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (excerpt); bell hooks, Margin to Center (excerpts); Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"; Nancy Fraser, "How Feminism Became Capitalism's Handmaiden"

****Sunday, 4/18: OPTIONAL Midterm Rewrites DUE 11:59 pm via Blackboard****

4/21, Week 11: Racism and Emancipation
Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction* (excerpts); Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (excerpts); C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (book review); Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"

****Sunday, 4/25: First Draft of Research Paper DUE 11:59 pm via Blackboard****

4/28, Week 12: Colonialism and Empire
Aimé Césaire, "Discourse on Colonialism"; Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* (excerpt)
OPTIONAL: Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (excerpt)

****Sunday, 5/2: Research Paper Final Draft DUE 11:59 pm via Blackboard****

****Monday, 5/3: Final Paper Topics Posted****

5/5, Week 13: Populism, Republicanism, and Christian Socialism
Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven* (excerpts); Dorothy Day, (selected essays)

*****<u>MONDAY</u>, 5/10*****, Week 14: The Future of the Left
Aaron Sorkin, Script of "The Trial of the Chicago 7"

****Thursday, 5/13: Final Paper DUE 11:59 pm via Blackboard****

****Wednesday, 5/19: Autobiographical Reflection DUE 11:59 pm via Blackboard****