COURSE INFORMATION

Description: What is “society,” and what should it be. That question, in different forms, lies at the heart of many of the central works of Western political philosophy. This seminar explores the question whether the various social structures and practices that govern our lives – the modern state and democratic citizenship, the market economy and the division of labor – are actually good for us: whether they tend to cultivate the best parts of us as human beings, or tend to stifle them. In this seminar we will focus on three main texts that address this question from differing perspectives: Plato’s Republic, Thomas Hobbes’s Leviathan, and Karl Marx’s (and Friedrich Engels’) The Communist Manifesto (and related writings). Each student will synthesize these different perspectives and work toward their own answer to the question whether society as we know it helps or hinders the full achievement of human potential.

Mission: Loyola Marymount University’s mission is to encourage learning, to educate the whole person, and to serve faith and promote justice. “Society and its Discontents”
serves this mission by challenging students to master texts of political theory central to the development of Western attitudes toward the good life and the just society.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** The following are the principal aims of the course:

1. **Students will understand, appreciate, and begin to pursue actively the intellectual rigor and academic excellence that define an LMU education.**

2. **Students will become familiar with a range of political and philosophical perspectives on modern society,** in particular those presented in three key texts in the Western political and philosophical tradition;

3. **Students will learn to carefully examine and critically engage in scholarly discourse concerning these classic philosophical and political texts,** acquiring a richer appreciation of the sources of some of Western culture’s most influential moral and political ideas as well as a greater critical awareness of those ideas’ merits and deficiencies.

4. **Students should improve in their capacity for interpretive and normative argument, both written and oral,** including specifically the ability to arrive at coherent and compelling interpretive and normative conclusions and to express those views in speech and in writing with greater focus, clarity, force and sophistication.

5. **Students should improve in their ability to conduct college-level inquiry and research,** including being able to evaluate sources for quality and acquiring more effective research and library usage skills.

6. **Students should grow intellectually and personally as individuals and as active citizens.**

**Prerequisites/Recommended Background:** None.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

There are two main course requirements used in assessing the course grade: course participation (40%) and three essay assignments (60%).

(1) **Course participation:** constitutes 40% of the course grade, subdivided into individual writing assignments (course blog assignments, reading comprehension quizzes, peer editing assignments, etc.) (10%); information literacy exercises (10%); and oral communication activities (course discussion participation and discussion leadership) (20%). More information on these components will be given in class.
Class Discussion: Student discussion will be a key purpose of many of our class meetings and will therefore constitute a significant part of the course grade. Students are also expected to contribute to class discussion. Contributions to discussion will be evaluated for quality rather than frequency – where thoughtfulness, preparation, creativity and imagination, and listening and responding to others’ contributions are the main indicators of quality for evaluating discussion performance. Other exercises designed to promote effective discussion, such as pop quizzes or speed writing, may be counted as part of the discussion portion of the grade. Students will also be assigned specific days to take a leadership role in the course discussion, including an introductory oral presentation: information and guidance on this will be provided both in class and in individual meetings with the instructor. Students should be prepared to have their political and philosophical views challenged, and to discuss fundamental moral and political values respectfully and rigorously with those who may hold different views.

Discussion Leadership: Seminar member will be assigned specific class sessions to serve as discussion leaders. During their assigned week, discussion leaders will review all the blog contributions of other seminar members, then consult with the instructor and other student discussion leaders to determine main topics and methods for the day’s discussion. Students should make an appointment in advance with the instructor prior to the day they serve as discussion leader to work out this strategy. (Any student whose class or work schedule strictly precludes meeting during those hours should notify the instructor and make alternative arrangements well in advance).

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all class meetings, having carefully prepared all assigned readings. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting. Students can have three absences for any reason; students lose 1% off the course participation grade for every absence beyond this threshold.

(2) Essay Assignments: collectively, these constitute 60% of the course grade.

a. First essay, which should be 5-6 pages long, and which will constitute 15% of the course grade. First draft is due October 3, revised draft is due October 7, final version is due October 15.

b. Second essay, which should be 5-6 pages long, and which will constitute 15% of the course grade. First draft is due October 31, revised draft is due November 4, final version is due November 12.

c. Final essay, which should be 10-15 pages long, and which will constitute 30% of the course grade. First draft is due November 22, revised draft is due December 2, final version is due December 9.
COURSE POLICIES

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty will be treated as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that can range from receiving no credit for assignments/tests to expulsion. It is never permissible to turn in any work that has been copied from another student or copied from a source (including Internet) without properly acknowledging the source. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth in the “LMU Honor Code and Process” which appears in the LMU Bulletin 2010-2011 (see: http://www.lmu.edu/about/services/registrar/Bulletin/Bulletins_in_PDF_Format.htm).

Additionally, it is not permissible to turn in work for a class that has been previously submitted in part, or in whole, for credit in another course. Any doubts or questions related to this policy should be brought to your Instructor as soon as they arise and before you turn in the work.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to have prepared adequately with respect to the assigned readings. It is not necessary to obtain prior approval from the instructor when missing a meeting is unavoidable. Students bear the entire responsibility for the decision to miss class and for whatever effect that may have on their course grade or their learning experience. Repeated absences will affect the discussion and attendance portion of a student’s grade, as detailed in the course requirements section.

Composition Instruction: The Writing Instructor (Mr. Haas) will work with students on all written assignments for the class, particularly the essays and the final paper. He will collect drafts and respond to them in conference sessions and after final polished essays are turned in. You are welcome to turn in a draft to him at any time. Each essay will have three drafts leading up to the final polished draft.

Email Communication: At times the instructors will communicate with the entire class using campus email systems, so it is essential that you regularly check your lion.lmu.edu email address or forward your lion account email to your preferred email address.

Emergency Preparedness: To report an emergency or suspicious activity, contact the LMU Department of Public Safety by phone (x222 or 310-338-2893) or at the nearest emergency call box. In the event of an evacuation, follow the evacuation signage throughout the building to the designated safe refuge area where you will receive further instruction from Public Safety or a Building Captain. For more safety information and preparedness tips, visit: http://www.lmu.edu/emergency

Expectations for Classroom Behavior: You are expected to engage in this course with honesty of voice and integrity of scholarship and to show respect for staff, professors, and other students in accordance with LMU’s Lion’s Code and Community Standards Student Conduct Code (Section IV.D), both available from the Office of Student Affairs.
Disruptive behavior which is persistent or significantly interferes with classroom activities may be subject to disciplinary action. A student may be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs if their behavior constitutes a violation of the conduct code.

**Late Penalties:** Assignments must be turned in at the designated time and place. Not turning in an assignment on time is unacceptable except with the prior agreement of the seminar instructor (which will be given only in exceptional circumstances). Accordingly, a penalty of **up to a full letter grade** may be assessed for each day the assignment is late.

**Office Hours:** The instructors look forward to meeting with students during regularly scheduled office hours, or by appointment when meeting during office hours is not possible. Students who would like to discuss issues raised in the course further than class discussions will permit, or students who encounter difficulties with the course or the assigned material, are especially encouraged to attend office hours.

**Special Accommodations:** Students with special needs who require reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning, Physical, or Psychiatric) needing academic accommodations should contact the DSS Office (Daum Hall 2nd floor, 310-338-4216) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit: [www.lmu.edu/dss](http://www.lmu.edu/dss) for additional information.

**Tentative Nature of the Syllabus:** If necessary, this syllabus and its contents are subject to revision; students are responsible for any changes or modifications distributed in class.

**COURSE TEXTS**

The following texts are required and are available for purchase at the university bookstore:


In addition, the following text is required and should be purchased in electronic form (instructions on finding it will be given in class):


Other primary and secondary sources will be available on electronic reserve or by handout.
COURSE SCHEDULE

The topics for discussion and assigned readings for each class session are listed below. Students should prepare the designated readings for each session before arriving to class.

Introduction

August 26 (M) – Introduction

August 28 (W) – Plato, “Crito” (BB)

  Rebecca Moore Howard, Writing Matters (“WM”), ch. 1

  Recommended: Melissa Lane, “Socrates and Plato” (BB)

August 30 (F) – Writing Session #1 – WM chs. 3 and 33

September 2 (M) – NO MEETING: Labor Day Holiday

Plato’s Republic

September 4 (W) – Plato, Republic, Book I

September 6 (F) – Writing Session #2 – WM chs. 10 and 29

September 9 (M) – Plato, Republic, Book II

September 11 (W) – Plato, Republic, Book III

September 13 (F) – Writing Session #3 – WM ch. 11

September 16 (M) – Plato, Republic, Book IV

September 18 (W) – Plato, Republic, Book V

September 20 (F) – Writing Session #3 – WM chs. 4 and 5

September 23 (M) – Plato, Republic, Book VI

September 25 (W) – Plato, Republic, Book VII

September 27 (F) – Plato, Republic, Book VIII

September 30 (M) – Plato, Republic, Book IX
October 2 (W) – Plato, Republic, Book X
October 3 (R) – FIRST ESSAY, first draft due to writing partner, 12:00pm
October 4 (F) – Writing Session #4 – WM ch. 6 (w/ peer editing in class)
October 7 (M) – Assigned journal article (to be determined)

FIRST ESSAY, first revision due, in class

October 8-10 (T-R) – INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS, WRITING INSTRUCTOR

Hobbes’s Leviathan

October 9 (W) – Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Introduction, ch. 6, 13
Recommended: Richard Tuck, “Hobbes’s Life” (BB)

October 11 – (F) – NO MEETING: Autumn Holiday

October 14 (M) – Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, chs. 14-15

October 15 (T) – FIRST ESSAY, final revised version due, 12:00 pm

October 16 (W) – Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ch. 16-19

October 18 (F) – Writing Session #5 – WM chs. 13, 17 + Info Lit Module (ILM) #1

October 21 (M) – Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ch. 20-21

October 23 (W) – Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ch. 24, 29-30

October 25 (F) – Writing Session #6 –WM chs. 14-15 + ILM #2-3

October 28 (M) – Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, chs. 31-32, 43

October 30 (W) – Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Review and Conclusion

Assigned journal article (to be determined)

October 31 (R) – SECOND ESSAY, first draft due to writing partner, 12:00pm

November 1 (F) – Writing Session #7 – WM chs. 16, 18, 58 (w/peer editing in class)
Karl Marx

November 4 (M) – Karl Marx, *The Portable Karl Marx*, pp. 131-146, 155-158

Recommended: Terrell Carver, “Reading Marx” (BB)

**SECOND ESSAY, first revision due, in class**

November 5-7 (T-R) – INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS, WRITING INSTRUCTOR

November 6 (W) – Karl Marx, *The Portable Karl Marx*, pp. 146-152, 158-173

November 8 (F) – Writing Session #8 – WM chs. 19-20, 22 + ILM #4

November 11 (M) – Karl Marx, *The Portable Karl Marx*, pp. 173-195

November 12 (T) – **SECOND ESSAY, final revised version due, 12:00pm**

November 13 (W) – Karl Marx, *The Portable Karl Marx*, pp. 203-217

November 15 (F) – Writing Session #9 – WM chs. 31-32, 39

November 18 (M) – Karl Marx, *The Portable Karl Marx*, pp. 218-228

November 20 (W) – Karl Marx, *The Portable Karl Marx*, pp. 228-241

November 22 (F) – Assigned journal article (to be determined)

**FINAL PAPER, first draft due to writing partner, 5:00pm**

November 25 (M) – Writing Session #10 – WM chs. 30, 54-55 (w/peer editing in class)

*November 27-29 (W-F) – NO MEETING: Thanksgiving Holiday*

December 2 (M) – **FINAL PAPER, first revision due, 12:00pm**

December 2-4 (M-R) – INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS, WRITING INSTRUCTOR AND SEMINAR INSTRUCTOR (no course meeting)

December 6 (F) – Conclusion

December 9 (M) – **FINAL PAPER, final revised version due, 12:00pm**