

Political Treatises That Changed the World

CSS 330

**Room Online
Spring 2021
Friday 2-4**

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This sequence in the junior tutorial covers what many consider the most influential political treatises ever written. Each one had pervasive impacts on how people came to think about politics as well as impacts on human behavior. These works truly changed history. The emphasis each week will be on scrutinizing the content these treatises and attempting to ascertain why these works were so “great.” We will analyze all facets of the arguments to determine the sources of their enormous impact. Many great thinkers penned their ideas. People read many things. What was it about these works that gave them such a greater appeal to the human mind? Why these books? Why these arguments? Ultimately, we seek some sort of understanding of why certain works inspire well beyond the norm. Is there a pattern to the content of arguments that truly mesmerize people? Or is it some random function of time and place? All such questions and issues will be the analytical lenses through which we scrutinize these monumental works.

Requirements

There will be three 5-page weekly papers for the first six weeks: you can choose to write papers for any three of the six weeks. In addition, there will be a longer 20-page research asking each student to pen their own most intimate political views in an attempt to impact the way people think about the world. The final week will be devoted to students’ presentations of their own treatises. The prompt for the short paper will be: evaluate the messages and arguments in these historic treatises and comment on why they had such a major impact. The final prompt will be to: write your own political treatise that changes the world.

Grading

Participation and mastery of the readings:	1/3
Weekly papers:	1/3
Final research paper: your own treatise:	1/3 Deadline TBD

Readings

Plato, Republic

Machiavelli, The Prince

Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto

John Stuart Mill, On Liberty

Martin Luther King Jr., Why We Can't Wait

Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique

Disability Resources

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860/685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

WEEK 1: Coming Out of the Cave: Plato, Republic

February 12/ April 2

WEEK 2: The Ultimate Primer on Power Politics: Machiavelli, The Prince

February 19/ April 9

WEEK 3: A New Twist on History: Marx, The Communist Manifesto

February 26/ April 16

WEEK 4: Unshackling the Chains of Governance: John Stuart Mill, On Liberty

March 5/ April 23

WEEK 5: Dreaming of a New World: Martin Luther King Jr, Why We Can't Wait

March 12/ April 30

WEEK 6: Another Twist on History: Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique

March 19/ May 7

WEEK 7: Presentations

March 26/ May 14

Students will make presentations to the class on their treatises.