Sample Syllabi – Subject to Change
The State: Its Origins, Justification(s), and Destiny

Course Instructors:
Primary Instructor: Joseph Cloward

Description: For thousands of years, humans have organized themselves in political communities we refer to broadly as ‘states.’ In the contemporary world, nearly all humans are organized in states, from Albania to Zimbabwe. States are diverse and governments take many forms, but each claims authority over citizens, subjects, and territories. What is a state and how did states come to be? How do they justify the authority they exercise? Is their authority ultimately justifiable? How will states change in the future? This course takes a long view of the history of the concept of the state through Western history, considering how different political thinkers have justified, criticized, explained, or rejected the existence of states. From Plato to Marx to contemporary political scientists and philosophers, we’ll examine a range of arguments put forward to explain and justify states and critiques of states as they have existed at different points in history. Ultimately, we’ll seek to develop our own understanding of what a state is and what might justify states’ authority, if anything can.

Students will develop critical reading skills as we study political theory texts central to the traditional and contemporary canon. They will learn to reconstruct arguments charitably and critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments. Through discussion and writing, they will learn to put philosophical arguments in conversation with each other in order to understand how political theory develops as a collaborative discipline over time. Students will learn and practice basic skills in philosophical writing by constructing their own basic arguments as they put other thinkers’ ideas into conversation with each other in order to address problems faced by contemporary states. They will further develop their writing skills by practicing outlining, workshopping, drafting, and revising a short final essay.

Course Materials: All readings will be available in Canvas.

Assignments & Expectations:
Students should expect to spend about 2 hours working on the course outside of class time, with some additional work to complete on weekends.

Assignments for the class include:
- Two response papers, 500-750 words each, one due on a day of your choice in Weeks 1-2 and one due on a day of your choice in Weeks 3-4.
- A recorded group presentation video.
A final paper, 1500-2000 words.

**Grading Breakdown:**

Reading & Participation – 20%
Response Paper 1 – 10%
Response Paper 2 – 10%
Final Paper – 30%
Group Project – 30%

**Attendance:**

Attendance is expected and is part of your participation grade. If you miss a session, you will be expected to write an additional response paper to make up that day’s participation.

**Class Format & Schedule:**

Class meets synchronously Monday – Friday. All students will meet together 6 hours each week for lecture. Students in the course will be divided into two sections, meeting for 2 hours each week in a discussion led by the Teaching Assistant and for 2 hours each week doing project-based learning (PBL), led by the Primary Instructor.

**Outline of Topics, Readings & Course Activities:**

1.1 – What is the State?

- In-class: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, excerpts
- In-class: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter 27, excerpt
- In-class: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, chapter 2, excerpt
- In-class: Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, chapter 3, excerpt

1.2 – Discussion Sections

- No Readings

*Part 1: Origins of the State*

1.3 – Ancient Origin Stories: Myth & Imagination

- Herodotus, Book 1.96-100
- Herodotus, Book 3.70-88
- Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 1.1-1.8
- Plato, *Republic*, Book II, 368c-376d
1.4 – (Discussion Sections)

- No Readings

2.1 – Ancient Origin Stories: Lawgivers & Constitutions

- Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, ch. 1-4
- Read at least one: Plutarch, Lives of Lycurgus, Solon, Numa Pompilius
- Preambles of The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution

2.2 – Early Modern Origin Stories (1/2 Discussion Section)

- Hobbes, *Leviathan*, excerpt
- Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, excerpt

2.3 – Modern Origin Stories (1/2 Discussion Section)

- Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*, excerpt
- Olson, *Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development*

2.4 – Centralization and the Nation-State

- Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, chapter 2
- Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, pp. 1-5, 14-32
2.5 – (Discussion Sections)

- No Readings

Part 2: Justifications of the State

3.1 – Legitimacy

- Arendt, *What is Authority?*, excerpt
- Weber, *The Three Types of Legitimate Rule*

3.2 – Social Contracts (1/2 Discussion Section)

- Locke, *Second Treatise*, excerpt
- Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, excerpt

3.3 – Social Contracts (1/2 Discussion Section)

- Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Lecture IV, excerpt
- Raz, *The Morality of Freedom*, chapter 2, excerpt

3.4 – Critiques of the Social Contract

- Hume, *Of the Original Contract*, excerpt

3.5 – (Discussion Sections)

- No Readings

4.1 – The Anarchist Challenge

- Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority*, Chapter 1
- Reading from *The Anarchist Reader* TBD
4.2 – Critiquing the Modern State from the Right (1/2 Discussion Section)

- Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, excerpt

4.3 – Critiquing the Modern State from the Left (1/2 Discussion Section)

- Marx, *On the Jewish Question* and *Critique of the Gotha Program*, excerpts
- YouTube Video: Debate between Chomsky and Foucault on the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

4.4 – The Anti-Colonial Critique of the Modern State

- Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, “On Violence”

ASSIGNMENT DUE – LAST DAY TO SUBMIT RESPONSE PAPER #2

4.5 – (Discussion Section)

- No Readings

ASSIGNMENT DUE – FINAL PAPER: INTRO & OUTLINE

Part 3: The Destiny of the State

5.1 – Cosmopolitanism

- Kant, *Idea of a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*
- Pogge, *Cosmopolitanism & Sovereignty*

5.2 – The Withering Away of the State (Discussion Sections & Group Presentations)

- Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*
- Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, chapter 5, especially section 2

ASSIGNMENT DUE – GROUP PRESENTATION VIDEO

5.3 – Defending the State (Discussion Sections & Group Presentations)
• Sun Yat-sen, San Min Chu I, The Three Principles of the People, Lectures 3-4, excerpts
• Stilz, Territorial Sovereignty, Chapter 1, pp. 1-22

5.4 – Reimaging the State

• Arendt, On Revolution, chapter 6

ASSIGNMENT DUE – FINAL PAPER: FIRST DRAFT DUE

5.5 – Discussion Sections & Group Presentations

• No Readings

ASSIGNMENT DUE – FINAL PAPER: FINAL DRAFT DUE