Course title: Political Ideas in Historical Context: from the French Revolution to Post-Communism

Language of instruction: English

Professor: Profesor Lector Camil Ungureanu

Professor’s contact and office hours: camil.ungureanu@upf.edu

Wednesday, 15.00-17-00 or by email.
Room: 20.116

Course contact hours: 45

Recommended credit: 3 US credits-5 ECTS credits

Course prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course

Language requirements: None

Course focus and approach: This is a course that focuses on history of the most influential political ideas and debates that shape our contemporary world. The approach will be interactive, and we will use of both written and audiovisual sources (cinema and documentaries). Theory will be always combined with the discussion of examples related to the United States, thereby making use of the background knowledge of the students.

Course description: This course represents a systematic introduction to the major political ideas that emerged and developed in Europe from the French Revolution to post-communism. The premise of the course is that political ideas always emerge and should be understood in specific historical contexts. Correspondingly, each class will start with an examination of the historical and cultural context, followed by an analysis of political ideas and arguments of representative authors such as E. Burke, A. de Tocqueville, J. S. Mill, K. Marx, F. Nietzsche. To this end, we will build connections between specific political ideas, works of art, and their historical context, in the attempt to better understand the modern and contemporary history of European civilization. The course will give a special weight to Spain as part of the broader European context, by discussing the main political moments and ideas that marked its modern and contemporary history.

Learning objectives:
1) The systematic knowledge of political ideas in their political and cultural context, focusing on Europe and Spain.
2) Understanding the specificities of the European civilisation in comparison to the American one.
3) Improvement of the capacity to construct informed arguments concerning political ideas and works of art.
4) Improvement of the capacity to present, question and debate major political and cultural issues.
**Course workload:** The lectures will provide the background for understanding representative texts by major thinkers such as E. Burke, A. de Tocqueville, J. S. Mill, K. Marx, F. Nietzsche, etc. Students will be asked to read and reflect critically on these texts in relation to their political and cultural context. We will also discuss in the class accessible audio-visual materials (cinema, documentaries) relevant for our topic. For each session students will have to read a text of approximately 25 pages.

**Methods of instruction:** The course is made of three elements; lectures, debates and short audiovisual materials. The goal of the course is to assist students in building their own informed and critical arguments on the course themes. Students will be strongly encouraged to participate in the class.

**Method of Assessment**
1. Midterm exam: 25% (short questions and text & images commentary)
2. Final exam: 30% (comprehensive)
3. Class participation: 15%
4. Term paper (and paper draft): 30%
   (!) A bonus will be granted to students who participate substantially in the class.

**Absence policy:** Excused absences will only be justified by an official medical report or probable family emergency. Any other reason will not justify an absence or change the date of an exam. The absence policy is the following:
3 absences: Student loses one point out of ten.
4 absences: Student loses two points out of ten.
5 absences or more: Student receives an “Incomplete” for the course.

**Classroom norms:** Students will have a ten-minute break after one one-hour session

**Weekly schedule:**
**WEEK 1 Introduction**

In the first class I will introduce the logic of the course, its methodology and main requirements.

**WEEK 2 The French Revolution and the Republican Ideology**

We will examine the origins and development of the French Revolution. In contrast to American republicanism which resulted in a federal state, French republicanism resulted in a unitary state.

**Required Readings**
WEEK 3 The Conservative Reaction to the French Revolution
We will examine the immediate consequences of the French Revolution and critical reactions to it such as E. Burke’s, the founder of modern conservatism. I will distinguish between conservative and reactionary thinkers. In the Spanish context, Balmes (a conservative) will be opposed to Cortes (a reactionary).

WEEK 4 The Emergence of Nationalism
We will examine the emergence of nationalism as being in part a reaction to Enlightenment and Napoleon’s military project. We will distinguish between liberal nationalism (e.g. Mazzini) and anti-liberal nationalism (e.g. Fichte).
Required Readings

WEEK 5 Origins and Development of the European Liberalism
We will examine the origins and evolution of liberalism both at the ideological and historical level. We will analyze the specificity of 19th century liberalism (e.g. J. S. Mill) which is linked to the colonizing mission of the “civilized” Europeans.
Required Readings

WEEK 6 The Industrial Revolution and the Socialist and Communist Critique
In this class we will examine the problems posed by the industrial revolution and the socialist and communist critique of them. We will distinguish between various forms of socialism and communism, i.e. statist/non-statist, revolutionary-democratic, etc.
Required Readings

WEEK 7 Europe in Crisis
We will discuss the stages of the crisis of parliamentary democracy which culminated in the two World Wars.
Required readings:

WEEK 8 The Russian Revolution and its aftermath
Contrary to Marx prediction, the communist revolution occurred in a largely non-industrialized country. We will discuss the causes and origins of the Russian Revolution, as well as the gradual emergence of totalitarianism in Russia and other communist countries.
Required Readings
Lenin, V. I., Selected Writings. Oxford University Press (selections).
WEEK 9 The Cold War
We will debate the main moments of the cold war, and the clash between the capitalist and socialist system.

Required Readings

WEEK 10 After the Fall of the Berlin Wall
We will debate the main theories concerning the fall of communism, and the main structural changes and events occurring after ’89.

Required Readings

Recommended bibliography:

1. For the general political and cultural background:


These three wonderful books are introductory yet complex. They are written by some of the best specialists in modern and contemporary history, and are very helpful in building connections between political and cultural dimensions.

2. For political thinkers, see the Cambridge Series of Political Thought edited by Q. Skinner and J. Tully (Burke, Marx, Mill, Herder). The series is impeccable and authoritative. The introductions are context-sensitive and manageable.

3. For the Spanish political thought in context, the most authoritative work is Abellán, J. L. 1996. Historia del pensamiento español. De Séneca a nuestros días. Ed. Espasa. Madrid.