

## **Course IS 451 N Political Thought II**

**Instructor - Mohinder Singh**

**Winter Semester**

**Credits: 4**

**Method of Instruction: a) Lectures**

**b) Guided reading in class of selected texts**

**Contact hours: 3 per week**

**Evaluation: Two mid-term assessments and final exam.**

### **Rationale and description of course:**

Indian universities generally make a distinction between Political Thought and Political Theory, in which the former syllabus is structured around individual thinkers, and the latter around concepts. These syllabi are also implicitly or explicitly about western thought/theory, while Indian Thought, if taught at all, is a separate course. Further, conventionally, western thought both at BA and MA level tends to end at Marx.

In these two courses on Political Thought, the primary concerns are

a) to introduce students with or without a background in Political Science to key themes in contemporary critical thinking.

b) to treat both 'non-western' and 'western' thought as resources in understanding contemporary intellectual and political fields.

c) to equip students of International Relations in particular, to engage comparatively with the theoretical aspects of issues they would deal with in area studies.

d) in the current intellectual climate of moves towards interdisciplinarity, to bring together diverse fields both within the discipline of Political Science - such as Political Thought, Political Theory, Indian Thought and Philosophy of the Social Sciences – as well as from outside the discipline, such as Cultural Studies, Anthropology and History.

### **Scope and method of teaching**

The approach would be to cover a wider field rather than intensively focusing on a small area. Each topic is centred around a set of readings that are provided to the students in advance.

Apart from lectures, students will engage with several of the readings through a guided reading in class.

**NB All the readings listed below are available in the photocopying section of School of International Studies**

## **I. Conceptions of the Natural, the Human, and the Political**

In the history of Western political thought, the political is variously thought and conceptualized in its relation to the natural reflected in concepts such as state of nature, natural law, natural rights etc. Some of these conceptions are selected for discussion under this section.

### **Readings:**

Fred D. Miller (1989) "Aristotle's Political Naturalism" [\*Apeiron\* 22 \(4\)](#), 1989

Otto von Gierke (1913) "The State and Law" and "The Beginnings of the Modern State" in Otto von Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richard Tuck (1979) "Thomas Hobbes" in Richard Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their Origin and Development*, Cambridge University Press.

Anthony Pagden (2003) "Human Rights, Natural Rights, and Europe's Imperialist Legacy", in [\*Political Theory\*](#) Vol. 31, No. 2, April.

Giorgio Agamben (1998) "Politicization of Life" in Agamben *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford University Press, 1998.

Bruno Latour (1993) "Constitution" in *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

## **II. Rise of the Social**

The rise of the social is historically linked to the emergence of capitalist political economy. The selection in this section seeks to discuss three important concepts related to the rise of the social: Society, civil society, and the social in their different conceptualizations.

### **Readings:**

Keith Michael Baker (2001) "Enlightenment and the Institution of Society: Notes for a Conceptual History" in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani Ed. *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*. Cambridge University Press.

Gareth Stedman Jones (2001) "Hegel and the Economics of Civil Society" in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani Ed. *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*. Cambridge University Press.

Moishe Postone (1993) "[Marx's] Critique of Bourgeois Civil Society" in Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*. Cambridge University Press.

Mary Poovey (2002) "The Liberal Civil Subject and the Social in Eighteenth Century British Moral Philosophy" in *Public Culture*, Vol. 14, Number 1, Winter.

Charles Taylor (2002) "Modern Social Imaginary" in *Public Culture*, Vol. 14, Number 1, Winter.

Michel Foucault (1991) "Governmentality" in Graham Burchell et. al. Ed. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### **III. Power, Sovereignty, and the Political**

The concept of the political as different from that of politics has been an important part of debates in political thought in the last two decades. Here, the attempt is to introduce this this concept along with the related concepts of sovereignty and power.

#### **Readings:**

Chantal Mouffe (2005) "Politics and The Political" in Mouffe, *On the Political*, Routledge.

Carl Schmitt (1985/1922) "Definition of Sovereignty" in Carl Schmitt *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*" (Tr. By George Schwab). Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

John Rawls (1987) "The Idea of Overlapping Consensus" in John Rawls *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Claude Lefort (1988) "Hannah Arendt and the Question of the Political" in Lefort *Democracy and Political Theory*. Polity Press.

Michel Foucault (1982) "The Subject and Power" in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Summer).

Jacques Ranciere (1995) "The Community of Equals" in Ranciere *On the Shores of Politics*.(Tr. By Liz Heron) London: Verso.

### **IV. Religion and Politics**

Along with the concept of the political and closely related to it has been the revival of the interest in rethinking the relation between religion and politics. Some of these concerns have been reflected in the revival of the interest in political theology and its relation to social and political theory.

### **Readings:**

Charles Taylor (1998) "Modes of Secularism" in Rajeev Bhargava Ed. *Secularism and its Critics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

John Milbank (2006) "Political Theology and the New Science of Politics" in Milbank *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*. Blackwell Publishing.

Talal Asad (2005) "Reflections on Laicité and the Public Sphere" *Social Science Research Council, Items and Issues*, Volume 5, Number 3.

<http://www.ssrc.org/publications/items/v5n3/index.html>

William E. Connolly (1999) "Liberalism, Secularism, and the Nation" in Connolly, *Why I am not a Secularist*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Juergen Habermas (2006) "Religion in the Public Sphere" in *European Journal of Philosophy* (14:1).

## **V. Comparative Political Thought**

Comparative political thought is a newly emerging field of study wherein the attempt is to study political thought from different parts of the world in a post-Eurocentric comparative framework.

### **Readings:**

Michael Freeden and Andrew Vincent (2013), "Introduction: The Study of Comparative Political Thought" to Freeden and Vincent Ed. *Comparative Political Thought: Theorizing Practices*, New York: Routledge.

Partha Chatterjee, (2011) "Lineages of Political Society" in Partha Chatterjee, *Lineages of Political Society: Studies in Postcolonial Democracy*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black.