

WEEK 1 - INTRODUCTION

If everyone hates politics so much, why does it exist?

- Politics is a consequence of people living together
- What makes us political?

Aristotle

- “Now the reason why man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere sound is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state.”
- Aristotle called politics the “master science” because politics—deliberation between self-ruling citizens about what was good and just—decided everything else that could happen.

Hannah Arendt

- “Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live ”
- “power needs no justification, being inherent in the very existence of political communities; what it does need is legitimacy ... Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow”

Republican View

- Public space
- Citizenship
- Participation
- Collective action
- Arguments over 'the good' (the common good)
- “a servant, a minor, all women, and generally anyone who must depend for his support (subsistence and protection), not on his own industry, but on the arrangements of others—all such people lack civil personality.”

The Boundaries of Politics are Political

- Whenever someone claims something “isn’t political,” they are making a political statement
- Control of boundaries of politics is political power
- A lot of political conflict is about the appropriate boundaries of politics

Power

1. Power of A to make B do something B would not otherwise do.
2. Power of A to limit the scope of B’s choices.
3. Power of A to make B believe that A’s preferences are in B’s best interests.

Hannah Arendt

- “While strength is the natural quality of an individual seen in isolation, power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse. . . . For power, like action, is boundless; it has no limitation in human nature, in the bodily existence of man, like strength. Its only limitation is the existence of other people, but this limitation is not accidental, because human power corresponds to the condition of plurality to begin with.”

Michel Foucault

- “Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude’, a ‘capacity’ which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turn it into a relationship of strict subjection.”

Carl Schmitt

- “Sovereign is he who decides upon the exception.”

Definition of the State

- “The monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a given territory.” (Weber)
- Legal mediator between competing interest groups. (Pluralism)
- “A committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.” (Marx)
- A “stationary bandit”. (Olson)

The Role of the State

- Make and enforce the most authoritative rules
- Take and redistribute resources
- Provide public goods
- Deal with other states

Politics and Violence

Some thinkers (Arendt, Crick) see politics as an alternative to violence - Foucault inverted von Clausewitz, so ‘politics is war by other means’

- Certainly we tend to think of democratic politics in these terms.
- However others emphasise the ever-present possibilities of violence because of the state’s monopoly of it.
- Politics which threatens state authority itself is likely to get very violent

Defining Politics

- Harold Lasswell - “Who gets what when, and how.”
- Bernard Crick - “a solution to the problem of order which chooses conciliation rather than violence or coercion”
- Kate Millett - “Power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of people is controlled by another.”
- Carl Schmitt - “The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is between friend and enemy.”

TEXTBOOK CHAPTER 1

Government and Governance

- Government: the institutions and offices through which societies are governed. Also used to describe the group of people who govern
- Also describes the highest level of political appointments, the entire community of institutions endowed with public authority
- Transforms anarchy to order, secures peace and promotes mutually beneficial cooperation
- Offers security and predictability - stability of law and its application
- How we can secure its undoubted benefits, whilst also limiting its inherent dangers
- ‘Who is to guard the guards themselves’ - Plato
- A political system: the interactions and organisations through which a society reaches and successfully enforces collective decisions.
- Governance: The process by which decisions, laws and policies are made, with or without the input of formal institutions
- Politics: the process by which people negotiate and compete in the process of making and executing shared or collective decisions
- Politics is a collective activity occurring between and among people, it involves making decisions on matters affecting two or more people, typically to decide on a course of action
- It is necessary because of the social nature of humans

Power

- The distribution and manipulation of power is at the heart of politics
- Power: the capacity to bring about intended effects. The term is often used as a synonym for influence, but is also used more narrowly to refer to more forceful modes of influence: notably, getting one’s way by threats

- Three dimensions: 1 - power should be judged by examining whose views prevail when the actors involved possess conflicting views on what should be done, 2 - the capacity to keep issues off the political agenda, 3 - covers the formation, rather than the expression, of preferences

The State, Authority, and Legitimacy

- The state provides the legal or formal mandate for the work of governments, allowing them to utilise the authority inherent in the state, the core guiding unit for comparison
- Authority - the acknowledged right to act, when subordinates accept the capacity of superiors to give legitimate orders, so that while an army general may exercise power, his authority is restricted to his own forces
- Legitimacy - the state or quality of being legitimate. A legitimate system of government is one based on authority, and those subject to its rule recognise its right to make decisions
- Ideology - a system of connected beliefs, a shared view of the world, or a blueprint for how politics, economics and society should be structured
- Anarchy - no governmental authority, free association and voluntary cooperation
- Marxism - elimination of the state system and private property will lead to the creation of a classless, non-exploitative and self-governing society
- Liberalism - individuals are the best judges of their own interests. Advocates a tolerant society which maximises personal freedom, and favours a government which is limited but freely elected
- Conservatism - traditional institutions and practises, free markets and decentralised government
- Fascism - national unity through an authoritarian state, strong leadership, mass mobilisation and militarism

Comparative Politics

- Definition - the systematic study of government and politics in different countries, designed to better understand them by drawing out their contrasts and similarities
- How political institutes and processes operate across the world

Classifying Political systems

- Typology: a system of classification by which states, institutions, processes, political cultures are divided into groups or types with common attributes
- Three Worlds System: a political typology that divided the world along ideological lines, with states labelled according to the side they took in the Cold War
- Political economy: the relationship between political activity and economic performance
- Gross national income: the total domestic and foreign output by residents of a country in a given year

TUTORIAL

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Monday 3-4pm office hours in Social Science Building Level 2 Room 4

MILLS

- The tyranny of man
- The puzzle of how they made progress but it was only limited in restricting government
- Loss of personality and individuality
- The attempts to limit power
- Political liberties and rights
- Constitutional checks on gov
- Ruled by others opinions
- The ruling elite controlled the democratic process
- The few not the many
- Absolutism and totalitarian state
- Freedom of opinion and thought
- Questions the status quo - Jesus, Socrates
- Freedom of action - must not impact others rights and liberties
- The Harm Principle

WEEK 2 – LIBERALISM

What is a political ideology?

Ideologies arose to fill the vacuum created by social, economic and cultural forces that together constitute 'modernity'

- Belief in the Bible and Jesus came into question - began to look for other explanations
- Considered people as property - gave way to owning labor power
- Royals and aristocracy tried to argue they were descendants of God - could convince their serfs of this
- Decline of feudalism and the Divine Right of Kings (1600-)
- The Renaissance (1600-) - Florence and Da Vinci, Machiavelli - the return of classical values (the human at the centre of the Universe, beauty, rationality, logic, form)
- The Age of Enlightenment (1700-) - France and England - scientific rationality and progress, can re-engineer society based on a rational design
- The rise of heterodox beliefs and secularism - reshaping humans on a more egalitarian basis
- Political and economic turmoil in Europe (1700s and 1800s) - capitalism emerges and spreads, new social forces, revolutions in England, France, Russia, America - gave opportunities to rethink and reform society

What are the different tendencies within liberalism?

- Liberalism can be defined in various ways, but (nearly) every version gives primacy to the value of individual liberty (hence liberalism) over other values, such as equality and justice.
- The individual is at the center - if they are given full reign, we will have a flourishing society
- Is it the collective society rather than the individual? Liberalism starts at the individual and works outwards
- However, liberalism is not a doctrinally based ideology.
- Or rather, a number of different doctrines have been adopted by liberals - liberalism is thus a plural and open-ended ideology with different tendencies
- Liberalism is thus a flexible, adaptive set of ideas - as society has developed, liberalism has evolved with it

Classic Liberalism (Adam Smith, J.S. Mill, F.A. Hayek)

- The liberty of individuals to do what we want is paramount
- Allowing us to exercise our freedom is beneficial to society as much as ourselves - a view that if we allow them to flourish and be independent, it will naturally benefit society as they are happier and more productive
- Even if it isn't beneficial, as long as it doesn't harm others then there is no ground for state intervention - harm principle - the state should only intervene where there is a real and immediate risk of us doing harm to ourselves or others, otherwise we should be allowed to do whatever we want
- Autonomy - the freedom to do harm to yourself and control your own destiny
- Indirect harm to others by hurting yourself doesn't count
- Less government intervention for the benefit of the individual
- Liberty encourages creativity, risk-taking and entrepreneurship - means there is a big scope to do what we want and that this is beneficial to society
- It thus underpins a dynamic economy, which in turn is beneficial to others.
- We should encourage self-regarding behavior as an end in itself, and also as a means of securing a flourishing society - encourages selfishness for the sake of motivation and entrepreneurship
- Minimal statist: guard against monopolies, provide money, safeguard property - fear of companies buying up competitors and preventing competition and therefore economic growth
- Why should the state be the sole provider of money? The state is a servant to the people
- Belief in a state to protect private property and to safeguard goods earned by entrepreneurship
- The role of tax - low taxes appeal to Classic Liberalists
- Democracy is a means to an end, not an end in itself - ambivalent, to prevent majoritarianism - the limited state - separation of powers to provide checks and balances, federalization and sub-sectioning of society
- Representation - the purpose of representative government is not to prevent them from governing themselves but to prevent them from being misgoverned

Deontological Liberalism (Kant, Locke, Nozick)

- Individuals are "ends in themselves"

- They have to be protected not only from the encroachment of others, but also by the encroachment of the state - driven by fear
- Individuals should be endowed with "rights" - of more fundamental importance than any definition of the common good - life, liberty and property
- The task of the state is primarily to protect our rights - rights are everything as they protect the individual from the state
- We need to be protected from the prospect of greater state intervention through a bill of rights and constitutional protections

Utilitarian Liberalism (Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, Karl Popper)

- Natural rights are "nonsense upon stilts" (Bentham) - the doctrine of rights is a theology, shows that Liberalism is not as secular as it aims to be
- Changed vision of Liberalism that moves away from the Bible, radicalizing it and secularizing it for the modern world - more scientific basis
- Individual liberty is a good only to the degree that it provides a benefit for society - that it optimizes happiness for everyone
- There is no biblical basis - the only thing that should inform our belief is "what can benefit the greatest number of people" - cannot know until you try and test different strategies
- The task of the state is continually to be mindful of the saying that what is just is what creates the best outcomes (the utility principle) - even when this risks infringing the liberties/rights of some
- There is no 'absolute' or natural right to be free

Political Liberalism (Paine, Rousseau, Wollstonecraft)

- Whilst rights are fundamental to civilized living, we can and do argue about what kind of rights we ought to respect - why only life, liberty and property?
- This presupposes an on-going conversation about the balance between individual rights and social obligations
- Puts rights into motion - doesn't take them as God-given commands, we should discuss what rights should be prioritized
- And also about expanding the sphere of rights to include those who might otherwise be excluded - women, indigenous, children, animals
- Liberalism thus has to be underpinned by with democratic institutions to encompass new claims - what kind of community, obligations and responsibilities we have as citizens
- Liberalism is nothing without democracy

Social Liberalism (T.H. Green, L.T. Hobhouse, J.M. Keynes)

- Individuals cannot exercise freedom when they are denied the means of existence, education etc. - felt that without a regard for how society was constituted, the rights of some people are compromised
- Unfettered capitalism is antithetical to freedom because it fails to provide the basic minimum without which we cannot function as individuals
- The market thus needs to be underpinned by minimum welfare provision to ensure basic needs are met
- Failure to do so will increase inequality, promote resentment of wealth and therefore destabilize the social compact without which no society can function.
- The social consequences of deep inequality - crime, robbery and violence
- Unequal societies are the most vulnerable to instability
- Compare Scandinavian nations to Sub-Saharan Africa

Liberal Egalitarianism (John Rawls, G.A. Cohen, Ronald Dworkin)

- A minimally just society is one that treats people equally - key difference
- Liberals are traditionally suspicious of equality as it often connotes the involvement of the state
- Inequalities can only be tolerated where they are to the benefit of everyone ("Maximin principle")
- No social arrangements are inherently more just than any other, but can only be seen as just in the light of the overall distribution of goods
- We want a dynamic and creative society, but we only tolerate that inequality when it benefits the whole society
- The market and capitalism are not prerequisites of a just society - a central allocative agency that can determine how just the allocation of goods (the state) is
- Statists

Scott Morrison

- Economic vs. social liberals

Conclusion

- The differences within the liberal tradition are just as striking as the similarities
- Liberalism can support and sustain all manner of different regimes - from an extreme “minarchy” (Nozick) at one end to the welfare state and social democracy at the other.
- But ultimately liberalism has prospered as the dominant ideology of capitalism - a belief in the primacy of individual liberty and the limited state.
- Other ideologies withered as capitalism’s reach broadened via colonialism, imperialism and globalization
- Now liberalism is “hegemonic” - the background ideology we don’t even notice.

TUTORIAL QUESTIONS

1. Why are there so many different liberalisms?
2. Should liberty be considered of more fundamental value than equality?
3. How convincing is J.S Mill’s case for liberty?
4. Should we agree that individuals are ‘the best, indeed the sole judge of their own interests’? Think of some counter-examples.
5. In Mill’s account an unemployed person sleeping rough is just as free as the millionaire sipping champagne on his cruiser in Sydney harbour. Any problems?

WEEK 3 – CRITICS OF LIBERALISM

LECTURE

Who are the main critics of liberalism?

- Anarchism
- Socialism
- Marxism
- Nietzsche

Idealism, Power and Utopia

- Like anarchism, socialism as a response to the rise of capitalism and growing inequality
- Socialists argues that equality and the collective should be seen as primary to individual liberty
- Core to socialism is a belief in the collective ownership of production, as opposed to private wealth and privilege
- Collective could mean small-scale or large-scale industrial production
- Socialists differ on the means to achieve socialism.
- Some argued for a violent overthrow of the state (Blanqui, Robespierre)
- The social democrats argued for a more peaceful, gradualist or parliamentary approach (Bernstein, Kautsky)
- There’s also a rich strain of utopian socialism which sets the issue of means to one side in favour of describing an ideal society (Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, William Morris)

Karl Marx - from socialism to Communism

- Marx is the most important left critic of liberalism
- Key for Marx is the disavowed origin of private property in “primitive accumulation”
- Liberalism seeks to convince us that it is “hard work” and diligence that delivers huge wealth to a small number - In fact it is exploitation of the vast majority through capitalist expropriation.
- Capitalism is however unsustainable and must give way to socialism and thence communism – “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs”.
- Communism is the “solution to the riddle of history”