

## POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Neuwaldegg Institute Summer Seminar – August 13-19, 2006

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Political philosophy is the inquiry into the character of the best or most just political order, in light of enduring principles of human nature and ethics on the one hand and the changing character of human society on the other hand. It examines the question, what is justice?, in recognition of the integrity of the human person; it also asks, what is the common good?, since human beings find our fulfillment through association with one another and so are, in some sense, part of a larger whole. Perhaps because politics claims as its concern the comprehensive human good, the tradition of political philosophy has developed through the study of great books; because political science is a practical science, it aims to address leading issues here and now.

With this in mind, our syllabus has been designed around the question of democracy, the dominant political regime of our age – in reputation, at least, if not in practice – and its principles of liberty and equality. More precisely, we will look at constitutional democracy, which aims both to embody the authority of the people as a whole and to ensure that government proceeds lawfully, with respect for the rights of individuals and of civil society more generally. What are the goods that democratic government protects? What are its dangers and its limits? Does it succeed in securing justice and the common good? We will approach these questions through reading a series of recent or contemporary essays (required), as well as parts of two classic texts (recommended): St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* and Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Lectures will address the recommended readings as well as the required ones, but the instructor recognizes that close study of major texts is impossible within the parameters of a single week's institute covering multiple academic fields.

As is evident from the title of one of these texts and from several of the articles as well, our study of the political philosophy of constitutional democracy will takes its bearings from the United States. This is not to suppose that American government ought to be blindly imitated by emerging democracies, much less that the American system is above criticism. Still, by virtue of its longevity and its influence on world power, American constitutionalism recommends itself to the attention of those in search of the best or most just regime.

### SYLLABUS:

#### *Session One: Political Philosophy & the Contemporary Predicament*

- Pierre Manent, "The Return of Political Philosophy," *First Things* 103(May 2000): 15-22  
<http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0005/articles/manent.html>
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol I, introductory chap. [recommended]  
<http://religionanddemocracy.lib.virginia.edu/library/tocs/TocDem1.html>
- St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, qq. 90-92 [recommended]  
<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/>

**Session Two: Sovereignty of the People, Natural Law, & Constitutional Democracy**

- F.A. Hayek, "Liberalism: Systematic," from *Enciclopedia del Novicento*  
<http://www.angelfire.com/rebellion/oldwhig4ever/systematic.html>
- Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., "The Debate on the Constitution," *New Criterion* 12 (1) (September 1993) <http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/12/sep93/mansfld.htm>
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol I, ch 3-4, 15-16 [recommended]
- Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, qq. 94-95 [recommended]

**Session Three: Economic Liberty & Civil Society**

- F.A. Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," 35 (4) (September 1945): 519-30  
<http://www.virtualschool.edu/mon/Economics/HayekUseOfKnowledge.html>
- Michael Novak, "Capitalism Rightly Understood: The View of Christian Humanism"  
*Faith and Reason*, September 1991  
<http://www.ewtn.com/library/business/fr91401.htm>
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol I, ch 9-12 [recommended]
- Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, qq. 96-97 [recommended]

**Session Four: Religious Liberty**

- Richard John Neuhaus, "A New Order of Religious Freedom," *First Things* 20 (February 1992): 13-17 <http://www.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft9202/articles/neuhaus.html>
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol I, ch 17; vol II, pt 1, ch 5-7 [recommended]  
<http://religionanddemocracy.lib.virginia.edu/library/tocs/TocDem2.html>
- Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, qq. 10-11 [recommended]

**Session Five: Local Liberty: Federalism & Subsidiarity**

- Michael Greve, "Laboratories of Democracy," *Federalist Outlook* (April 2001)  
[http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.12743/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.12743/pub_detail.asp)
- Robert A. Gahl, "Common Good, Sovereignty, and Subsidiarity"  
[http://www.thomasinternational.org/conferences/20040718palermo/gahl\\_commongood.htm](http://www.thomasinternational.org/conferences/20040718palermo/gahl_commongood.htm)
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol I, ch 5; vol II, pt. 2, ch 1-8; pt 4, ch 1-5 [rec.]
- Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 104 [recommended]

**Session Six: Justice & the Common Good**

- Leo Strauss, "Liberal Education and Mass Democracy," from Robert Goldwin, ed.,  
*Higher Education and Modern Democracy* (Chicago, 1967)  
<http://www.ditext.com/strauss/lib2.html>
- George Weigel, "The Free and Virtuous Society: Catholic Social Doctrine in the Twenty-First Century," 2004 Tyburn Lecture  
[http://www.eppc.org/publications/pubID.2107/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.eppc.org/publications/pubID.2107/pub_detail.asp)
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol II, pt 1, ch 1-4, 8-10; pt 4, ch 6-8 [rec.]
- Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 58 [recommended]

NOTE: Editions of Tocqueville more recent than the online translation, like the French original, divide vol. I into two parts (or books), after ch 8; hence what appears online as vol I, ch. 13, will be vol I, pt 2, ch. 5.