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Department of Politics

327. REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL THOUGHT

Robert W. Sutherland, Instructor

December 2004

PRINTING : [Click here](#) for a conveniently printed version of the course outline.

REACHING THE INSTRUCTOR: [E-mail](#) is the best method. Others are slower and less certain. My extension is 4226, but I rarely check voice mail, so if you need to talk with someone who will get a message to me, call the South Hall Faculty Secretary, Cheryl Dake, ext. 4283.

CLASS MEETINGS: South Hall 300; see [schedule](#) below

TEXTS: *Empire* by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri; Burke, *Works of Edmund Burke*, Vols 1 & 2. Online texts by Marx.

GRADES:

PAPERS and PRESENTATIONS--50%, final paper (30%); oral presentation (20%) Topics to be Announced.

EXAMS--50%, including a mid-term (20%) and a final exam (30%).

OTHER POLICIES--Missed exams & presentations may not be made up; credit may be reassigned for documented (e.g. Trauma Center Registration Receipt) emergencies. Both the Final Exam and the Final Paper remain with me for future reference in revising and improving the course. They can be picked up at my office immediately after Politics 327 is offered again. Portions of the *Catalogue* on adding and dropping courses and portions of the *Compass* on dishonesty in academic work are incorporated here by reference. A discount of 5% will be applied to the grades of late papers, except for documented emergencies.

GRADING SCALE: A = 1750-2000, A- = 1650-1749, B+ = 1550-1649, B = 1450-1549, B- = 1350-1449, C+ = 1250-1349, C = 1150-1249, C- = 1050-1149, D+ = 950-1049, D = 850-949, D- = 750-849, F = 000-749.

The number of points possible on any given exam or paper is the product of 20 points times the importance measured in percent of the final course grade. For letter grade equivalents, multiply the percentage times: 18 = A, 17 = A-, 16 = B+, 15 = B, 14 = B-, 13 = C+, 12 = C, 11 = C-, 10 = D+, 9 = D, 8 = D-.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING ORAL PRESENTATIONS: Grades are determined by performance in content and style. Strength in content depends on a clear presentation of main ideas, careful subordination of explanation or examples, and close attention to logical transition. Elements of style include skill in referring to notes (**do not read a prepared text**) and keeping eye contact across the audience, in managing the time available (**do not exceed 5 minutes**), and in oral expression (**watch rate of speed and volume in speaking**) and variety of emphasis (**use of means other than the words themselves to get your point across**).

SYNOPSIS:

I. [REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT](#)--Ancient (Aristotle, Locke, Am. Rev.) vs. Modern (Rousseau, French Rev., Marx & his legacy)

II. MARX--Revolutionary Impulse and the General Cure of Human Misery by Science & Revolution

- A. Misery & its cure in *On the Jewish Question*
- B. Science & the glory of violent action in *The Communist Manifesto*
- C. Castro and globalization

III. Wisdom of Experience in Balancing Conservation & Change

- A. Burke on the American Revolution
- B. Burke on the French Revolution

IV. *Empire*: Marx for the 21st Century?

ASSIGNMENTS--To be done before class on the day indicated:

Day

Week I: Day 2-- 9:30: Marx, [*On the Jewish Question*](#); 1:30:Marx, [*The Communist Manifesto*](#)

Week II: Day 1--9:30: Castro, Speeches on World Health & Revolution, Revolution in the Countryside, U.S.& "the system,"

2--9:30: Castro, Speeches on Neo-liberal Globalization#1, #2, the Press, Democracy, & the "Empire;" "[The Barbaric World Order...](#)" "[Cuba's Achievement and America's Wars](#)"[President Bush at West Point; World Under the rule of Nazi Concepts & Methods](#)

3-- 9:30:Burke, [*Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*](#)

4-- 9:30: Burke, [*Speech on Moving His Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies*](#)

5-- 9:30:Burke, [*Reflections on the French Revolution*](#), pp. 87-196

Week III: Day 1-- 9:30: Burke, [*Reflections on the French Revolution*](#), pp.196-365

2 - **NOON: MID-TERM EXAMINATION: Essay Question**

3--9:30: *Empire*, Preface, pp. 22-27, 42-63, 101-120, 132-134

4-- 9:30: *Empire*, pp. 137-156, 172-182, 198-203, 205-218

5---**NOON: Optional Rough Draft of the Final Paper Due**; See "[...Evaluating Papers](#)"

Week IV: Day 1- 9:30: *Empire*, pp. 221-237, 244-256, 269-272, 304-348

2-- 9:30: *Empire*, pp. 353-413; Oral Presentations

3-- 9:30: Oral Presentations

4--9:30: Oral Presentations

5- 8:00 **FINAL EXAMINATION; FINAL PAPER DUE:**

STUDY QUESTIONS ON *THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO*

1. What is the class struggle & how is it related to revolutions in the means of production?
2. What is the bourgeoisie, its personality, culture, & the contradictions leading to its demise?
3. What is the proletariat, its stages, struggles, & its vanguard?
4. What does Marx think about: communism, freedom, bourgeois individuality, bourgeois families, historicism & democracy, differing kinds of socialism & the place of communism in the political struggle?

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR CASTRO

1. How, in the May 14th speech, does Castro update the revolutionary impulse by applying it to Cuban experience and then expanding it to world concerns?
2. How, in the June 3rd speech, was the Revolution accomplished and what achievements of the Revolution does Castro stress? To what extent is tourism a challenge to socialism and how does it evoke a revolutionary emphasis on science? How does Castro address terrorism?
3. How, in the June 20th speech, does Castro's discussion of education set up his attack on the "system?" Write a paragraph characterizing Castro's use of the term.
4. How, in the July 3rd speech, does Castro link the "system" to "neo-liberal globalization?" What alternative globalization does Castro propose? How does he link it to Christianity? Why does Castro initially compare globalized imperialism to the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam but then use very different terms to explain it in a larger Caribbean context?
5. What, in the August 21st speech, does Castro mean when he says that "an artificial economy has turned the world into a large casino"
6. How, in the November 12th speech, are press and the state related under socialism and capitalism? How does Castro enlist "communication" and "communicator" against the "empire." What will be the "empire's" fate and how will it be brought about? How does Castro respond to those worried about democracy in Cuba?
7. What features establish the barbarism of the current world order, according to Castro
8. What evidence supports the cataclysmic end of such an order? How will Cuba fare in the aftermath?
9. What purpose is served by the first half of Castro's 2003 speech and, according to Castro, why is Cuba's revolutionary destiny a result.
10. What qualities of U.S. leadership and policy make it neo-fascist? What concern does it provoke about future U.S. policy towards Cuba and other socialist countries?

STUDY QUESTIONS ON BURKE

Assignment I

Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents (1770)

1. What distinguishes common or general complaint from the distemper and discontent which Burke addresses?
2. What is the Grenville government's response? Why has the "great object of policy" for that government gone unnoticed?
3. What were the desires of the king and a faction of the court? By what methods does the faction seek to prevail as a cabal?
4. How does a system of favoritism differ from a mixed government with discretionary power? How does such a system differ from a free commonwealth in which Parliament acts as it should?
5. What objection to the importance of popular support does Burke cite and how does he reply to it? What is the "grand principle" for the plan of favoritism? Does it serve the interest which it claims to advance?
6. What is the purpose of the House of Commons and what two symptoms indicates its corruption? What reformation does Burke seek and how is it to be accomplished?

Assignment II

Speech on Conciliation with the American Colonies (March 1775)

1. What stages does Burke's interest in America go through (identify at least four) and to what purpose does he finally dedicate himself?
2. What three considerations help to determine whether Parliament ought to concede? What six sources are especially relevant to the third?
3. What three ways of proceeding does Parliament confront? Which will not work and why?
4. What is left and what six propositions are likely to accomplish it?

Assignment III

Reflections on the French Revolution, I

1. How important is the term "regulated liberty," used by Burke in the third paragraph? Explain in a well-developed statement Burke's distinction between such liberty and the "simple view" of liberty?. What is its relationship to liberty and power?
2. What is Burke's initial estimate of how important the French Revolution is? Who is Dr. Price and what does Burke think of his use of the pulpit?
3. What three claims do Dr. Price and the Revolutionary Society advance?
4. What considerations provide a key to Burke's reply to each?
5. How does Burke defend the right to property, especially large accumulations of it?
6. How does Burke contrast his understanding of human "rights" to those who defend the French Revolutionaries?
7. What is "the worst of the politics of revolution"? What "natural feelings" or "sentiments" is Burke especially concerned to recognize or defend and how does he do so?
8. Briefly describe the philosophy based on "moral imagination" and contrast it to what Burke calls "barbarous philosophy."
9. What does Burke mean when he says that "religion is the basis of civil society, . . ." (185) What is the principle of "consecration" and why is a "perfect democracy . . . the most shameless thing in the world." (189) Why is consecration important for English political life generally, for jurisprudence, for understanding society as a contract.

Assignment IV

Reflections on the Revolution, II

1. What instruction and consolations does Burke expect to be drawn from consecration? Why are they important in responding to Marx on human misery? How does Burke distinguish between the confiscators and the reformers?
2. What harm, both direct & indirect, does Burke see done by the Revolutionary policy on church property in France?
3. What groups are the strongest supporters of the policy and what is their basic purpose? What considerations lead Burke to advocate reform of the nobility and clergy as a better policy?
4. What are the "causes" of "storms" in public life, what are the pretexts? How is history perverted, especially by intellectuals and writers? What is the real reformation they seek?

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR *EMPIRE*

Reading Assignment One:

1. How is the "Empire" different from imperialism?
2. Why is the U.S. privileged among nations of the Empire? How is it related to what the authors call their

"political task"?

3. What is meant by "the construction of Empire is good in itself but not for itself"?
4. Why does the "local Left" negate liberation? What is the Res Gestae and how does it proceed to victory as proletarian internationalism goes down to defeat?
5. Explain, briefly, the mole and the snake. Why does al Qaeda seem improbable as a struggling proletariat even though it matches remarkably the definition and lessons of 21st century struggles?
6. What do the two heads of the eagle represent and why would they be turned inward?
7. What are the two fundamental kinds of operations that contribute to the construction of the modern concept of the people in relation to that of the nation in 18th and 19th century Europe?
8. What is the problem with liberatory national sovereignty and how is it reflected by black nationalism?
9. What is the "European civil war," what tragic irony underlies it, and how are both sides related to totalitarianism?
10. Why is Marx representative of utopian disappointment among those seeking liberation from colonialism?

Reading Assignment Two:

1. What is the problem with the "post-" theories and why is this a dangerous problem for any power theory?
2. What role does postmodernism play in the passage to Empire? Be specific about the ties of postmodernism to modern sovereignty. To what extent does global marketing reflect what postmodernism celebrates?
3. What is fundamentalism; how is it related to postmodernism? How are both related to the process of globalization?
4. What caused the U.S. to be tempted to revert to European imperialism?
5. How did the Gulf War "announce the birth of a new world order"?
6. List the three moments of imperial control. What does corruption mean when applied to Empire?
7. What is counter-Empire, how is it related to the IWW, labor migration, and two important elements of postmodern republicanism?
8. What is a new Barbarian? Why is "anthropological exodus" a poor attempt at a postmodern republican body?

Reading Assignment Three:

1. How are the outdated critiques of imperialism still useful when considering Empire?
2. What, according to Hilferding, impedes economic equalization and how did Lenin anticipate the theory of Empire?
3. What are the three mechanisms that constitute steps from imperialism to Empire?
4. According to "Empire", what were the 1) most important and 2) secondary aspects of the Cold War?
5. Name and describe one effect that follows the tendency towards world market unification?
6. What are the three hypotheses of continued capitalist health?
7. Name each level of the "Pyramid of Global Constitution." Compare ancient mixed constitutions, according to Polybius, with a hybrid constitution. What holds together the hybrid?
8. What threats to social control characterize Empire? What principles inform imperial administration? How does imperial control operate? Briefly describe each method.

Reading Assignment Four

1. What is meant by "immeasurable" and how is it related to the concern for Justice in classical and modern political philosophy (p. 354-55)?
2. How is labor related to community and then to liberation (or "human emancipation" in our translation of *OJQ*)?
3. Distinguish between two kinds of circulation and explain why the difference is important.

4. What is meant by "the end of history" and to what extent can history "end"?
5. Why is a "sense of crisis" an outcome of the "paradox of empire"?
6. Why did European intellectuals flee to America? Did it have more to do with America or Europe, more to do with reality or illusion?
7. Why is corruption so important to the continuation of Empire?
8. What city do the authors expect to prevail what revised conception of citizenship goes along with it? What are the other two political demands of the multitude?
9. What is the only part of Empire that has yet to form?

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PAPERS

An "A" paper has the following elements:

1. Good, clear, complete discussion of major parts of the topic
2. A penetrating thesis statement connecting the parts to each other,
3. Accurate, skillful use of argument and evidence in supporting the thesis,
4. A strong conclusion anchored in a tightly drawn organization of thesis, argument, and evidence, plus
5. No more than one error per page of the sort outlined in a standard manual of style and usage.

A "B" paper has the following:

1. Adequate on the parts, using familiar phrases from the class discussion & the readings,
2. Clear thesis but more weakly stated than in an "A" paper,
3. Argument and evidence systematically offered but not finely gauged to the difficulty or complexity of the issue; transitions become increasingly tentative,
4. Broad, general conclusion based on adequate organization with no more than two errors per page of the sort outlined in a standard manual of style and usage.

A "C" paper has:

1. Incomplete discussion with weak thesis followed by loosely related arguments or evidence to which objections are obvious, missing transitions,
2. Brief conclusion, sketchy organization, no more than three errors per page

A "D" paper: Garbled, inaccurate discussion, no thesis, little evidence or argument, abuse of quotations, assertion in place of conclusion, gaps in organization, no more than four errors per page.

FINAL PAPER TOPIC

A wide range of topics fit within revolutionary political thought and student background and interest thus have a major role to play in determining a topic. Quick determination of a topic is, however, imperative and the instructor will assign a topic if progress is not immediately obvious. Every paper must make significant use of the readings assigned for the course. Some samples of topics may be found below:

American Imperialism and the Bush Presidency

Assessments of *Empire*, I: Critical

Assessments of *Empire*, II: Favorable

The European Left and Islamic Radicalism

Social and Economic Forums on the Left

Contemporary Anarchists and Revolutionary Thought

ALF/ELF and Revolutionary Thought

Postmodern and Modern Revolutionary Thought: a comparison of *Empire* with the selected writings from American writers in the mid-twentieth century, esp. William Appleman Williams..

Heroic genius in modern and post-modern Revolutionary Thought

Women in Marxian and Modern Revolutionary Thought

Gender in Postmodern Revolutionary Thought

Morality in Revolutionary Thought: from Marx to Castro

Morality in Postmodern Revolutionary Thought

[Castro's Critique: Anti-Capitalist, Anti-American or Both?](#)

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