This is the third course in the Government Department's political theory sequence, Govt 337, 338, and 339. Although this series is historically organized, Govt 339 is not. We begin with Nozick’s very popular statement of libertarian thinking, a version of classical liberalism, written late in the 20th century. Classical liberalism had been largely eclipsed by other political ideologies by the early 20th century, but especially in the US it underwent a revival first in the academy and subsequently in political influence beginning in the 1960s. We begin with Nozick because his account takes us back to the early modern social contract thinking which – in its Lockean version – begins with a notion of rights that are in some sense “natural,” an account Nozick turns into a defense of the minimal state. His influential revival of this stream of Enlightenment thinking sets the stage for Nietzsche’s searching critique of the ideals of reason and freedom represented by 19th century liberalism and socialism, which we take up next. These ideals were subjected to a profound real world challenge in the form of the Great War beginning in 1914, which prepared the ground for the rise of fascism during the years between WW I and WW II. These challenges to the central ideals of the Enlightenment will occupy our attention for the rest of the semester.

Because the range of possible topics far exceeds what we can cover in a semester, our attention must be highly selective. One of the main themes of the course is whether reason can provide a grounding for our moral and political lives. The idea that reason can do so, and in particular that a society based on reason can be a free society because its principles can be accepted by all of its members, is a powerful legacy of the Enlightenment, shared by both socialist and liberal thinkers. But at least since Nietzsche, philosophical and cultural criticism has given rise to a deep skepticism about the possibility of discovering rational justifications for the values and principles that underlie and give meaning to our individual and collective lives, and the related idea that human freedom can be realized in a rational society.

The second unit of the class will examine critiques of this ideal, beginning with Nietzsche and continuing with Weber and Schmitt. We will then consider the most important 20th century restatement of liberalism, Rawls’s egalitarian liberalism. Although Rawls’s theory is not set out as a response to these critiques, it can be read as an effort to salvage the fundamental principles of a liberal and democratic order in the face of these critiques. We will then turn to Habermas, whose work grows out of the Frankfurt School in Germany, which is in turn rooted in the traditions of European Marxism, and is similar to Rawls in attempting to restate the ideals of the Enlightenment for our time. We will then examine modern conservative thinking, turning then to Foucault who in many ways can be read as reviving and restating Nietzsche’s critique of liberal and socialist ideals. We will then turn to the emergence of the human rights regime and issues of globalization, which came to prominence in the last third of the 20th century and continue to be vital questions now. Finally, we will close the semester by considering a sustained critique in the name of realism of some of the theories we will have studied.
Although there is no specific prerequisite for this class, it presupposes some background in modern political theory and ethics. Students who are unsure about their preparation for the class should consult with the instructor before or at the beginning of the semester.

Texts:

The following texts have been ordered for the course, and should be available in the bookstore. All texts will also be on reserve in Olin.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Hackett, paper, 0-87220-283-6
Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, expanded ed., Chicago, paper, 9780226738925
Jürgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, MIT, paper 0-262-58186-8

Course Expectations and Requirements:

This is a lecture-discussion class. Class sessions will be devoted mainly to discussion of the arguments from the texts we will be studying. IT IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL THAT READINGS BE COMPLETED BEFORE CLASS. It is not enough just to read the texts passively; you should come to class prepared to state and explain the central concepts, the main theses, and the core structure of the argument for the assigned reading for each class. Computers may be used in class to take notes and when appropriate to check texts or other sources, but under no circumstances to do e-mail, social media, etc. Cell phones and similar devices may not be used in class under any circumstances and must be turned off before class begins.

In addition to doing the readings on time and participating in class discussions, students will be expected to write four 6-8 page papers, and one short (2-3 pp) paper at the end of the semester. These papers are critical essays on the material in the class, and will not require additional research or outside sources (though you are free to do research and to bring in relevant materials from outside of the class). The papers will be due on February 21, March 7, April 11, and May 2, though these dates are subject to change. The short paper will be due May 14 at 5 PM. Late papers will be marked down one letter grade per day unless an extension has been arranged at least 24 hours before the paper is due. Each of the four papers will have equal weight in determining the final grade, and the final (short) paper will be weighted one half of a regular paper; class participation will be used to raise or lower the final grade by up to 1/3rd of a letter grade.

Papers will be evaluated according to the following criteria: analytical rigor (logic, precision, clarity of argument, consideration of counterarguments, etc.); originality or creativity; scholarship (accurate representation of authors cited, engaging with texts relevant to the topic, quality of research if a research paper, etc); mechanics (quality of prose, grammar, spelling,
citation of sources, etc.). A paper in the “B” range is a good paper: it will be well argued with a clear thesis, showing a strong command of the materials of the class, and will be well written. An “A” paper is an excellent paper: it will have the strengths of a “B” paper but to a higher degree, and it will reflect original and creative thinking about the issues. A paper in the “C” range is one that does not adequately meet one of the first three criteria listed above.

I am committed to being accessible in and outside of the classroom. I will hold regular office hours and am available to meet at other times by appointment; you should feel free to contact me by e-mail, and I will get back to you within a reasonable period of time. I will also make every effort to read your papers quickly and to provide constructive feedback on your work. I am happy to meet or correspond with you about your ideas before you write a paper, and to read outlines and drafts, time permitting.

Please note that it is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me by the end of the first week of the semester, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html

Syllabus:  Note: dates are approximate; items marked with an asterisk are available on e-reserves; all books are on reserve and have been ordered for the bookstore; journal articles can be accessed electronically through the library, and are usually available in bound journals in the library.

I. Introduction and Libertarianism

Class 01 (1/27): Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Preface (ix-xiv) and chs 1-3 (3-53)
Class 02 (1/29): Nozick, ch 7, section 1 (149-82); ch 8 (232-75)
Class 03 (tba; note that there will be no class on 2/3): Finish libertarianism, begin Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, First Treatise

II. Nietzsche and the Critique of Modernity I

Class 03 (tba): Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, First Treatise
Class 04 (2/5): Nietzsche, Second and Third Treatises
Class 05 (2/10): finish Nietzsche
Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 19-79
Class 07 (2/17): Finish Schmitt

First paper, February 21

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III. Egalitarian Liberalism

    Class 09 (2/24): Rawls, Part III (80-134)
    Class 10 (2/26): Rawls, Parts IV and V (135-202)
    Class 12 (3/5): No new reading

    Second paper March 7

Spring Break

IV. Critical Theory

    Class 13 (3/24): J. Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, editors’ “Introduction” (vii-xxxii) and ch 1 (3-46 (§iv and §v (16-25) may be skimmed or skipped entirely))
    Class 14 (3/26): Habermas, chs 9 (239-52) and 10 (253-64)

V. Democracy and Inclusion


VI. Conservatism


Third Paper April 11

VII. The Critique of Modernity II: Foucault

    Class 19 (4/14): Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, “Introduction” (3-29); *“Lecture One, 7 January, 1976,” from Power/Knowledge, 78-92; Reader, ”Nietzsche..." (76-100)
Class 20 (4/16): Reader, "Disciplines..." (170-238)
Reader, "Truth and Power" (51-75), "Bio-Power" and "Sex..." (257-329)

VIII. Globalization, Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights

Class 23 (4/28): Seyla Benhabib, The Rights of Others, “Introduction” (1-24); ch 2 (49-69)
Class 24 (4/30): Benhabib, ch 3 (71-128), ch 5 (171-212), “Conclusion” (213-221)

Fourth paper May 2

IX. Realism

Class 25 (5/5): Raymond Geuss, Philosophy and Real Politics.
Class 26 (5/7): No new reading

Final (short) paper due May 14 at 5PM.