

PO201-30 Political Theory From Hobbes: Seeking Freedom and Equality

24/25

Department

Politics & International Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Miri Davidson

Credit value

30

Module duration

22 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

How should human beings be governed? Could societies function without private property? Is violence justified as a response to grave social injustice? What does it mean to 'decolonise'? Political Theory from Hobbes invites students to critically confront the ideas of some of the most important (predominantly) European political and social thinkers since about 1640, with special reference to their best-known works. These include Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*, Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, J. S. Mill's *On Liberty*, Mill and Harriet Taylor's *The Subjection of Women*, Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk*, Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Martin Luther King's writings on non-violence, and Angela Davis's *Women, Race and Class*. The module will consider how these ideas inform contemporary debates in political theory, such as debates about Black Lives Matter, no-platforming, decolonisation, climate change, and intersectionality.

The module builds on ideas explored in *Introduction to Politics* during your first year, and it leads towards the third year module, *Issues in Political Theory*, which deals with present-day arguments

about social justice.

Module aims

This module aims to give you the skills to understand and critically evaluate the political philosophy of some of the most important European (and American) writers from 1640 onwards. You will be encouraged to read widely in both the primary and secondary literature concerning these writers, and to apply their ideas to current events. We aim to develop your understanding of how political theory is shaped by the context in which it was written (whether civil war, colonialism, or fascism) and by underlying assumptions about human nature, property, class, race, and gender.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Throughout the module, we will study texts such as the following: Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*, Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, J. S. Mill's *On Liberty*, Mill and Harriet Taylor's *The Subjection of Women*, Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk*, Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Martin Luther King's writings on non-violence, and Angela Davis's *Women, Race and Class*.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of how political thought relates to issues concerning freedom, equality, human nature, and forms of oppression.
- Interpret and assess critically the best-known texts of some of the most important western European political and social thinkers from Hobbes to Fanon, drawing, if appropriate, on a diverse range of thinkers from both within and outside western liberal thought.
- Confront and assess key sets of ideas in political theory, and present and defend your point of view in writing.

Indicative reading list

Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*, Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, J. S. Mill's *On Liberty*, Mill and Harriet Taylor's *The Subjection of Women*, Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk*, Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Martin Luther King's writings on non-violence, and Angela Davis's *Women, Race and Class*.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Subject specific skills

On completion of this module, you should be able to:

Demonstrate an understanding of how political thought relates to issues concerning freedom, equality, human nature, and forms of oppression.

Interpret and assess critically the best-known texts of some of the most important western European political and social thinkers from Hobbes to Fanon, drawing, if appropriate, on a diverse range of thinkers from both within and outside western liberal thought.

Confront and assess complex sets of ideas in political theory, and present and defend your point of view in writing.

Transferable skills

The module provides students with opportunities to acquire and to develop the following key skills:

Critical thinking and analytical skills. This involves identifying premises and conclusions of arguments; determining whether the conclusions follow from the premises; and understanding the practical implications of theoretical commitments.

Close textual analysis skills. This involves interpreting a complex text, and distilling from it various interconnected lines of argument.

Oral communication skills. This involves communicating complex ideas in person and responding constructively to the view of others.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (50%)
Seminars	18 sessions of 1 hour (50%)
Total	36 hours

Private study description

For private student and independent learning, students are expected to read and study the core and supplementary texts, as well as reflect on each week's seminar questions.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A3

	Weighting	Study time
Critical review	30%	
Students are asked to explain a key argument from a particular historical thinker, and then evaluate this argument by considering its strengths and/or weaknesses. In doing so, the critical review should develop its own overall argument.		
Essay	70%	
Students are asked to write an essay in response to a question posed (students have a list of questions from which to choose). The essay should develop an argument in response to the question.		

Feedback on assessment

Exams and essays are marked according to criteria set out in the Undergraduate Handbook

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UPOA-M100 Undergraduate Politics
- UPOA-M16A Undergraduate Politics and International Studies
 - Year 2 of M16A Politics and International Studies
 - Year 2 of M16A Politics and International Studies
 - Year 2 of M16A Politics and International Studies
- Year 2 of UPOA-M168 Undergraduate Politics and International Studies with Chinese
- Year 2 of UPOA-M169 Undergraduate Politics and International Studies with Chinese (3 year)
- Year 2 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology
- Year 2 of UPOA-M163 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and French
- Year 2 of UPOA-M164 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and German
- Year 2 of UIPA-L2L8 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Global Sustainable Development
- Year 2 of UPOA-M166 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Hispanic Studies
- Year 3 of UPOA-M165 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Italian
- Year 2 of UPOA-M162 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Quantitative Methods

This module is Core optional for:

- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
- UPHA-V7MM Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 2 of V7MS Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major) (with Intercalated Year)
 - Year 2 of V7MS Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major) (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 2 of UIPA-L2L8 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Global Sustainable Development

This module is Optional for:

- UECA-3 Undergraduate Economics 3 Year Variants
 - Year 2 of L100 Economics
 - Year 2 of L100 Economics
 - Year 2 of L100 Economics
- UECA-LM1D Undergraduate Economics, Politics and International Studies
 - Year 2 of LM1D Economics, Politics and International Studies
 - Year 2 of LM1D Economics, Politics and International Studies
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law

This module is Unusual option for:

- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 2 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)
 - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law

This module is Core option list A for:

- UECA-4 Undergraduate Economics 4 Year Variants
 - Year 2 of LM1H Economics, Politics & International Studies with Study Abroad
 - Year 2 of LM1H Economics, Politics & International Studies with Study Abroad

- UECA-LM1D Undergraduate Economics, Politics and International Studies
 - Year 2 of LM1D Economics, Politics and International Studies
 - Year 2 of LM1D Economics, Politics and International Studies
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
- UPOA-M164 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and German
 - Year 2 of M164 Politics, International Studies and German
 - Year 3 of M164 Politics, International Studies and German
- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law

This module is Core option list B for:

- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 2 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)
 - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)

This module is Core option list C for:

- Year 2 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
- UPOA-M166 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Hispanic Studies
 - Year 2 of M166 Politics, International Studies and Hispanic Studies
 - Year 3 of M166 Politics, International Studies and Hispanic Studies
- Year 3 of UPOA-M165 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Italian
- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law

This module is Option list B for:

- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics

This module is Option list E for:

- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law