This course is an introduction to the study of politics that is oriented to the problems of political action. What makes these problems distinctive is the fact that politics is at once the creation of a legitimate public order and a system of power, and the requirements of legitimacy and the imperatives of power are often in tension with each other. This tension shows up in the questions we will address in the first unit of the course. What kinds of motivations for engaging in politics are ethical? Does it matter what the outcome is? What about the quality of the act itself? What is the relative importance of political rules and personal character? As a citizen, I am obligated to obey the laws, but as a moral being, it’s often said, I must follow my conscience. But what should I do if the dictates of law conflict with the judgments of conscience? How can I be obligated to obey laws I have not made or to which I have not agreed? When – if ever – may I justifiably disobey?

In the second part of the course, we will consider the character of the political order that claims our obedience. Some kinds of governments may be legitimate, and I may be obligated to obey their laws. But there are certainly some regimes that are illegitimate, and so can make no moral claim on me. We will examine two kinds of answers to the question of what regime has the authority obligating us to obey its rules. The first is Locke’s liberal idea that the political order is legitimate only insofar as it respects the individual rights of those who live under it. The second is Rousseau’s democratic idea that legitimate authority only exists when the laws stem from the collective will of the people who live under them. We will also consider non-consensual bases of authority, such as tradition and knowledge.

The third issue of political action we will discuss is often called the problem of ends and means – what can we properly do to bring about a just (or relatively just) society? For the imperatives of power often seem to dictate that one be prepared to dirty one's hands in order to advance the good in political life. Thus, we will ask what kind of person must one be, if one is to engage in political activity? Must one, as Machiavelli argued, learn how not to be good, or is there a way in which the demands of politics and ethics can be reconciled, as Gandhi argued? And is there a sense in which our morality derives from the nature of politics and the political community itself?

Books: These are recommended for purchase; they are in paperback at Wesleyan RJ Julia bookstore on Main St.

Johnson, Paul. *Churchill* (Penguin)
Machiavelli, Niccolo. The Prince (Signet Classics, Penguin)
Milgram, Stanley. Obedience to Authority (HarperCollins, repr. 2009)
Plato. Trial and Death of Socrates (3rd rev. ed., Hackett)
Rousseau, Jean Jacques. First and Second Discourses (Bedford/St. Martin’s)

In some cases – such as Bondurant -- we will not be reading an entire book, so you may wish
to use the reserve room rather than purchase every book. Many of the classic texts are
available in the library in multiple translations and editions. Several are available on the web
in useful formats (but often don’t have page or line numbers.) Other books we will read, by
Sophocles and Fanon, for example, are available in links I will provide on the syllabus.
Some books are available to rent from the bookstore. All books are on four-hour reserve at
Olin Library Reserve Desk. Articles and chapters from books are on Electronic Reserve
(ERes). These are available from “Tools” on the Wesleyan home page, scroll down to
Library, and then scroll down to “Course Reserves.” The password for the course is govt159.

Course Structure and Expectations

I will lecture for background and setting frameworks – presenting themes and posing
questions. Readings should be completed by the date for which they are assigned, so we can
have good discussions. All readings are required (except for those in parentheses, which are
optional.) Passages marked passim. may be skimmed. Please bring a copy of the reading to
class.

Written assignments: three papers and a final exam. A short paper due Sept. 27, a
medium paper due Oct. 20, a short paper Nov. 8, and a final examination during the exam
period.

There will be two films, “The Counterfeiters” and “The Battle of Algiers,” shown
probably on Sunday early evenings, Nov. 12 and 26, respectively. They will also be on Olin
Reserve, and students who cannot come to the evening class showing should plan on
watching it close to the group time. Several people might watch it together so you can talk
about it.

We hope to have a high level of discussion and the close analysis of texts. We live in
interesting political times and any opinion is welcome, so long as it is related to the readings.
The class is a cooperative endeavor in which we work together to enhance our understanding.
Each of us brings a unique background and perspective, and contributes by engaging with
each other and the readings and films. We need to listen sympathetically and respectfully in
order to understand each other’s concerns and points of view. At the same time, we need to
engage critically, raising questions that deepen discussion. This will only work if everyone
comes to class prepared to listen and having thought about the reading. This means being
prepared to state and explain the key concepts used by an author, outline the main thesis or
theses in two or three concise sentences, and present your own assessment of the argument’s
persuasiveness.
Laptop computers and iPads can be used in class to access some readings. Electronic devices can be distracting, however, to oneself and others. In order to maintain our focus, any other use of laptops, smartphones, iPads, and smartpens is not allowed in class, unless granted special permission. Students found texting, e-mailing, or browsing the web and social media during class time will be penalized with a lower class participation grade. If you definitely need to take notes on your laptop, you may do so with permission; any use of your computer for non-class purposes will result in suspension of the privilege.

Resources for students with disabilities.
http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/index.html
North College, 237 High Street, 860.685.5581

Please let me know early in the semester if you need ADA accommodations. Students with documented learning, physical, sensory, or psychiatric disabilities are entitled to reasonable academic accommodations to ensure equal access to educational, housing, and recreational opportunities at Wesleyan. Please visit the Disability Resources website and follow the instructions for requesting accommodations. Laura Patey, Associate Dean for Student Academic Resources, has an office in 021 on the lower level of North College. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 with Amendments of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability.

William Halliday will serve as Teaching Apprentice; William is available to help with the assignments, as am I. (whalliday@wesleyan.edu, nschwartz@wesleyan.edu)

Syllabus on next pages:
## Syllabus

I. Political Obligation, Individual Conscience, and Political Action

### Sept. 4
Introduction

### Sept. 6
Sophocles, *Antigone*, at [https://mthoyibi.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/antigone_2.pdf](https://mthoyibi.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/antigone_2.pdf)

### Sept. 11
Plato, *Apology* and *Crito* (and *Phaedo*, 114d-118)

### Sept. 13
Paul Johnson, *Churchill*, Chs. 1-2

### Sept. 18


### Sept. 20

### Sept. 25


### Sept. 27
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” [http://abacus.bates.edu/admin/offices/dos/mlk/letter.html](http://abacus.bates.edu/admin/offices/dos/mlk/letter.html)

(Richard Wasserstrom, “The Obligation to Obey the Law, in Bedau, ed., pp. 256-62)

### Sept. 27
PAPER DUE
II. Political Authority and Legitimacy: The Moral Foundations of Political Life

A. Politics as the Protection of Rights: Liberalism

Oct. 2
John Locke, *An Essay [on] Civil Government* [Second Treatise], Chs. I-V, & IX

Oct. 4
Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chs. VI-XV

Oct. 9
Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chs. XVI-XIX

B. Politics as the Creation of Community: Radical Democracy

Oct. 11
Jean Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality"

Oct. 16

Oct. 18


Oct. 20
PAPER DUE

Oct. 23
Fall Break

III. Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands

A. Ends and Means: The Craft of Politics

Oct. 25, 30
Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Nov. 1

(Judith Hicks Stiehm, "The Man Question," in *Women's Views of the Political World of Men*, pp. 207-23)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 6, 8</td>
<td>Johnson, <em>Churchill</em>, Chs. 3-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 8</td>
<td>PAPER DUE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 15</td>
<td>Arendt, Chs. 9-10 <em>passim.</em>, 11-14, &amp; pp. 244-47, 277-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 20</td>
<td>Stanley Milgram, <em>Obedience to Authority</em>, Preface, Chs. 1-4, 10-12, Epilogue</td>
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<td>Nov. 22</td>
<td>Thanksgiving break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 27, 29</td>
<td>Frantz Fanon, <em>Wretched of the Earth</em>, Preface by J.-P. Sartre, Ch. 1, (2, 5), &amp; Conclusion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Concerning Violence,&quot; (&quot;Spontaneity: Its Strength and Weakness,&quot; or &quot;Grandeur and Weakness of Spontaneity,&quot; &quot;Colonial War and Mental Disorders&quot;), and “Conclusion”</td>
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