**PPL 493 GEOGRAPHIES OF CONSERVATISM**

FALL 2022

LOTT 113

Tuesday-Thursday 4.00-5.15

*The portraits below (from left to right) are Russel Kirk (with Pres. Reagan), author of the revitalization of conservative thinking in 20th Century US; Oswald Spengler, German philosopher of history that emphasize the cyclical and metaphysical nature of human experience against a materialist and progressivist view of the world; and Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini, who re-vitalized the medieval Islamic legal tradition for the modern world. By discussing the intellectual contribution of these and other thinkers in their geographical and historical context, this class aims at an academically rigorous overview of a variety of intellectual traditions, which stood against the emergence of the modern world to preserve continuity in social orders, political structures, and worldviews. The first section of the course analyzes the philosophical roots of Anglo-American traditionalist conservatism, to then compare it with a diverse array of movements in different sociopolitical spaces. In so doing, it traces philosophical similarities and differences between those movements, to conclude with the resulting different stances in policies. The goal is to show how different institutional make-ups in state and non-state actors enable different forms of conservatism.*

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**Office hours:** by appointment

**COVID safety protocols**

1) If students test positive for COVID-19 at any health care facility, they must report it to the Student Health Center (https://coronavirus.olemiss.edu/report/ or 662-915-7274) and they must follow directions from the healthcare provider and isolate. If faculty and staff test positive for COVID-19, they should contact the Employee Health Service at 662-915-6550.

2) Students with COVID-19 should seek medical attention by a healthcare provider and contact their instructor to let them know that they will be missing class due to a health-related issue.

3) If you need to isolate due to contracting COVID-19 at any point this semester, you must do so, and email me as soon as possible. I will work with you to help you continue your progress in the course. In your email, state how long you expect not to attend class. I not be able to provide recordings of class sessions; however, you can follow class via zoom (see zoom protocol below). You will have access to your texts, my course content, and our Blackboard course site. More information on isolation protocols can be found at https://healthcenter.olemiss.edu/covid-19-faqs/. Follow the most up-to-date guidance from the CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html.

4) Quarantines are an important tool for controlling the spread of the virus. More information on quarantine protocols can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/if-you-were-exposed.html.

**Zoom protocols**

**1)** students will be able to attend the class remotely if quarantined or sick, or for other reasons. Zoom will be on during class discussions. **Students following via zoom must keep the camera on and be visible for the entire duration of the class.**

**Description**

This course compares and contrasts relatively distinct political philosophies centered upon the preservation of continuity – in social norms, institutional structures, and world views – against the onslaught of modernity – understood as the diffusion of philosophies and worldviews rooted in the Enlightenment, industrial societies, and the secularization of the political sphere. It particularly focuses on the 20th Century, when modernity reached its highest point, and a few relatively isolated thinkers attempted to resist it by reframing and rethinking traditionalist views of the world and of politics. In so doing, this course argues that *geography matter*, i.e. that the specific institutional frameworks and legacies that shaped the diffusion of modernity in specific places and spaces, also shaped the opportunities of traditionalist philosophers. The key assumption of the course is that – since the Socialist *Internationale* of the 19th Century – the modernist view of the world embodied by Left wing political movements has spread alongside a global network of mutually recognized and supportive intellectual and political movements. On the other hand, traditionalist, conservative, political thought has remained to a greater degree insular, and thus exhibited a greater variety of responses to the challenges of modernity.

Drawing on key thinkers in a wide array of geographical areas, this course is arranged in an introduction and three sections. The introduction outlines the world view that characterized European and (in part) Asian pre-modern societies, and discusses how the emergence of the modern State and the philosophies of the enlightenment began to erode it. The first section is devoted to the emergence of Anglo American conservatism to its culmination in the 20th century, focusing on its long, coherent goals of preserving a spiritual view of the world, a sacred mission for the State, and an established, hierarchical social order. The second is dedicated to the continental European ‘literature of the crisis’ of the early 20th Century, based on the notion of a decline of the West due to a loss of its metaphysical roots. Due to the influences of medieval chivalric thoughts, and to the direct confrontation with Communism after the Russian revolution, this tradition has a stronger militant and metaphysical bent. The last section, more limited in scope, provides a brief overview of how some thinkers in the Islamic and Confucian traditions drew upon their respective pasts to respond to modernity. The goal of this section is to show that conservatism is not only a Western phenomenon. In a nutshell, we will describe conservatism as a system of thoughts that looks at the past for the solution of contemporary and future problems, and in so doing rejects a purely materialist vision of the world. Such system of thoughts may or may not result in political movement and the advocacy for specific policies.

Students will carry out weekly readings, write response papers, make presentations and lead discussions on specific readings, write one policy analysis.

**Learning objectives/assessments**

1. Students will analyse philosophical debates about conservatism in different contexts. Assessment: midterm and final exam; homework assignments
2. Students will describe the extent to which these philosophical debates enter the public sphere. Assessment: graded class discussion
3. Students will analyze how the various positions within the conservative movement shapes contemporary public policy. Assessment: research paper

**Disclaimer**

This course will be extraordinarily hard. Mainstream academic reading is constantly updated by recent scholars, who write consistently (and actually shape) how we view the world. Instead, here we will read – in some cases – old texts, that may NOT be politically correct and DO NOT reflect the world view we are used to. As a result, understanding and analyzing their arguments will more difficult than usual.

Extreme civility and humility are required. This course is designed to be a SAFE SPACE for people to listen and be heard, regardless of their stance on the issues under discussion. At any given class time I expect the following behavior: PROFESSIONALISM: come prepared; if on a given day you really cannot read in-depth, state and apologize to the group; limit your interventions accordingly; offer your service to the group (i.e. take notes, take time, etc). CIVILITY: give everyone time and space to talk; show appreciation for other people's points. KINDNESS: if someone is shy or has difficulty understanding the material, give the person space, invite him/her to talk.

**Acknowledgement:**

This course is the outcome of a collaboration with Daniele Tiberio, independent scholar and friend. Daniele and I thank Christopher Preble, Atlantic Council, and Dr Claes Ryn, Catholic University of America, for their support and mentorship. We also thank former PPL students Wills Hay, Barron Mayfield, Mallie Imbler, and Megan Krynen for their encouragement.

**Description of examinations**

Policy analysis 30%

Homework assignments & discussions 30%

Midterm 20%

Final exam 20%

**Grading Scale**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A + | 97-100 |  | C+:  | 77-79% |
| A:  | 94-100%  |  | C: | 74-76% |
| A-: | 90-93% |  | C- | 70-73 |
| B+: | 87-89%  |  | D: | 60-69% |
| B: | 84-86% |  | F: | Below 60% |
| B-: | 80-83% |  |  |  |

**Grading standards**

**A range**: the task has been fully completed, bringing new and original insights to the work. Basically, you need to go beyond what is expected in the assignment. The A range will be graded on a curve, comparing A level works in each given assignment.

**B range:** an upper B grade corresponds to a perfect execution of the task assigned (consisting of a combination of style and fulfillment of instructions, as well as persuasiveness when needed). A low level B means there are some minor areas of improvement in the execution of the task.

**C range:** various levels of imperfection in style, fulfillment of instructions, or persuasiveness (for example, student writes a good paper, but uses a smaller amount of sources than required, or uses sources not appropriate to the level of the assignment).

**D:** Obvious deficiencies in understanding the assignment, highly problematic stylistic choices.

**F:** Student did not carry on the assignment as requested

**Attendance and other Policies:**

The University requires instructors to verify the attendance/participation of students in ALL courses within the first two weeks of the semesters. Formal verification of student attendance/participation will be done in the second week of classes.

In this class, attendance is mandatory throughout the semester. Homework assignments will count as verification. Unjustified continuous absence for more than two weeks will result in an F grade at the end of class. Cumulative unjustified absence for more than eight classes (30% of class) will result in an F grade.

‘Unjustified absence’ is an absence without previous agreement with the instructor via email, phone or other means.

Unjustified late assignments (except homework) are not accepted. “Unjustified late assignment” is an assignment turned in after the deadline without previous consent of the instructor. Late homework are NOT accepted. Instead, students will be able to miss up to 4 homework with no penalty

Queries on grades may result in a lower grade.

Honor code applies.

Syllabus subject to change

**Texts:**

**Online readings only; either posted on blackboard or available through hyperlinks on syllabus.**

**SCHEDULE**

**INTRODUCTION. Setting the stage**

*This introduction ‘sets the stage.’ First, it describes the characteristics of the society that English conservatives in the 18th century attempted to preserve, especially a) a religious view of the world; b) the emphasis on precedent and continuity; and c) the idea of nobility and social hierarchies. Second, is analyses how the Enlightenment philosophy, the scientific revolution, and the emergence of the modern State began destroying such society*

**Week 1 – traditional societies**

**August 23-25**

Whitlow, Mark (1996) The Byzantine world view, pp. 134-138 in *The making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025,* London, Red Globe Press

Melvin Bragg, October 11, 2007 “The divine right of kings” *In Our Time BBC Radio 4*. Listen at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0080xph>

**Week 2 – the Enlightnment, sovereignty and modernity**

**August 30-September 1**

Rousseau (1968) Book 1 in *The social contract* Penguin Books (pp. 1-20) this is also available as audiobook

Melvin Bragg, June 30, 2016. “Sovereignty” *In Our Time BBC Radio 4.* Listen at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07hhvxx>

Michael Biggs. Putting the state on the map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation. *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* 41(2) April 1999: 374-405.

**SECTION 1 *The making of Anglo-American conservatism***

*This section discusses the origin of Anglo-American conservatism as a reaction against the social disruption brought by the abandonment of traditional worldviews, in favor of a materialistic view of the world based on individualism, the modern State, and the scientific revolution. Responses included an emphasis on prudence, restraint, moral values driven by spirituality, and precedent*

**Week 3** **Burke**

**September 6 - 8**

Burke, E (1993) *Reflections on the revolution in France* Oxford, Oxford University Press 16-44; 48-52; 82-94; 149-157

**Week 4** **Babbitt**

**September 13-15**

Babbitt, I. (1924) *Democracy and Leadership* Indianapolis, Liberty Classics (Foreword, introduction, chapters 2,3,7)

**Week 5 Russel Kirk**

**September 20-22**

Kirk, R. (1986) *The Conservative Mind. From Burke to Elliott.* 7th edition (Chapter 1 The idea of conservatism; Chapter 2 Burke and the politics of prescription Chapter 4 romantics and utilitarians 5 Southern conservatism: Randolph and Calhun)

**Week 6** *Midterm prep and midterm*

September 27-29

**MIDTERM**

**SECTION 2 *European conservatives: the ‘literature of the crisis’***

*This section discusses the notion, brought forward by a group of continental European thinkers of the early 20th Century, of a ‘crisis of the West.’ Formed by the traumatic experience of WW1 and confronted with the Russian Revolution, these thinkers first argued that the Western civilization as they knew it was in its final phase, marked by the abandonment of an older system in favor of ‘something new’, which is not necessarily good. Their analysis has a stronger metaphysical flavor than the Anglo-Americans: they foresaw civilization collapsing, the end of the Modern World, and the emergence of a new type of human being shaped by the machine*

**Week 7 Spengler**

**October 4-6**

Spengler (1963) *The Decline of the West,* Oswald Spengler by Arthur Helps (pp 9-16) and Introduction (pp 29-61)

*INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH PAPER*

**Week 8 Juenger**

**October 11-13**

Juenger (2017) *The worker* Foreword and ‘Technology as mobilization of the world through the form of the Worker” (pp. vii-xix and 97-126)

**Week 9 Evola-Guenon**

**October 19-20-25**

Guenon, R. (1942) *The crisis of the modern world* Chapter 1 the dark age, Chapter 3 Knowledge and Action

Evola, J, Godwin, J. (2002) *Men Among the Ruins: Post-War Reflections of a Radical Traditionalist* Chapter 1 revolution, counter-revolution, tradition; Chapter 2 sovereignty, authority, imperium, Chapter 3 Personality, freedom, hierarchy

**SECTION 3 Islamic and Asian conservatisms**

**Week 10** **Khomeini and Wu Mi**

**October 27-November 1-3**

Khomeini, R. Algar (1970) *Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist.* Introduction; The Necessity of Islamic Government; The Form of Islamic Government <https://www.iranchamber.com/history/rkhomeini/books/velayat_faqeeh.pdf>

Xuezhao, W. (2004) The Birth of a Chinese Cultural Movement: Letters Between Babbitt and Wu Mi (introduction and two letters of your choice) [http://www.nhinet.org/wu17-1&2.pdf](http://www.nhinet.org/wu17-1%262.pdf)

Chang-Woei, W. (1999) On Wu Mi’s conservatism <http://www.nhinet.org/ong.htm>

*Research paper 1st draft*

**Week 11 SECOND EXAM** *Prep and exam*

*November 8-10*

**Week 12** Flex week – speakers

November 14-18

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**November 22-29**

**CONCLUSIONS**

**Week 12**  *CLASS WRAP UP AND OPEN QUESTIONS*

November 30-December 2

**Final exam, Wednesday, Dec 7, 4 pm RESEARCH PAPER**

**POLICY MEMO: CONSERVATIVE POSITION IN A POLICY DEBATE**

**Goal:** the goal of this memo is twofold: the first goal is to analyze a specific policy proposal (or position in a policy debate) that you consider to be ‘conservative. You can analyze a specific policy put forward by either party or group within a party – such as, for example, state-level laws limiting abortion, or alternatives to healthcare policies proposed by various groups; you can also analyze a specific position or strategy, such as, for example, challenging certain liberal policies in the courts. The second goal is to link the proposal with conservative philosophical positions (not limited to those discussed in class). What makes the proposal or position you are studying conservative? For example, if you are studying the opposition to abortion or healthcare you will need to explain what conservative principles justify such opposition. The third goal is to analyze how the proposal – and the groups supporting it – relate to mainstream party politics. In this section you need to discuss how the groups pushing forward the proposal lobbied and persuaded the main parties to support it. In so doing, the aim is to distinguish between the main parties and conservatism as a policy and philosophical stance: although we tend to identify conservatism with the Republican Party, this is not always the case. For example, there is a minority of anti-abortionists in the Democratic Party, while positions on immigration are split within parties along lines that are not always clearly identifiable as progressive or conservative.

**Structure.** The first part of the paper builds upon what you have learned in PPL 101, and especially in Kraft Furlong, *Public Policy. Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives,* Washington, CQ Press, 2007.Part 2 ‘Analyzing Public Policy’ pp. 92-179. The second part is similar to a research paper, in which you discuss why certain groups identify a policy or a position as conservative. This section will require independent research on more contemporary conservative authors, as the authors read in this class rarely had a direct influence on policy. The third one is against policy-focused, discusses how a specific party adopted the policy position through lobbying and alliances.

**STEP 1.** Review PPL 101.

**STEP 2.** Choose the broad policy or position you want to research. Your topic should focus on a national or state-level policy proposal in the US, or on specific actions in the courts to curb or promote certain policies (if you are interested in a local or international issue, please discuss your idea with the instructor beforehand). You can focus on either a current or a past issues. If you choose to analyze past issue, please remember it does not matter which party “won”; instead, you need to analyze who supported the position or policy, why, and how it made it (or did not make it) to a party platform. Examples of policy proposals or positions include, but are not limited to, the opposition to healthcare reforms (and the alternatives proposed by conservative groups), free trade agreements (both past and present), military interventions/withdrawals, immigration reforms, wearing face coverings in public buildings, gun control, mask mandates, and any other debate of your choice.

Please write a three-page report defining A) the broad policy proposal or position you will investigate and B) the specific groups advocating for the proposal, and C) the conservative principles used by proposal advocates (for example, pro-gun advocates often cite the second amendment. Explain why protecting a constitutional amendment is a conservative position). You should quote an appropriate number of sources (at least five), both policy and scholarly.

Here is a list of conservative scholars writing on contemporary issues; feel free to use them, only if they are relevant to your topic

* Gregory Schneider, *Conservatism in America Since 1930*, 1-65, 91-106, 169-225, 259-272, 300-335, 373-378, 401-423.
* Claes Ryn, “How Conservatives Failed ‘the Culture’.”<http://nhinet.org/failed.htm>
* Claes Ryn, *America the Virtuous.*
* Justin Garrison, “A Covenant With All Mankind: Ronald Reagan’s Idyllic Vision of America in the World.”<http://www.nhinet.org/garrison21-1.pdf>
* Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, Introduction, Chs. I, IV, 156-164, VI, 294-323
* Claes Ryn, “History and the Moral Order” \*
* Claes Ryn, “Allan Bloom and Straussian Alienation.”
[http://www.nhinet.org/ryn18-1&2.pdf](http://www.nhinet.org/ryn18-1%262.pdf)
* Joseph Baldacchino, “The Value-Centered Historicism of Edmund Burke.”
<http://nhinet.org/burke.htm>
* Claes Ryn, “From Civilization to Manipulation.”
<http://www.nhinet.org/ryn22-1.pdf>

**STEP 3.** Prepare a 2500-3000 word (bibliography included) policy analysis merging Step 2 with additional work that A) analyzes the policy position in detail, making sure to present excerpts of speeches, documents, and data outlining the position in detail; B) includes both scholarly and policy sources (at least 10, preferably 15); C) uses graphs and visuals.

The format must be the following:

**Executive Summary or Abstract**

**Introduction**

**Background:** this section describes thepolicy proposal or position

**Policy support and action** this section describes the groups that are supporting the proposal and the actions they took. It must contain data and visuals

**Principles endorsed** this section discusses the principles, or reasons why supporters see such proposal as ‘conservative’ (here you need to cite conservative thinkers, relying on your research and not only on class)

**Positions in the main party** this section discusses whether or not one of the parties endorsed the proposal, and how the supporters lobbied for it

**Conclusion: Outcome of the proposal or position (if a past issues), or status of the debate (if current)**