Professor Helena Rosenblatt

Hist 72100 The History of Liberalism from Locke to Rawls
Tuesday 4:15-6:15 p.m. 3 credits
Hrosenblatt@gc.cuny.edu

Course Description:

This course is an in-depth introduction to some of the founding thinkers and texts of the liberal tradition. We will read canonical texts and works of interpretation in an effort to answer questions such as: What do we mean when we speak of liberalism? What if any, are its core principles and values? What is alive and what is dead in the liberal tradition? We will focus on works by Locke, Wollstonecraft, Rousseau, Constant, Mill, Green, Spencer, Hobhouse, Hayek and Berlin, and finish with an examination of Rawls. Main themes: Property and the Role of Government; Women’s Rights and Roles; Social Contract and the Individual; Morals, Empire and Race.

Course Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to
* Read texts more critically and effectively
* Identify and summarize key arguments in texts in an articulate and persuasive manner, verbally and in writing
* Demonstrate an understanding of the principal ideas in the history of liberalism

Course Requirements:

* Regular and intelligent class participation demonstrating thorough reading of all assigned materials: 30%
* One-page analytical summaries of the weekly readings and two interesting discussion questions for each class: 30% (Summaries must be handed to me at the beginning of class; questions must be emailed to me and the class by 8 a.m. on Tuesday) (FIVE over the course of the term)
* A 20 page paper on one liberal text. Topics must be decided and approved by March 13; final paper submitted by May 14. No late papers will be accepted. 40%

Jan 30 Introduction: What is Liberal about Liberalism?


**Feb 6 Method**


**Feb 13 John Locke: Two Treatises of Government**

A) Social Compact and Property

*Two Treatises of Government*


**Feb 20 NO CLASS (Classes follow Monday schedule)**

**Feb 27 John Locke: Two Treatises of Government**

B) Women and Slavery.

Butler, Melissa. “Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: John Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy” in Shanley, Mary Lyndon and Pateman Carole eds. *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*. Text will be provided


March 6 Wollstonecraft and the Birth of Feminism

A Vindication of the Rights of Woman


Nussbaum, Martha C. "The Feminist Critique of Liberalism," The Lindley Lecture, The University of Kansas 1997. Text will be provided


March 13 Rousseau and Democracy

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract. There are many easily obtainable editions.

James Miller, Rousseau. Dreamer of Democracy, chapter 5. Text will be provided.

March 20 Benjamin Constant, Theorist of Liberalism

Benjamin Constant, The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation, Part One (“The Spirit of Conquest”)

Principles of Politics Applicable to All Representative Governments (1815 version)
Beware that the oll. Libertyfund version is NOT the 1815 version, despite the fact that it implies that it is.

“The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns”

All three texts can be found in Constant, Political Writings, ed. Biancamaria Fontana, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

March 27 John Stuart Mill and Individuality

On Liberty

The Subjection of Women

Both can be found in On Liberty and The Subjection of Women, Alan Ryan ed., Penguin Classics.

They can also be found at http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/mill-on-liberty-and-the-subjection-of-women-1879-ed

March 30-April 8 Spring Break

April 10 Liberalism and Empire

Jennifer Pitts, A Turn to Empire. The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France, intro and chapter 5.

Uday Mehta, Liberalism and Empire. A Study in Nineteenth Century British Liberal thought Chapts 1-4

Gregory Claeys, Imperial Sceptics, British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920, ch 3.


April 17 Two Kinds of Liberalism: Laissez-faire or the Welfare State

Herbert Spencer, The Proper Sphere of Government, twelve letters (1842-3) or Man versus the State, 1884

both available at


https://books.google.com/books?id=BuChalE-Z4UC&pg=PA365&lpg=PA365&dq=T.H.E.+Hill+liberal+contract&source=bl&ots=yQ2056ExG3&sig=_MyL_JYN3OrMAUape-iRyAfwq3g&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiLjLj0TXAhXtSN8KHdoUADIQ6AEIRzAF#v=onepage&q=T.H.E.%20Hill%20liberal%20contract&f=false

and selections from LT Hobhouse, Liberalism, pages tba

https://www.gutenberg.org/files/28278/28278-h/28278-h.htm
April 24 Race Science and Eugenics


May 1 John Dewey, F. A. Hayek, Isaiah Berlin

John Dewey, selected essays.
Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”

May 8 Rawls

John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, pages to be announced.

May 15 The Stakes


Selections from/reviews of Pierre Manent and Larry Siedentop, Mark Lilla

https://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/does-trumps-rise-mean-liberalisms-end