1. Introduction to the History of Political Thought Papers

For several decades now, Cambridge has been an international centre for teaching and research on the history of political thought, a subject which has formed a substantial component of the undergraduate degrees in both History and Politics. On the Politics side, there is a widespread view among those who teach the subject here that the study of political ideas in their historical contexts offers an invaluable training for thinking critically and flexibly about politics more generally.

Much of the teaching for this paper is organised by the History Faculty. It is responsible for the production of the reading lists, and will have arranged the lectures that will be delivered throughout the academic year. Sometimes Politics students feel intimidated by the lectures—they worry that they don’t know enough about modern European history, for example, and they come to believe that the History students are better placed than they are to benefit from what’s being said. But if you have thoughts like this, it’s worth exploring the other side of the coin. It’s true that Historians may initially be more familiar with some aspects of the subject than Politics students. But Politics students (especially if they have taken the Part I paper, POL1) usually have considerably more experience at handling political argument at a decent level of sophistication by the time they come to study for this paper, and that gives them a very useful platform on which to build their engagement with the syllabus here—since taking political argument seriously is ultimately what this paper is about.
2. Introduction to the Period

Beginning with the Enlightenment and extending from the American and French revolutions to the wave of revolutions in 1848 and the challenge to capitalism in the thought of Karl Marx, this paper explains the formation of the fundamental concepts of modern politics. The line between the sacred and the civil, the relation between liberty and commerce, the transformations in the principles of political legitimacy which led to the notion of the modern representative republic, the nineteenth-century rise of the idea of nation-states and nationalism, the modern concept of empire, the demand for gender equality: all these and more form the content of this paper.

Like POL 7, this paper offers two kinds of intellectual exploration. In Part A, you will focus on a close reading of major texts within their political and intellectual contexts. This enables you to explore how political argument was articulated in texts by the greatest political philosophers of the period. In Part B, you will focus on groups of texts which are thematically and historically connected, developing your ability to understand the way that a given political language is inflected in different directions according to different demands of national and international debate in the modern period. For those who have done other papers in the history of political thought or are thinking of taking them, this paper provides an essential introduction to the understanding of all aspects of understanding political thought, including the foundations of truly modern politics in a global setting.

3. How to study for this paper

**Lectures**: because the material to be covered spans a wide chronological and thematic range, and also because many students will not have studied the history of political thought before, a comprehensive array of lectures is offered. This need not cause you alarm since you are not required or expected to attend them all. Note that some lectures from other Faculties may be included in this list because the expertise in the history of political thought in Cambridge is shared among several Faculties. Lecturers are encouraged to place their outlines, bibliographies and other material on the paper’s Moodle site in advance of the lecture. (Moodle is the replacement for the old CamTools.) Your id will be added to the list of site users by the course organiser at the start of the academic year, based on information received from the administrative offices of History and POLIS. If you have been omitted, you should contact the course organiser.

**Supervisions**: for this paper, the norm is to have six paired supervisions for the paper spread over the Michaelmas and Lent terms. In these supervisions, you should cover six of the twenty-three named authors (section A) and historical topics (section B) that make up the syllabus, in preparation for answering three questions in the examination (including at least one question from each of sections A and B). What you need to do, therefore, is to construct, in conjunction with your supervisor and supervision partner, your own intellectual pathway through this paper. Before you start, you should make an initial choice of, say, authors and topics; these will preferably have thematic or historical connections between them. You may change your choice as you proceed, but identification of a pathway is the key to making the most of this paper. The following page just indicates some possibilities, and is in no sense meant to be directive, simply illustrative, but there is of course considerable overlap between certain authors and themes.
4. Some Possible Pathways through this Paper (indicative/illustrative only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Sociability and Commercial Society in the Enlightenment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Natural Law &amp; History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Montesquieu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rousseau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Luxury &amp; Commercial Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Republicanism &amp; Political Thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Montesquieu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rousseau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. American Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. French Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Wollstonecraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Critics of Social Contract Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Hume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Burke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender &amp; Political Thought (18/19th centuries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Wollstonecraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bentham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Social Science &amp; Political Thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Towards Perpetual Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Luxury &amp; Commercial Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rousseau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nationalism &amp; the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Consequences of the French Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rousseau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. French Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Burke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tocqueville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nationalism &amp; the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. German Ideas of Freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rousseau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Culture &amp; Aesthetic Politics in Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Nationalism &amp; the State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hegel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Marx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. The Background to Marx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rousseau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. French Revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Hegel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Socialism before 1848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Marx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Progress and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender &amp; Political Thought (18/19th centuries)/ Social Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hegel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Marx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tocqueville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mill</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Empire &amp; Civilization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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5. Lectures

For guidance as to which lectures will be most relevant to your course of studies, you are advised to get in touch with your supervisor as early as possible in Michaelmas term.

Lectures will take place in the History Faculty Building unless otherwise indicated. Please consult online lecture lists for the most up-to-date information.

Introductory Session: An introductory session for students taking POL7 and POL8 will be held on Friday 11th October (week 1), 1pm in ARB SG1/2.

Michaelmas Term:

MISS S. TOMASELLI
Natural Law, Sociability, and Luxury: (B14, B15) (4 lectures, M 10, weeks 1-4)

MISS S. TOMASELLI
Wollstonecraft; Gender and Political Thought in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (A6, B19) (4 lectures: M 10, weeks 5-8)

DR C. MECKSTROTH
German Political Thought from Kant to Marx (A7: Kant, A10: Hegel, B18: Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany, A13: Marx) (8 lectures, M 12)

PROF. R. BOURKE
Montesquieu and Rousseau (A2, A3) (4 lectures, Tu. 12, weeks 1-4)

DR C. MECKSTROTH
Bentham and Mill (A8, A12) (4 lectures: Tu. 12, weeks 5-8)

Lent Term:

DR R. SCURR
Social science and political thought (B23) (2 lectures, M 12, weeks 1-2)

MISS S. TOMASELLI
Political Thought of the American Revolution (A16) (2 lectures, M 12, weeks 3-4)

DR D. BELL
Nationalism and the State (B21) (2 lectures: M 12, weeks 5-6)

DR D. BELL
Empire and Civilization (B23) (2 lectures: M 12, weeks 7-8)

PROF. R. BOURKE
Hume and Smith (A1, A4) (4 lectures, Tu. 12, weeks 1-4)

PROF. R. BOURKE
Burke (2 lectures: Tu. 12, weeks 5-6)

DR. T. HOPKINS
French Political Thought from the Revolution to Tocqueville (B16: The French Revolution; A9: Constant; B20: Socialism before 1848; A11: Tocqueville) (8 Lectures, W 12)

Easter Term:

DR C. MECKSTROTH
Class: Topics in nineteenth-century political thought (2 one-hour classes: M 12, weeks 1-2)

PROF. R. BOURKE
Class: Topics in eighteenth-century political thought (2 one-hour classes: Tu. 12, weeks 1-2)
6. Structure of the Paper

The paper is divided into two sections. Section A focuses on some of the most prominent political thinkers of the period, and you will study their major texts in depth, to gain a detailed, contextual understanding of their thought. Section B offers a range of more thematic or historical topics, for which you will be expected to read across a range of primary texts, and reflect on the broader problems of historical and philosophical interpretation that confront historians of political thought and political theorists in studying this period. You will need to cover at least one topic from each section in the exam, but the precise balance you strike between the two sections is a matter for you to decide with your supervisor and supervision partner, although most students prefer to take a majority of their topics from Section A.

SECTION A

A1 Hume
A2 Montesquieu
A3 Rousseau
A4 Smith
A5 Burke
A6 Wollstonecraft
A7 Kant
A8 Bentham
A9 Constant
A10 Hegel
A11 Tocqueville
A12 John Stuart Mill
A13 Marx

Section B

B14 Natural Law and History
B15 Luxury and Commercial Society
B16 The Political Thought of the American Revolution
B17 The Political Thought of the French Revolution
B18 Culture and aesthetic politics in Germany 1770-1810
B19 Gender and Political Thought in the 18th and 19th centuries
B20 Socialism before 1848
B21 Nationalism and the State
B22 Empire and Civilization in nineteenth-century Political Thought
B23 Social Science and Political Thought
7. The Examination

POL8 and POL10 are examined separately, so second-year students will sit a different exam paper to third-year students. Both papers are marked by examiners in POLIS; students taking the History versions of the paper will sit the same exams, but they will be marked by examiners from the History Faculty.

Past papers are most easily accessed via the History Faculty website:

https://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/hist-tripos/info-all-years/examinations.

Follow the link to ‘Past examination papers’ [requires Raven]

where you will find them listed under Part I Paper 20 (POL8) and Part II Paper 4 (POL10).

Examiners’ reports for the last few years will be found in the Appendix to this course guide (from page 68).

Candidates can expect that a question will be set on each of the prescribed authors in Section A and topics in Section B. But you should be aware that the guarantee of a question on each author and topic does not mean that examiners will set lowest common denominator, generic questions, open to a pre-prepared answer. They are much more likely to ask specific questions, approaching the author/topic from a particular perspective. Candidates are therefore strongly advised to prepare more than the minimum of required authors and topics.

The examination rubric is: Answer three questions, at least one from each section. (Overlap between answers must be avoided.)

SAMPLE EXAMINATION PAPER

SECTION A

1. Why did Hume deny that ‘self-love’ provided the basis for political society?
2. On what basis did Montesquieu rest his criticisms of ‘despotic government’?
3. Why and with what consequences for his theories did Rousseau argue that man in a state of nature cannot perfect himself?
4. How compatible are the views about human motivation contained in Smith’s Theory of Moral Sentiments and his Wealth of Nations?
5. How important are Burke’s views about religion for his political theories?
6. Why did Wollstonecraft distinguish the rights of man from the rights of woman?
7. Why did Kant argue that governments should not aim to promote the happiness of the governed?
8. Why did Bentham give so much prominence to the analysis of human motivation in his political writings?
9. How did Constant reconcile his ‘great veneration for the past’ with his enthusiasm for the progress of enlightenment?

10. Why did Hegel believe that modern states differ from ancient states?

11. In what respects did Tocqueville believe that the American experience was instructive for Europe?

12. To what extent did the value of liberty of thought for Mill depend on its associations with liberty of action?

13. Why had Marx so little patience with the theories of so many nineteenth century socialists?

SECTION B

14. Why was Vico so insistent that the principles of his ‘New Science’ were different from those of the great Protestant exponents of Natural Law?

15. How far did theorists of commercial society believe that governments could and should promote the public interest?

16. How important to early American political thought was the British constitutional experience?

17. Can the origins of the Terror persuasively be located in French revolutionary patterns of thought?

18. How novel were German Romantics’ ideas about the nature of ‘freedom’?

19. Did the political language of nineteenth-century theorists of the condition of women differ from that used by their eighteenth-century predecessors?

20. Did early socialism possess a political theory?

21. Was nationalism entailed by the principle of nationality?

22. Is utilitarianism necessarily imperialist?

23. Explain the ambition of nineteenth-century positivists to replace politics by science.
8. READING LISTS

The aim of Section B is to allow students to consider the general context in political thought within which the ideas of major political thinkers developed. The primary texts suggested in Section B therefore have a different status from the set texts in Section A. Candidates need not master every one of the Section B primary texts, but need to show evidence of engagement with texts relating to each topic.

The Bibliography is designed to aid Lecturers, Supervisors, and students. Students are not expected to read every item on it, but should be guided in their reading by their supervisors. They may then return to the Bibliography for further reading in an aspect of an author or topic which particularly interests them, and for revision reading.

Works marked with an asterisk * are suggested as helpful introductions or as particularly important interpretations of the author or topic.

The reading list provided by the History Faculty is lengthy. In recognition of the fact that the structure of teaching and the timing of supervisions differs for HSPS students, it has been thought helpful to divide the secondary reading for each topic into two parts: suggested secondary reading and further reading. Under the first heading, students will find those texts thought to be most helpful as an introduction to the topic, and a range of significant interpretations of the chosen thinker or theme. Under the second, they will find further reading suggestions that will facilitate more in-depth study of topics. The division is by no means intended to be prescriptive, and individual supervisors may well recommend that students begin with texts from the ‘further reading’ sections.
A1. HUME

(E) = e-book available via iDiscover.

Set texts:


Suggested secondary reading:

General
*J.A. Harris, Hume: An Intellectual Biography (Cambridge, 2015) (E)

Philosophy, politics and history:
*A.C. Baier, A Progress of Sentiments: Reflection on Hume’s Treatise (Cambridge MA, 1991) chapters 7-12. (E)
D. Forbes, Hume’s Philosophical Politics (Cambridge, 1975)
*J. Robertson, The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760 (Cambridge, 2005), chapter 6, pp. 256-324. (E)
Paul Sagar, The Opinion of Mankind: Sociability and the theory of the state from Hobbes to Smith, (Princeton, 2018) (E)
*J.P. Wright, Hume’s Treatise of Human Nature: An Introduction (Cambridge, 2009) (E)

Moral philosophy:

Politics and political economy:
J. Robertson, The Case for the Enlightenment (above), Ch 7, pp. 360-76. (E)

Further secondary reading:
Philosophy, politics and history:
S. Blackburn, How to Read Hume (London, 2008)

Moral philosophy:
J. Moore, ‘Hume and Hutcheson’, in M. A. Stewart and J. P. Wright (eds), Hume and Hume’s Connexions (Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 25-37
L. Turco, ‘Hutcheson and Hume in a Recent Polemic’ in Mazza and Ronchetti (eds), New Essays on David Hume, 171-198.

Politics and political economy:
C. Wennerlind and M. Schabas (eds), David Hume’s Political Economy (London and New York, 2008): esp. the chapters by Wennerlind and Schabas on money; Berry on superfluous value (luxury); Charles and Cheney on French translations of Hume; Hont (above) on the rich country – poor country question.

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):
1. ‘It is therefore, on opinion only that government is founded’ [HUME, ‘Of the First Principles of Government’]. What, for Hume, followed from this proposition?
2. Why did Hume reject the idea that allegiance to government had a contractual basis?
3. Why did Hume think that the concept of property was fundamental to an understanding of politics?

4. According to Hume, what was required to establish large and lasting societies?

5. Did Hume’s political thinking change as he developed his interest in political economy?

6. Why did Hume believe commerce to be compatible with the virtue of justice on which all society depends?
A2. MONTESQUIEU

(E) = e-book available via iDiscover.

Set Text:


Suggested secondary reading:

*R. Douglass, ‘Montesquieu and Modern Republicanism’, Political Studies 60 (2012), 703-19. (E)
D. Kelly, The Propriety of Liberty: Persons, Passions, and Judgement in Modern Political Thought (Princeton, 2010), chapter 2. (E)
*N.O. Keohane, Philosophy and the State in France: The Renaissance to the Enlightenment, (Princeton NJ, 1980), Chapters 10-14 (E)
*P.A. Rahe, ‘The Book That Never Was: Montesquieu's Considerations on the Romans in Historical Context’, History of Political Thought, 26 (2005), 43-89. (E)

Further secondary reading:

R. Kingston (ed), Montesquieu and His Legacy (Albany NY, 2008) (E)
P.A. Rahe, Montesquieu and the Logic of Liberty (New Haven CT, 2009)

Particular topics:

D. Desserud, ‘Commerce and Political Participation in Montesquieu’s Letter to Domville’ History of European Ideas, 25 (1999), 135-151. (E)

*Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):*

1. Why was Montesquieu confident that modern monarchies could adapt to commerce?
2. Explain Montesquieu’s confidence that despotism was unlikely to be established in Europe.
3. What scope did Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* allow for rulers to effect change by legislation?
4. Why was Montesquieu so hostile to ancient forms of government, republics in particular?
5. How did Montesquieu’s definition of liberty bear on his judgment of ancient and modern forms of government?
6. Why did Montesquieu suggest that the English needed to be particularly jealous of their liberty?
7. Did Montesquieu think that the republican form of government had a future?
8. Why did Montesquieu not consider rule by a nobility among the three principal species of government?
9. To what degree was Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws* a commentary on the French monarchy of his day?
A3. ROUSSEAU

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set Texts:

Suggested secondary reading:

General and introductory

More particularly,
C. Brooke, Philosphic Pride. Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau (Princeton, 2012), Ch. 8: Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
*F. Neuhouser, Rousseau’s critique of inequality: reconstructing the Second Discourse (Cambridge, 2014) (E)
M. Sonenscher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The division of labour, the politics of the imagination and the concept of federal government, (Leiden, 2020) (E)
R. Wokler, Rousseau, the Age of Enlightenment and their Legacies (Princeton, 2012) (E) collected articles, including:
pp. 1-28: ‘Perfectible Apes in Decadent Cultures: Rousseau’s Anthropology Revisited’, also in Daedalus, 107 (1978), 107-34;

Further secondary reading:
A. Abizadeh, ‘Banishing the Particular: Rousseau on Rhetoric, Patrie, and the Passions’, Political Theory 29 (4), 556-582. (E)
J. Hope Mason, The Indispensable Rousseau (London, 1979)
J. Hope Mason, ‘“Forced to be Free”’, in R. Wokler (ed), Rousseau and Liberty (Manchester, 1995), 121-38.
C. Kelly and E. Grace eds., Rousseau on Women, Love and Family (Hanover NH, 2009)
H. Rosenblatt, ‘Rousseau, the Anticosmopolitan?’ Daedalus 137 (2008), 59-67. (E)
M. Schwartzberg, Rousseau on Fundamental Law, Political Studies 51 (2003), 387-403. (E)

Rousseau’s contexts
B. Kapossy, Iselin contra Rousseau (Basle, 2006), chapter 3, pp. 173-245.
Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

1. How would Rousseau’s social contract rectify the inequality which he believed had corrupted modern society?

2. ‘In a word, I see no tolerable mean between the most austere Democracy and the most perfect Hobbesianism’ ['Letter to Mirabeau’, 1767]. What light does this comment by Rousseau throw on his Social Contract?

3. How important was religion in Rousseau’s Social Contract?

4. Did Rousseau suppose that amour propre could be turned to man’s moral and political advantage?

5. ‘Since the Lawgiver can use neither force nor reasoning, he must of necessity have recourse to an authority of a different order, which might be able to rally without violence and to persuade without convincing’ [ROUSSEAU, The Social Contract]. Why did Rousseau think this?

6. Why was the notion of perfectibility so important to the argument of Rousseau’s Second Discourse?
A4. SMITH

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set Texts:


Suggested secondary reading:

Major interpretations:


**N. Phillipson, Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life (London, 2010)

*D. Winch, Adam Smith’s Politics, (Cambridge, 1978) (E)

The Theory of Moral Sentiments
C. Griswold, Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment (Cambridge, 1999) (E)

P. Sagar, ‘Beyond sympathy: Smith’s rejection of Hume’s moral theory’, British Journal for the History of Philosophy 25 (2017), 681-705 (E)


The Wealth of Nations
S. Muthu, ‘Adam Smith’s Critique of International Trading Companies’, Political Theory 36 (2008), 185-212. (E)


Further secondary reading:
D. Kelly, *The Propriety of Liberty: Persons, Passions, and Judgement in Modern Political Thought* (Princeton, 2010), chapter 3 (E)

P. Sagar, ‘Smith and Rousseau, after Hume and Mandeville’, *Political Theory* 46 (2018), 29-58. (E)


**The Theory of Moral Sentiments**


**The Wealth of Nations**


**The ‘Adam Smith Problem’**


**Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):**

1. Did Adam Smith provide commercial society with a moral justification?

2. What did Adam Smith take to have been the consequences of the ‘unnatural and retrograde order’ of Europe’s historical development?

3. To what extent did Adam Smith believe that governments should intervene to prevent particular economic interests from disadvantaging others?

4. Did Adam Smith believe that the pernicious consequences of international commercial competition could be satisfactorily contained?

5. Which was more basic to Smith’s theory of moral sentiments, sympathy or propriety?

6. Why did Adam Smith regard justice as a more important virtue than benevolence for commercial society?
7. Why was Adam Smith confident that moral values stemming from the human capacity for sympathy would be compatible with economic relations based on self-interest?

8. Is virtue for Smith more a question of nature or of artifice?

9. What is the significance for Smith’s theory of sociability of his distinction between praiseworthiness and the love of praise?
A5. BURKE

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set Texts:

Pre-Revolutionary Writings, ed. I. Harris, (Cambridge, 1993) (E)

Suggested secondary reading:

R. Bourke, Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke (Princeton, 2015)
W. Selinger, Parliamentarism from Burke to Weber, (Cambridge, 2019), chs 1-2. (E)

Further secondary reading:

P. Bullard, Edmund Burke and the Art of Rhetoric (Cambridge, 2014) (E)
Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

1. Did Burke think of civilization as fragile?

2. What in Burke’s view made the revolution in France so very different from all previous political upheavals?

3. ‘A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation’ [BURKE, Reflections on the Revolutions in France]. When and how did Burke think such change would or should come about?

4. Given his view of the need to be governed by men of ability, why did Burke not argue for meritocracy?

5. What role did religious institutions play in Burke’s political thought?

6. Did Burke entirely reject the idea that men had rights?

7. According to Burke, what role do passions and sentiments play in politics?

8. Given his support of trade, why did Burke not think of the relation between governed and governors in contractual terms?

9. ‘Burke’s political writings are better as public interventions in response to immediate circumstances than as works of philosophical contemplation.’ Discuss.

Recommended additional primary texts:
Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, ed. R. Holmes, in Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark and Memoirs of the Author of “The Rights of Woman” (London, 1987) [or ed. by H. Morley, (London, 1889) (E)]

Suggested secondary reading:
M.H. Guest, Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810 (Chicago, 2000), Introduction & Part IV.
C.L. Johnson (ed), The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft (2006), esp. chapters 2, 3, 4 and 7 (E).

Further secondary reading:
J. Conniff, ‘Edmund Burke and His Critics: The Case of Mary Wollstonecraft’, Journal of the History of Ideas, 60 (1999), 299-318. (E)

W. Gunther-Canada, Rebel Writer: Mary Wollstonecraft and Enlightenment Politics (DeKalb, Illinois, 2001)


Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

1. What was Wollstonecraft’s ultimate ambition for women?
2. Did Wollstonecraft believe that women were enslaved by their passions?
3. Did Wollstonecraft want women to be more like men?
4. How did Wollstonecraft justify her usage of the language of rights in her Vindications?
5. Did Mary Wollstonecraft believe in the progress of civilization?
6. Was Wollstonecraft more concerned with emancipation than with rights?
7. What did Wollstonecraft see in the French Revolution?
8. Why was Wollstonecraft so concerned with property?
A7. KANT

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set Texts:


*Political Writings*, ed. H. Reiss, (2nd edn., Cambridge, 1991). Not available through iDiscover, but see the following editions for the specified texts, which are all available digitally:


‘Towards Perpetual Peace’ (1795) [available at https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/kant/kant1.htm ]

‘Metaphysics of Morals’ (1797) (‘Introduction to the doctrine of right’ and ‘The doctrine of right, Part II: Public right’). Cambridge University Press may make available ed. by L. Denis and M. Gregor, 2nd ed., (Cambridge, 2017) [ https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/kant-the-metaphysics-of-morals/7D1394D56E177B8BE620B4B9D7A22301 ]. Failing this (there have been access issues), try the translation available at https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/morals/ch04.htm.


Suggested secondary reading:

*P. Guyer, Kant* (London, 2006)
A. Wood, Kant (Oxford, 2005)

On Moral Theory:
S. Sedgwick, Kant’s Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: An Introduction (Cambridge, 2008) (E)
*A. Wood, Kant’s Ethical Thought (Cambridge, 1999) (E)

On Kant’s Political Theory:
*E. Ellis, Kant’s Politics (New Haven, 2005), chapters 1-3
*A. Ripstein, Force and Freedom: Kant’s Legal and Political Philosophy (Cambridge MA, 2009) (E)

On Anthropology & Human Nature:

On Revolution:

On Cosmopolitanism:
O. Höffe, Kant’s Cosmopolitan Theory of Law and Peace (Cambridge, 2006)
C. Meckstroth, ‘Hospitality, or Kant’s Critique of Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights,’ Political Theory, 46 (2018), 537-59. (E)

Further secondary reading:


**Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):**

1. Why did Kant argue that no state should forcibly interfere in the constitution and government of another state?

2. How did Kant reconcile the claim that rebellion is never justified with his insistence that the only good reason for a state is to secure citizens’ freedom?

3. ‘Kant betrayed his moral principles by denying a right to revolution.’ Discuss.

4. Why did Kant think we must strive gradually to approximate the idea of perpetual peace, even though we cannot be certain ever to attain it?

5. Did Kant’s view of individual freedom as the central political value lead him to advocate a minimal state?

6. Why did Kant’s moral and political theory place freedom above other values?

7. Why did Kant argue that whatever a people cannot decide for themselves also cannot be decided for them by a legislator?
A8. BENTHAM

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set Texts:


Suggested secondary reading:


*R. Harrison, Bentham, (London, 1983)


J. Waldron, Nonsense upon Stilts: Bentham, Burke and Marx on the Rights of Man, (London, 1987)

Further secondary reading:


**Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):**

1. What implications did Bentham’s view of ‘fictions’ have for politics?

2. Is it appropriate to describe Bentham’s ideas as philosophically and politically ‘radical’?

3. Why did Bentham think the principle of utility offers a more secure foundation for politics than natural rights?

4. Do Bentham’s utilitarian principles support or compete with democracy?

5. Why was Bentham more concerned with the consequences of decisions than the rightful authority to make them?

6. How did Bentham’s criticisms of Blackstone inform his view of politics?

7. ‘The community is a fictitious body... The interest of the community then is, what? – the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it’ [BENTHAM, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*]. What role did this claim play in Bentham’s political theory?

8. What was the significance of Bentham’s commitment to ‘official aptitude maximised, expense minimized’?

9. Why was Bentham so critical of the view that government was founded on an original contract?
A9. CONSTANT

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set Text:

Political Writings, ed. B. Fontana, (Cambridge, 1988)

The above edition is not available online. It comprises three texts:

The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation and their relation to European Civilization (1814) [No digital edition of this text in English translation appears to be available at this time (20.3.20)]

Principles of Politics applicable to all Representative Governments (1815) [No digital edition of this text in English translation appears to be available at this time (20.3.20)]. N.B. This text is not to be confused with the Principles of Politics applicable to all Governments (1806-10) listed in the section, ‘Suggested additional primary texts’.

The Liberty of the Ancients compared with that of the Moderns (1819) [available online at https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/constant-the-liberty-of-ancients-compared-with-that-of-moderns-1819 ]

Candidates intending to revise this topic, but without access to the Fontana edition, are encouraged to direct their attention to the section, ‘Suggested additional primary texts’ in order to expand their understanding of Constant’s political thought.

Suggested additional primary texts:
B. Constant, Principles of Politics Applicable to all Governments [1806-10], ed. by E. Hofmann, trans. by D. O’Keefe, (Indianapolis IN, 2004) [ https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/constant-principles-of-politics-applicable-to-all-governments ]. N.B. notwithstanding Capaldi’s erroneous suggestion to the contrary, this is not the text published by Constant in 1815 and translated by Fontana, but an earlier and larger manuscript. Though there are substantial differences between the two texts, readers of this earlier work will gain an understanding of what underpins Constant’s constitutional thought.

B. Constant, Commentary on Filangieri’s Work, ed. by A.S. Kahan, (Indianapolis IN, 2015) [ https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/commentary-on-filangieri-s-work ].


Suggested secondary reading:

*B Fontana, Benjamin Constant and the Post-Revolutionary Mind (New Haven, CT, 1991)

*B. Garsten, ‘Religion and the Case against Ancient Liberty: Benjamin Constant’s Other Lectures’ Political Theory 38 (2010), 4-33. (E)


Suggested further reading:


A. de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge, 2008), chap. 4 (E)

G. Dodge, *Benjamin Constant’s Philosophy of Liberalism: A Study in Politics and Religion*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 1980)


A. Ghins, ‘Benjamin Constant and the politics of reason’, *History of European Ideas* 44 (2018), 224-243. (E)


Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

1. According to Constant, how had the rise of commerce in the modern world made the protection of individual liberty both possible and necessary?

2. Did Constant’s view of liberty depend on a critique of democracy?

3. ‘It is not to happiness alone, it is to self-development that our destiny calls us’ [CONSTANT, The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns]. What consequences did Constant believe followed from this maxim?

4. Why did Constant explain the politics of his day in terms of a contrast between ‘modern’ and ‘ancient’ societies?

5. Why did Constant defend the inviolability of property rights?

6. Why did Constant argue that representative assemblies should be formed by property holders?

7. ‘Variety is life; uniformity is death’ [Constant, The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation]. What implications did this claim have for Constant’s political theory?

8. Why did Constant argue that political authority should yield to public opinion the right to judge questions of morality?
A10. HEGEL

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set Texts:

Elements of the Philosophy of Right, ed. A. Wood (Cambridge, 1991) [especially Preface, Introduction, and Ethical Life]; [or Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, ed. by T.M Knox, (Oxford, 1952) (E)]

Suggested secondary reading:

General and introductory
*F.C. Beiser, Hegel (London, 2005) (E)

Hegel’s Social and Political Theory
*S. Avineri, Hegel’s Theory of the Modern State, (Cambridge, 1972) (E)
D. Knowles, Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hegel and the Philosophy of Right (London, 2002) (E)
C. Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, (Cambridge, 1979) (E)

Specifically on the philosophy of history:

On Religion:

Further secondary reading:

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

1. If Hegel’s state was supposed to be based on the freedom of the citizens, why was he so critical of democracy?

2. Explain the relation between Hegel’s view that society is in one sense always free and his argument that it has become more truly free in the course of history.

3. Why did Hegel think the modern state succeeded at realizing freedom where ancient models had failed?

4. ‘Hegel sacrifices the individual to the state.’ Discuss.

5. Why did Hegel begin his discussion of ethical life with the family?

6. What did Hegel’s political thought owe to his view of the ancient Greek polis?

7. ‘It is the march of God in the world, that there be a state’ [Hegel, Philosophy of Right]. What did Hegel mean by this?

8. Why did Hegel describe reason as ‘cunning’?
A11. TOCQUEVILLE

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set Texts:


The Ancien Régime and the Revolution, ed. J. Elster (Cambridge 2011) (E)

Suggested secondary reading:

J. Elster, Alexis de Tocqueville: The First Social Scientist (Cambridge, 2009) (E)
P. Manent, Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy (Lanham MD, 1996)
J. Pitts, ‘Tocqueville and the Algeria Question’, in Pitts, A Turn to Empire (Princeton NJ, 2005), ch. 7. (E)
*M. Richter, ‘Tocqueville and Guizot on Democracy: From a Type of Society to a Political Regime’, History of European Ideas 30 (2004), 61-82. (E)
*C.B. Welch, De Tocqueville (Oxford, 2001) (E)

Further reading:

Additional primary texts:
Tocqueville on America after 1840: Letters and Other Writings, eds. A. Craiutu and J. Jennings (Cambridge, 2009) (E)

Secondary literature:
A. de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge, 2008), chap. 6 (E)
W. Selinger, *Parliamentarism from Burke to Weber*, (Cambridge, 2019), ch. 5. (E)

*Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):*

1. Did Tocqueville think that the political dangers facing France and the United States required similar or different responses?

2. Why did Tocqueville think ‘mores’ (*moeurs*) were so important for protecting liberty?

3. How important to Tocqueville’s account of liberty and the threats it faced in a democratic society was his understanding of the historical role of the aristocracy?

4. Why did Tocqueville distinguish between a ‘federal’ and an ‘incomplete national government’, and consider the latter ‘one of the great discoveries of political science in our age’?

5. Why did Tocqueville suggest that great revolutions would happen less often in a democratic society?

6. Why did Tocqueville argue that the French Revolution had created governments ‘more fragile, but a hundred times more powerful than those that it toppled’ [*Tocqueville, The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*]?

7. ‘I am convinced that anarchy is not the principal evil that democratic centuries will have to fear, but the least’ [*TOCQUEVILLE, Democracy in America*]. Discuss.

8. ‘One must beware of confusing the fact of equality itself with the revolution that serves to introduce it into the social state and the laws’ [*TOCQUEVILLE, Democracy in America*]. Why?
A12. J.S. MILL

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set Texts:


All these texts can be found online in the Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, ed. J.M. Robson et al., at https://oll.libertyfund.org/people/john-stuart-mill.

Volumes II and III = Principles of Political Economy (Volume III for Books IV and V)

Volume XVIII = Essays on Politics and Society I (‘On Liberty’)

Volume XIX = Essays on Politics and Society II (‘Considerations on Representative Government’)

Volume XXI = Essays on Equality, Law, and Education (‘The Subjection of Women’).

Suggested secondary reading:


G. Claeyts, Mill and Paternalism (Cambridge, 2013) (E)


W. Selinger, Parliamentarism from Burke to Weber, (Cambridge, 2019), ch. 6. (E)

N. Urbinati, Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government (Chicago, 2002).


On Economics:


On the Subjection of Women:

On International Relations:
D. Bell, ‘John Stuart Mill on Colonies’, Political Theory, 38 (2010), 34-64. (E)
J. Pitts, A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France (Princeton NJ, 2005), Ch. 5, pp. 123-162. (E)
G. Varouxakis, Liberty Abroad. J.S. Mill on International Relations (Cambridge, 2013) (E)

Further secondary reading:
D.O. Brink, Mill’s Progressive Principles (Oxford, 2013) (E)
G. Conti, Parliament the Mirror of the Nation: Representation, Deliberation, and Democracy in Victorian Britain, (Cambridge, 2019), esp. parts 3-5. (E)
F. Hayek, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor: Their Correspondence and Subsequent Marriage (London, 1951)
D. Kelly, The Propriety of Liberty: Persons, Passions, and Judgement in Modern Political Thought, (Princeton, NJ, 2010), Ch. 4 (E)
D.E. Miller, Mill’s “Socialism”, Politics, Philosophy & Economics 2 (2003), 213-238. (E)
A. Pyle ed., Liberty: Contemporary Responses to John Stuart Mill (Bristol, 1994)
F. Rosen, Mill (Oxford, 2013)


**Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):**

1. How important to Mill’s political theory was faith in the progress of civilization over time? ‘I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions; but it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being’ [*On Liberty*]. What followed from this definition of utility for Mill’s theory of liberty?

2. Were Mill’s arguments against the subjection of women consistent with the qualifications he would place on rights to self-governance and equal suffrage in *Considerations on Representative Government*?

3. Why was Mill’s distinction between ‘true’ and ‘false’ democracy important for his larger theory of the connection between liberty and representative government?

4. How did Mill understand the political challenges posed by economic progress?

5. To what extent did Mill’s political thought support the authority of elites?

6. How did Mill’s theory of representative government reflect his claim that everyone deserves ‘to have his opinion counted at its worth, though not more than its worth’ [*MILL, Considerations on Representative Government*]?

7. ‘The term duty to oneself...means self-respect or self-development; and for none of these is anyone accountable to his fellow-creatures’ [*MILL, On Liberty*]. What was the significance of this claim in Mill’s political thought?

8. Why did Mill insist that the doctrine of free trade rested on grounds different from the principle of individual liberty?

9. Was Mill’s argument in *On the Subjection of Women* consistent with his comments on colonial rule in *Considerations on Representative Government*?
A13. MARX

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set Texts:

The Communist Manifesto, ed. G. Stedman Jones, (London, 2002) [also included in Later Political Writings, ed. by Carver, as below].

Marx: Early Political Writings, J. O’Malley and R. A. Davis eds (Cambridge, 1994) (E)

Marx: Later Political Writings, ed. T. Carver (Cambridge, 1996) (E)


Suggested secondary reading:

General and introductory
*T. Carver, Marx (Cambridge, 2018) (E)

*J. Elster, An Introduction to Karl Marx (Cambridge, 1986). (E)


*G. Stedman Jones, Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion, (London, 2016)

More particularly,


*A. Wood, Karl Marx, 2nd ed. (Abingdon, 2004)


Further secondary reading:


F. Wheen, *Karl Marx* (New York, 1999)

*Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):*

1. Why and in what way did Marx think human emancipation required abolishing the state?
2. What role did ‘alienation’ play in Marx’s discussions of religion, the state, and the capitalist economy?

3. Why was Marx so insistent in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* that the Lassallean socialists were mistaken in identifying socialism with a ‘fair distribution’ of goods?

4. ‘The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it’ [MARX, ‘On Feuerbach’]. So why did he write more about history and economics than about plans for change?

5. Why did Marx distinguish political emancipation from human emancipation?

6. Was Marx a democrat?

7. Did Marx agree with anything in the philosophy of German idealism?
B14. NATURAL LAW AND HISTORY

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:


Suggested secondary reading:

*M. Goldie and R. Wokler (eds), The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought (Cambridge, 2006) (E), Part III: Natural Jurisprudence and the Science of Legislation, including:

9. K. Haakonssen, ‘German Natural Law’,


More particularly, on Natural Law in Germany:

*T.J. Hochstrasser, Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment (Cambridge, 2000) (E)

On Natural Law in Scotland:


On Vico’s response to Natural Law:


Further secondary reading:


*Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):*

1. Why was Natural Law still so important for political thought in the early eighteenth century?
2. Why did Vico think that his ‘rational civil theology of divine providence’ held the key to understanding the historical development of human societies?
3. Did the increasingly historical approach to Natural Law in the eighteenth century make it less ‘natural’?
4. Were eighteenth-century theories of sociability responses to a weakening of faith in natural reason?
5. To what extent did post-Hobbesian natural law take a historical turn?
6. Why did Vico think that the Protestant natural lawyers had failed to explain human sociability?
7. If sociability had a history, why was it deemed natural?
8. Why were natural law theorists concerned to show that society preceded the institution of government?
B15. LUXURY AND COMMERCIAL SOCIETY

Suggested primary reading:


Suggested secondary reading:

The luxury debate and political economy:


On Mandeville:

E.J. Hundert, *The Enlightenment’s Fable* (Cambridge, 1994) (E)

The French debate:


On Ferguson:


Further secondary reading:

H.C. Clark, Compass of Society: Commerce and Absolutism in Old Regime France, (Lanham, MD, 2007), chapters 2-8. (E)


R. Hamowy, ‘Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and the Division of Labour’, Economica, n.s. 35 (1968), 244-259. (E)


Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

1. Why was Fénelon’s critique of luxury so enduringly provocative to those who would defend commercial society in the eighteenth century?

2. Was the eighteenth-century luxury debate about the town versus the country?

3. Where did Adam Ferguson’s Essay on the History of Civil Society leave the luxury debate?

4. Why did Mandeville’s defence of luxury convince so few in the eighteenth century?

5. Why did both defenders and critics of commercial society use the language of vice and corruption?

6. Why was Fénelon’s utopia of agrarian self-sufficiency so persistent a reference point for participants in the eighteenth-century luxury debate?

7. What was luxury thought to corrupt?

8. Were eighteenth-century critics of luxury critical of inequality?
B16. POLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:


Thomas Paine, Common Sense, ed. Isaac Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976); or online (3rd ed., 1776) (E)


Supplementary primary reading:

Suggested secondary reading:


*P.S. Onuf, ‘Reflections on the Founding: Constitutional Historiography in Bicentennial Perspective’, *William and Mary Quarterly* 46 (1989), 341–75 (E)


Further secondary reading:


T. Ball and J.G.A. Pocock (eds), *Conceptual Change and the Constitution* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1988)

R. Beeman et al. (eds), *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987)

H. Belz, R. Hoffman and P. Albert (eds), *To Form a More Perfect Union: The Critical Ideas of the Constitution* (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1992)


R.K. Matthews, *If Men Were Angels: James Madison and the Heartless Empire of Reason* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1995)


D. Waldstreicher, Slavery's Constitution: From Revolution to Ratification (New York, 2009)


C. Yirush, Settlers, Liberty, and Empire: The Roots of Early American Political Theory, 1675–1775 (Cambridge, 2011) (E)


Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

1. Did the Constitution purchase national stability at the expense of democracy in the United States?

2. ‘Neither wholly national nor wholly federal’ [The Federalist, number 39]. What did James Madison mean by this characterization of the Constitution of 1787?

3. Was the Constitution of 1787 the fulfilment or a repudiation of the Declaration of Independence?

4. Why did John Adams think that the word Republic ‘may signify any-thing, every-thing, or nothing’ [ADAMS to J. H. Tiffany, April 30, 1819]?

5. ‘Divide et impera [divide and rule], the reprobated axiom of tyranny, is under certain qualifications, the only policy, by which a republic can be administered on just principles’ [MADISON, 1787]. Discuss with reference to the U.S. federal constitution.

6. Did the Anti-Federalists and the Federalists share a common vision of America?

7. Were the Anti-Federalists the only true republicans among theorists of the American Revolution?

8. Given their many grievances with the federal Constitution, why were the Anti-Federalists mollified by the promise of a Bill of Rights?

9. Was the American Revolution a repudiation of the idea of monarchy?
B17. POLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:

includes: ‘Views of the Executive Means available to the Representatives of France in 1789’ (not otherwise available);
‘An Essay on Privileges’, available in eighteenth-century translation – search under this title (E)


Saint-Just, Robespierre, Speeches, in K.M. Baker (ed.), *The Old Regime and the French Revolution: Readings in Western Civilisation* (Chicago, 1987), pp. 304-7 (Saint-Just), 368-84 (Robespierre); also in M. Walzer (ed), *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI* (New York, 1992) (Saint-Just); R.T. Bienvenu (ed) *The Ninth of Thermidor: the fall of Robespierre*, (New York, 1968), pp. 32-49 (Robespierre) [none of these are available online].
For Robespierre, see https://pages.uoregon.edu/dluebke/301ModernEurope/Robespierre.pdf (available as of 20.3.20).
For Saint-Just, see https://revolution.chnm.org/exhibits/show/liberty--equality--fraternity/item/525 (available as of 20.3.20).

Paine, *The Rights of Man*, ed. G. Claeys (Indianapolis, 1992); or in two parts (London, 1791-2) (E)

Also:

Suggested secondary reading:


Further secondary reading:

K.M. Baker, Condorcet: From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics (Chicago, 1975)


H.C. Clark, Compass of Society: Commerce and Absolutism in Old Regime France, (Lanham MD, 2007), chapters 8-10. (E)


Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

1. Did the political theorists of the French Revolution re-define the concept of a republic?
2. In what sense, if any, did the political thinkers of the French Revolution believe the nation to be ‘sovereign’?

3. ‘Political unity was the central problem facing political thinkers in the French Revolution.’ Discuss with reference to two or more authors.

4. Did any French Revolutionary thinker explain how to reconcile respect for universal ‘rights of man and citizen’ with the constituent power of the people?

5. Which was more important to thinkers of the French Revolution, reason or virtue?

6. How important was the concept of equality to the political theorists of the French Revolution?

7. ‘There must not be any confusion between a constituting power and a constituted power’ [SIEYÈS, Views of the Executive Means]. Why did subsequent political thinkers of the French Revolution struggle to avoid this confusion?

8. Why did the political thinkers of the French Revolution object to the existence of ‘privileges’?

9. Why did many theorists of the French Revolution believe it necessary to ‘ingraft representation upon democracy’ [PAINE, The Rights of Man]?
Suggested primary reading:


Suggested secondary reading:


*F.C. Beiser, Enlightenment, Revolution and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought 1790-1800* (Cambridge, MA, 1992) (E)


*D. James, Fichte’s Social and Political Philosophy: Property and Virtue* (Cambridge, 2011) (E)


*D. Moggach, ‘Schiller’s Aesthetic Republicanism’, History of Political Thought 28 (2007), 520-41. (E)


Further secondary reading:
I. Berlin, ‘The Counter-Enlightenment’, in Berlin, Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas, 
H.C. Reiss (ed), The Political Thought of the German Romantics, 1793-1815 (Oxford, 1955)
R. Velkley, ‘The Tension in the Beautiful: On Culture and Civilisation in Rousseau and German Philosophy’, 
in C. Orwin and N. Tarcov eds., The Legacy of Rousseau (Chicago, 1997), 65-86

Herder:
F.M. Barnard, Herder on Nationality, Humanity, and History (Montreal, 2003)
S. Muthu, Enlightenment against Empire (Princeton, 2003), chap. 6 (E)
R. Speck, ‘Johann Gottfried Herder and Enlightenment Political Thought’, Modern Intellectual History 11 
(2014), 31-58. (E)
V.A. Spencer, Herder’s Political Thought: A Study of Language, Culture, and Community (Toronto, 2012)
Anthony J. La Vopa, ‘Herder’s Publikum: Language, Print and Sociability in Eighteenth-Century Germany’, 
J. Zammito, Kant, Herder, and the Birth of Anthropology (Chicago, 2002)

Humboldt:
D. Sorkin, ‘Wilhelm von Humboldt: The Theory and Practice of Self-Formation (Bildung), 1791-1810’,
Journal of the History of Ideas 44 (1983), 55-73. (E)

Fichte:
A. Schmidt, ‘Self-Cultivation (Bildung) and Sociability Between Mankind and the Nation: Fichte and 
A.J. La Vopa, Fichte, The Self and the Calling of Philosophy, 1762-1799 (Cambridge, 2001)
R.R. Williams, Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other (Albany, 1992), chap. 3. Novalis:

Novalis

Schiller:
F. C. Beiser, Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-Examination (Oxford, 2005) (E)
J. Reed, Schiller (Oxford, 1991)

*Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):*

1. What political implications follow from the view of German thinkers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that freedom is the development of individuality?

2. How did German thinkers at the turn of the nineteenth century understand the relation between culture and politics?

3. Why did a number of German thinkers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries come to argue that a rational state was an insufficient guarantee of freedom? Did the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German thinkers who emphasized the political role of culture reject reason?

4. What role did the notion of history play in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German theories of culture and politics? Answer with reference to two or more of the authors you have read.

5. Were German theorists of culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries seeking a substitute for religion?

6. ‘Thus what Rousseau and the ancient poets put behind us, under the names “state of nature” and “golden age”, lies ahead of us instead... What we have to achieve is represented as something we have lost’ [FICHTE, *Some Lectures Concerning the Scholar’s Vocation*]. Why was this difference so important to Fichte?

7. Why did so many German theorists of culture at the turn of the nineteenth century argue that society should be understood as organic rather than mechanical?

8. What did German theorists of culture at the turn of the nineteenth century see in the thought and politics of France?
B19. GENDER AND POLITICAL THOUGHT IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:

W. Thompson and A. Wheeler, *Appeal of One-Half of the Human Race, Women, Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men &c.*, ed. M. Foot and M. M. Roberts (Bristol, 1994); https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/objects/lse:cik442nul?id=lse%3Acik442nul#page/1/mode/2up )

Suggested secondary reading:

Arianne Chernock, *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism* (Stanford, California, 2010)
**S. Knott and B. Taylor (eds), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 2005), Part 2, Sections 6, 8, 9 and 10 (E).
C.G. Moses and L.W. Rabine (eds), *Feminism, Socialism and French Romanticism* (Bloomingon, IN, 1993).

Further secondary reading:

Mary Astell and the early eighteenth century
chapters 1, 3, 5, 13 (E).

The Enlightenment

The Revolutionary period

Mill and Victorian Britain

Engels and the later nineteenth century
P. Davies, Myth, Matriarchy and Modernity: Johann Jakob Bachofen in German Culture, 1860–1945, (Berlin, 2010)

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):

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58
1. Was the happiness of women or of society foremost in the considerations of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theorists of the condition of women?

2. Did eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theorists of the condition of women think of women as history’s victims?

3. Did eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theorists of the condition of women believe in progress?

4. What changes, if any, in the condition of men were envisaged by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century commentators on the condition of women?

5. To what extent did the arguments of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century commentators on the condition of women rest on the natural equality of the sexes?

6. What importance, if any, did the history of women have in eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century theories of women’s condition?

7. Why did so few eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics of the condition of women rely on arguments about justice?
B20. SOCIALISM BEFORE 1848

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:

R. Owen, A New View of Society and other Writings, G. Claeys ed., (Harmondsworth, 1991); or A New View of Society and other Writings, (London: Dent, 1949),

Suggested secondary reading:

J. Beecher, Charles Fourier: The Visionary and his World (London, 1986)
G. Claeys, Citizens and Saints: Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism (Cambridge, 1989) (E)

Further secondary reading:


**Owen & Britain:**


**Saint-Simon & Early French Socialism:**


**Fourier:**


**Proudhon:**


**Blanc:**

**Marx & Engels’ Views:**
D. Leopold, ‘The Structure of Marx and Engels’ Considered Account of Utopian Socialism’, *History of Political Thought* 26 (2005), 443-466. (E)

**Herzen & Russia:**

**Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):**

1. Were the early nineteenth-century socialists’ critiques of commercial society forward- or backward-looking?
2. What significance did socialist authors before 1848 attach to the French Revolution?
3. Were early socialist doctrines egalitarian?
4. ‘Early nineteenth-century socialism was a rejection of politics.’ Discuss.
5. Did early socialists regard the state as a potential ally or as an enemy?
6. ‘Industrial competition was the central problem that early socialist theorists sought to confront.’ Discuss with reference to two or more authors.
7. Did early socialist thinkers seek to destroy Christianity or to reform it?
8. Was early socialism more concerned with social harmony than with justice?
9. ‘Early socialism was less concerned with the redistribution of property than with the organisation of labour.’ Discuss.
B21. NATIONALISM AND THE STATE

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:


Suggested secondary reading:


*D. James, Fichte’s Republic: Idealism, history and nationalism*, (Cambridge, 2015) (E)

E. Kedourie, *Nationalism* (New York, 1960), chapters 5-7


*S. Recchia & N. Urbinati, ‘Giuseppe Mazzini’s International Political Thought’ in Recchia and Urbinati (eds), A Cosmopolitanism of Nations, pp. 1-30 (E)

Further secondary reading:


*Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):*

1. When and how did the idea of nationality enter into European theories of the state?

2. What criteria were used by nineteenth-century thinkers to identify national communities worthy of political freedom?

3. Why was nationalism a vehicle for liberalism in the nineteenth century?

4. Why were many nineteenth-century conservatives sceptical of nationalism?

5. To what problems were nineteenth-century theories of nationality and nationalism thought to be solutions?

6. Are nineteenth-century theorists of nationality best understood as supporters or opponents of the French Revolution?

7. Did nationalism in the nineteenth century support or compete with republicanism?

8. What was the relationship between nationality and civilization in nineteenth-century political thought?
(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

**Suggested primary reading:**


*On Liberty*, ‘Introduction’, in *On Liberty and Other Writings*, ed S. Collini (Cambridge, 1989); or in *Collected Works*, vol. XVIII;


The following primary texts, published around 1900, are also important:


**Suggested secondary reading:**


*D. Bell, Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire (Princeton, NJ, 2016) (E)
*D. Bell (ed.), Victorian Visions of Global Order: Empire and International Relations in Nineteenth Century Political Thought (Cambridge, 2008), esp. chs 6, 8, 9 and 10 (E)
*G. Claeys, Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920 (Cambridge, 2010) (E)
*S. Muthu, Enlightenment against Empire (Princeton 2003) (E)
S. Muthu (ed.), Empire and Modern Political Thought (Cambridge, 2012), esp. chs. 8-13 (E)
*J. Pitts, A Turn to Empire: the Rise of Liberal Imperialism in Britain and France (Princeton, 2005) (E)
N. Slate, Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India (Harvard, 2012) (E)

International Law
*J. Pitts, Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire (Cambridge, MA, 2018).

Further secondary reading:
A. Brewer, Marxist Theories of Imperialism, 2nd ed. (London, 1990)
S. Buck-Morss, Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History (Pittsburgh, 2009)
D. Chakrabarty, Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought & Historical Difference (Princeton, 2000) (E)
D. Kelly (ed.), Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought (Oxford, 2009), esp. chs 1 and 5.
J. Levy and I. M. Young (eds), Colonialism and its Legacies (Lanham, 2011), esp. chs. 2, 7, 8, 10, 12
U. S. Mehta, Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought, (Chicago, 1999)
C. Mills, The Racial Contract (Cornell, 1997)
J. Morefield, Covenants without Swords: Idealist Liberalism and the Spirit of Empire (Princeton, 2004)

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):
1. Were Liberal theories of empire proof against the Marxist critique of imperialism?
2. Was Liberalism necessarily imperialist?
3. To what extent did nineteenth-century accounts of empire depend upon arguments about civilization?
4. Did nineteenth-century thinkers believe empire was promoted or undermined by modern commercial relations? Answer with reference to two or more of the thinkers you have read.

5. Were nineteenth-century theorists of empire more concerned with the colonies or with the metropole?

6. Were arguments about the British presence in India significantly different from those about European imperialism elsewhere in the world?

7. What role did political economy play in British liberal critiques of empire?

8. ‘In the empire, one might say, liberalism had found the concrete place of its dreams’ [UDAY SINGH MEHTA, Liberalism and Empire]. Is this an accurate portrayal of the relationship between liberalism and imperialism in the nineteenth century?
Suggested primary reading:


Suggested secondary reading:


Further secondary reading:


D.G. Charleton, *Positivist Thought in France during the Second Empire, 1852-70* (Oxford, 1959)


H.S. Hughes, Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930, (London, 1959)
M. Mandelbaum, History, Man and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought (Baltimore, 1971)

Saint-Simon:
F.E. Manuel, The New World of Henri Saint-Simon (Cambridge, 1956)
R. Wokler, ‘Saint-Simon and the Passage from Political to Social Science’, in A. Pagden (ed), The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge, 1987), 323-38 (E)

Specifically on Comte:
E. Caird, The Social Philosophy and Religion of Comte (Bristol, 1999)

Durkheim:
R.A. Jones, The Development of Durkheim’s Social Realism (Cambridge, 1999) (E)
S. Lukes, Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work, a Historical and Critical Study (Stanford CA, 1973)

Suggested supervision questions (from old Tripos papers):
1. Did nineteenth-century Social Science represent a turn away from political philosophy?
2. Did positivist ideas in Social Science depend upon an assumption of progress in history?
3. Why was reflection on the French Revolution so important to the development of social science in the nineteenth century?
4. Did nineteenth-century contributors to the rise of social science agree on the meaning of ‘science’?
5. ‘Nineteenth-century social science was motivated by a social and practical goal, not merely by the pursuit of knowledge.’ Discuss.
6. How did nineteenth-century social scientists understand the relation of society to nature?
7. Why was the idea of the division of labour so important to nineteenth-century social scientists?
8. Was nineteenth-century social science antagonistic to political pluralism?
9. What role did religion play in nineteenth-century attempts to model social understanding as science?
10. Was nineteenth-century social science politically anti-revolutionary?
Appendix: Examiners’ Reports

N.B. POL8 and POL10 are examined and marked separately. Past papers are most easily accessed via the History Faculty website:

https://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/undergraduate/cam-only/past-papers [requires Raven login]

where you will find them listed under Part I Paper 20 (POL8) and Part II Paper 4 (POL10).

POL8 Examiners’ Reports

2018-19
Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins

Eighty candidates sat the paper by examination this year; one candidate was assessed following special assessment procedures. The examination was, very regrettably, significantly disrupted when a misprint was discovered five minutes into the exam. Question 21, which should properly cover the Nationalism topic, had been replaced by last year’s question on Empire and Civilization. The exam was stopped after approximately five minutes; the correct question was identified by the examiner from History, who was the paper setter. Candidates were informed of the correction and those who had begun to answer the misprinted question 21 were requested to strike out their answers. The exam resumed with ten minutes added to the clock to make up for lost time. These changes were communicated by the examination supervisors to other examination centres, although it appears that, in at least one instance, this message was not received. Clearly, this raises questions about paper-setting procedures. As with POL7 and POL10, the exam paper for POL8 is set by the Faculty of History and subject to their scrutiny. The examiner for POL8 did not have sight of the exam paper before the morning it was sat. I strongly recommend that this change in future, and that exam papers for POL7, POL8 and POL10 be made available in advance to their respective examiners in POLIS as a safeguard against any repeat of this kind of error.

In light of this disruption, special care was taken to ensure that no candidate was unduly disadvantaged. Examiners identified all cases where there were particular grounds for thinking that a candidate might have been disadvantaged by the error and its correction. These were given additional scrutiny by the external examiners, as were cases where there seemed to be a significant discrepancy between a candidate’s marks for POL8 and those for other papers.

In the event, overall the standard of answers was high. Eighteen candidates received an overall First-class mark; fifty-eight received an Upper Second; three received Lower Seconds; and one candidate received a Third. The median mark was 66; the mean was 65.8. There were 138 answers on Section A topics; 102 answers on Section B topics. Answers were heavily clustered around five topics. The most popular topic was Rousseau (36 answers), followed by Wollstonecraft (31 answers), Gender (24), Burke and Empire and Civilization (both 21). Trailing some way behind was Luxury and Commercial Society (13), Hume and the French Revolution (both on 12), the American Revolution (11), Nationalism (9), and Kant and Mill (both on 8). Bringing up the rear were Montesquieu, Marx, and Socialism before 1848 (all on 5), Constant and Social Science (both on 4), Tocqueville and Natural Law (both on 3), Bentham and Hegel (both on 2) and Smith (most
unusually, receiving only a single answer). Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany was the only topic not to receive an answer. There were notably strong answers on Hegel and on the Gender topic, although the latter topic also attracted many rather generic answers to the question; there were a number of good answers on Hume, Wollstonecraft and Nationalism, and those candidates who attempted the questions on Smith, Bentham, Constant, Natural Law, and Social Science tended to perform well. Strikingly, many candidates struggled with the questions on Rousseau and Empire and Civilization, with a number of candidates receiving one or more marks in the 40-49 or 50-59 range for these questions.

Much as in previous years, the best answers had a number of virtues in common. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, they offered direct answers to the questions posed rather than generic discussions of the topics concerned. Secondly, they were based on close reading of the relevant set texts and did not rely upon summary accounts such as might be gleaned from lectures, supervisions or basic textbooks. Thirdly, they offered cohesive arguments that used each successive paragraph to build an overarching case, rather than laying out arguments in a disjointed or haphazard fashion. Additionally, the best answers were able to make judicious use of secondary literature to advance their case, whether by invoking it in support of the argument, or by challenging its conclusions with reference to the primary texts.

For section A, as noted, Rousseau proved most problematic. Weaker candidates showed a lack of familiarity with the discussion of the lawgiver in Book II Chapter 7 of the *Social Contract*. Several confused this figure with either the sovereign or the government; others neglected the emphasis of the question on the source of the lawgiver’s authority or misidentified it. Others still offered an overview of the argument of the *Social Contract*, but neglected to focus on the problem at hand. Stronger answers took the quotation as the starting point for a discussion of the lawgiver’s role and their appeal to divine authority. Problems with other topics were less widespread. Hume was generally answered well, though most candidates were significantly more familiar with the *Treatise* than with the *Essays*. Montesquieu was answered best by those candidates able to discuss the distinction between nobility and aristocracy with confidence, and to relate them to different forms of government. Answers on Burke were somewhat unadventurous, with many candidates falling back on generic discussion of his ‘consistency’. Better answers aimed to address the relationship between theory and practice more directly. Wollstonecraft attracted a number of strong answers that made interesting use of the *Short Residence*. Weaker answers neglected one or other of the two *Vindications*. Kant was generally well answered, and candidates proved adept at relating his moral, legal and political philosophies. The emphasis on free trade in the Mill question presented a challenge to those candidates who had neglected the relevant passages in *On Liberty* or who had passed over the *Principles of Political Economy*. Answers on Marx were mixed. Though all candidates showed some understanding of a range of his texts, weaker candidates struggled to make a coherent argument. Few showed any very deep appreciation of Marx’s historical or philosophical thought. Other questions attracted fewer answers, though these tended to be of high quality. The answers on Smith and Hegel demonstrated a good grasp of the primary texts and in some cases notable intellectual ambition in their arguments. Bentham and Constant attracted some convincing arguments based on a solid understanding of the primary texts. The answers on Tocqueville were a little weaker, and it was noticeable that some candidates were less than confident in discussing the *Ancien Régime and the Revolution*.

For Section B, Gender was the most popular topic. The best candidates excelled, with answers that demonstrated both wide reading in the primary and secondary literature, but also a clear focus on the ways in which the historicization of the ‘woman question’ shaped debate on the subject. Weaker candidates fell into two camps: those who did not focus sufficiently on the ‘history’ aspect of the question; and those who
struggled to pull the threads of their answer together into a coherent argument. For Empire and Civilization, a focus on political economy again proved challenging. Some candidates struggled to address this dimension of the topic on anything more than a superficial level; others neglected one or another of the terms specified in the question: ‘British liberal critiques of empire’. Optimistic attempts to recruit Marx to the ranks of British liberals did not impress. The best arguments drew on secondary and primary sources to examine the role of debates on free trade, attacks on the ‘old colonial system’ and slavery, on international competition, and on the role of empire in fostering or perpetuating domestic inequality. Some answers also made plausible cases for distinguishing between favourable and critical arguments about empire in thinkers such as J.S. Mill. Of the other topics, the Luxury topic was popular this year, and received a number of very well-informed answers, though some candidates struggled to retain the focus on ‘corruption’. The French Revolution question was not answered especially well, with a number of candidates demonstrating a very superficial knowledge of Sieyès’ thought, in particular. The American Revolution fared a little better, especially where candidates demonstrated first-hand knowledge of the Constitution itself, as well as of the arguments made for and against its adoption. The Nationalism topic attracted some very strong answers, which both drew on a wide range of primary texts, but also, crucially, gave thoughtful consideration to the concept of ‘civilization’. The candidate who answered the question solely with reference to texts drawn from the Empire topic fared less well. Answers on Socialism and Social Science were generally solid, though some candidates slipped into giving flat overviews of key thinkers. The better answers focused more attentively on the terms of the questions. The answers on Natural Law all provided convincing answers to the question, but in some cases could have tried to make more use of the set texts.

2017-18
Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

Eighty-two candidates sat the paper this year. There were thirteen overall First-class marks, fifty-eight Upper Seconds, and eleven Lower Seconds. The median mark was 64, the mean a little higher (64.6). There were 151 answers on Section A questions, and 95 on Section B questions. Every question on the exam paper was attempted at least twice except for the question on natural law, which attracted no answers. The popular answers were on Rousseau (as ever, 34), Wollstonecraft (25), gender (23), the French Revolution (19), Smith and Burke (both 14), nationalism (13), and Montesquieu (12). Mill’s popularity on this paper continues to decline, with only nine takers this year (fewer than Constant, for example, who had ten). German authors were also not very popular this year, with eight on Kant, three on Hegel, five on Marx (though these were strong answers), and two on the German Romantics (ditto). Although authors and topics that concentrated on France were popular (counting Rousseau and Constant as French for the time being), making up just over a third of all answers, they were, at the margin, slightly weaker in quality than answers on other questions, and somewhat flat answers were disproportionately to be found amongst attempts to the questions on Rousseau, Constant, Tocqueville, and the French Revolution.

The fundamental things apply / As time goes by, and this remains as true as ever when it comes to POL8. Higher marks were awarded to candidates who focused on the question on the exam paper and reflected on what, exactly, was being asked about, rather than moving as swiftly as possible to generic discussion of the set authors’ best-known views; who showed first-hand knowledge of the set texts, rather than relying on textbook summary or arm’s-length engagement; who were able to bring in accurate reference to and sensible discussion of relevant secondary literature, where this was appropriate; who built an argument across the
answer as a whole, rather than offering disjointed paragraphs with little connection between them; and who clearly allocated their time evenly across their three answers, rather than starting off with a longer and ending with a somewhat truncated piece. One satisfying aspect of this year’s scripts is that vanishingly few answers read like summaries of lecture material. A very small number of essays, however, did read like answers to questions that had appeared on previous exam papers—about Rousseau on transparency, or Bentham on Blackstone, for example—that had been very lightly repurposed.

Turning to some of the individual questions, the stronger answers on Rousseau tended to have more concrete institutional detail (sometimes with explicit reference to Geneva, Poland, or Corsica), and worked out strong lines of argument to connect the two main set texts, rather than juxtaposing them and/or dealing mainly in abstractions. Wollstonecraft answers were sometimes let down by an insufficiently analytical attention to the distinction between rights and virtues. Responses to the question on Kant sometimes failed to hold their attention on the essay ‘What is Enlightenment?’, and spent too long distracted by chestnuts like the right to revolution or the relationship between his moral and his political thought. Bentham essays flourished to the extent that they thought about what ‘official aptitude’ might be. Answers on Hegel might have focused more on the idea of history as slaughterbench than they did. Those on Constant and Tocqueville too often read like essays from candidates who had not really moved on from Part I. Stronger essays on the latter incorporated discussion of the Ancien Régime and the Revolution, or contributions from secondary authors such as Cheryl Welch. Mill essays might have had more than they did on the notions of a duty to oneself and of accountability. Marx answers were generally good, and the stronger answers weren’t just fixated on the “young Marx”, but covered later texts including, in particular, the Critique of the Gotha Programme.

When it came too Section B, weaker answers on luxury rehearsed the standard Hontian discussion of the debate as it came down from Fénelon and mentioned cities a few times; stronger answers showed that they had really got inside the spirit and detail of Mandeville’s argument. Essays on the American Revolution were better to the extent candidates were aware of recent scholarly debate on the question of monarchy, e.g. Eric Nelson’s recent contribution. Essays on the French Revolution sometimes appear to have been written by candidates who either hadn’t really thought about privilege at all or were too focused on specifically monarchical privilege. On both of these topics, some essays were let down by insufficient grip on the general train of events during the Revolutions concerned. Better essays on women organised their answers around a central line of argument, rather than spending a paragraph on each set author and vaguely relating what they had to say to the question that had been asked. When it came to the questions on nationalism and empire, the more interesting answers grappled directly with the set texts, rather than offering detached summary. Weaker answers to the question on empire either offered a fairly general account of British liberal imperialism, into which the phrase “standard of civilisation” was slipped a few times, or offered uncritical summary of some commentator or other’s views.

2016-17
Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

106 candidates sat the paper. Looking at the overall marks for the paper, there were seventeen Firsts, eighty Upper Seconds, eight Lower Seconds, and one Third—though twenty-seven candidates earned a First-class mark from at least one marker, and eighteen a Lower Second. All questions were attempted at least once; though two, on nineteenth-century social science and natural law only attracted one
answer, and one, on German Romanticism, attracted only two. The most popular questions were on Rousseau (48 answers), Burke (22 answers), Wollstonecraft (24 answers), Constant (22 answers), the French Revolution (28 answers), gender (43 answers), and empire (25 answers). John Stuart Mill was a lot less popular than usual on this paper, attracting only 16 answers.

As ever, candidates were rewarded for focussed answers to the questions the Examiners had actually posed, rather than for offering answers to versions of previous years’ questions, potted versions of supervision essays, or regurgitated but only partially-digested lecture material. In Section A, candidates did well who could show a decent feel for the way their subjects reasoned about political questions, not reducing their thought to a set of fixed ‘positions’. Weaker answers to Section B questions ambled through outlines of what the set authors had to say paragraph by paragraph, with little of much interest to say that worked to bind an argument together across the essay as a whole. Stronger answers fashioned the material into a distinctive argument to address the question. Some reflections follow on some of the individual questions that attracted more than a very small number of answers.

In Section A, answers on Montesquieu often offered some connections between his accounts of monarchy and commerce without providing a confident account of how everything fitted together, e.g. gesturing at what false honour might have to do with commercial life but not developing a clear and coherent argument. Too many Rousseau essays read like a summary of one of Professor Robertson’s classes, with a bit too much emphasis on the figure of the lawgiver, with sometimes insufficient attention paid to other significant factors in his political thought. Essays on Burke were stronger to the extent that they were not narrowly focused on his critique of the French Revolution. The answers on Wollstonecraft approached the question of the French Revolution in a pleasingly imaginative number of ways. The Kant essays were generally strong, from able candidates well versed in both the primary and the secondary literature. Bentham answers needed to make a tighter link between the critique of Blackstone and his views on politics than they sometimes managed to do. As ever, answers on Constant were stronger to the extent to which they could build on or otherwise escape (rather than merely recapitulate) the Constant that students encountered at Part I. Mill essays were richer to the extent that candidates were familiar with the ways in which he characteristically reasons about things, rather than just plugging in ideas of his utilitarianism, or being committed to the ‘harm principle’. Those who wrote on Marx were sometimes not clear enough about just what commodity fetishism was actually held to be.

In Section B, answers on the luxury debate sometimes spent too long on Fénelon himself, rather than on what came afterwards, and were better when they thought carefully about the question rather than merely recapitulating István Hont’s survey chapter. When it came to the French Revolution, one rather got the sense that candidates were writing about the Revolutionary figures they happened to know about, rather than about the ones who might best illuminate a discussion of the question. Too many of the essays on gender precisely illustrated the general problem with Section B essays highlighted above—they trotted through the set authors in chronological sequence, rather than organising the material more confidently around a central line of argument that spoke to the question being asked. Essays on nationalism often didn’t do quite enough to anchor the discussion in the question of why the French Revolution might be thought to be a significant issue in the first place. Answers on socialism were stronger when candidates had things to say about industrial competition, rather than presenting generic accounts of what Fourier and the gang might have been thought to be up to. The best answers on empire
offered accounts that tried to integrate the set texts into a broader account of the changing character of nineteenth-century arguments about empire, rather than just saying, well, here’s a thinker who was more interested in the colonies, and here’s another who was more interested in the metropole.

2015-16
Examiner: Dr Ruth Scurr

89 candidates sat this paper, 22 obtained Firsts, 62 II.1s, 4 II.2s and one Third.

The most popular questions by far were on Rousseau (35 answers) and the French Revolution (31). After this, the most popular questions were Wollstonecraft (21), Gender (16), Empire (16), Constant (15) and Nationalism (14). All other questions had 10 or fewer answers. The least popular were German Romantics (3), Natural Law (2) and Social Science (0). The marks ranged up to 79 and overall the standard was high this year.

As in previous years, those who read widely and were able to assemble their learning in a well-structured and fluent answer to the question (as opposed to just displaying their knowledge and erudition in the round) did best. Knowledge of both primary texts and their context is required for successful answers in this paper. HSPS Tripos Part II Examiners’ Reports, POL Papers, 15-16 Page 8 of 16

Those who did least well had not done enough work and attempted to rely on Part I level knowledge, or displayed poor time management leading to a very short third answer. Some candidates did not focus sharply on the question and provided a general overview instead of a specific answer.

Most candidates rose to the challenge of answering the intricate and thought-provoking questions. A significant number chose to answer two questions from Section B. In many cases it was clear that attending lectures had greatly benefited their answers. The best were able to combine the information obtained from lectures with wider reading to craft nuanced and informed answers.

In general candidates made good and clear use of primary and secondary texts. Answers on Constant were particularly strong this year, in all cases avoiding the temptation to draw on Part I work and displaying a subtler and more historically informed approach. Some answers on Rousseau and Mill relied on superficial readings of the primary texts and were disappointing.

More than one candidate came close to breaking the ‘Avoid overlap between your answers’ rule.

This said, it was a very good year for the History of Political Thought 1700-1890 Paper.

POL10 Examiners’ Reports

2018-19
Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins
Fourteen candidates sat this paper this year, of whom four received Firsts and the remainder Upper Seconds. The median mark was 67 and the mean 66.5. As these figures suggest, the overall standard was high, with a number of candidates receiving marks for individual questions in the high 70s. Candidates tackled a pleasingly wide range of questions. Every topic in Section B received at least one answer: Nationalism attracted four answers, the French Revolution three, and the American Revolution and Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany two each. The pattern for Section A was a little more clustered. Burke led the field (6 answers), followed by Hume and Montesquieu (4 each), Constant (3), Rousseau and Tocqueville (2 each), and Smith, Kant, Hegel and Mill (1 each). Most unusually, Wollstonecraft, Marx, as well as Bentham, received no answers.

As always, the best answers displayed a firm grip on the question posed; good (and in some cases outstanding) knowledge of the primary texts; the ability to construct a coherent and well-structured argument; and good judgement in using secondary literature either to support an argument or to provide a target for criticism. Weaker answers demonstrated either a failure to answer the question directly; a deficiency of understanding of the set texts; or a poorly-constructed argument.

Of those topics where it is possible to draw out some general trends, Montesquieu was the most consistently well-answered. Candidates were generally well versed in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century French political debate and were able to draw out some plausible connections in discussing Montesquieu’s political theory. The question on Hume was most compellingly answered by candidates who could confidently connect his theory of property with the theory of government. Answers on Burke were rather too often somewhat generic, discussing his writings on Ireland, America and France in turn and making a more or less plausible case for or against consistency. The better answers tended to those that were more confident in tying the material together into a coherent argument. On Constant, it was clear that Garsten and Rosenblatt’s discussion of Constant’s religious thought have made an impact, but this sometimes led to the political dimension being downplayed. It was noticeable on this topic, as on some others, that some candidates were tempted to rehearse arguments from practice essays that did not always speak to the matter at hand. On Nationalism, the best answers were those that were more ambitious in their attempts to draw out what a ‘coherent doctrine’ might have been. On the French Revolution, all the answers started sensibly enough from a comparison between Sieyès and Robespierre, but without advancing especially far in their analysis of the concepts of ‘nature’ and ‘artifice’.

2017-18
Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

Seven candidates sat the paper, writing thirteen answers on Section A authors and eight on Section B topics. One candidate received a (low) First-class mark, one a (high) Lower-second class mark, the rest were all Upper Seconds. There were few significant disagreements amongst the markers, which were never greater than five points. Only two questions attracted more than two answers. There were five essays on Rousseau, which flourished to the extent that they focused sharply on the analytical separation between sovereignty and government, rather than restating more general aspects of his political thinking. There were three essays on the luxury debate, where candidates usually didn’t quite say enough about corruption *per se*, but seemed more comfortable talking about other negative consequences of luxurious consumption.
2016-17
Examiner: Dr Christopher Brooke

Nine candidates sat the paper, writing 15 answers on Section A authors and 12 answers on Section B topics. Two scripts received first-class marks from both markers, five scripts received upper-second-class marks from both markers, one script received lower-second-class marks from both markers, and one script divided opinion around the 2:1/2:2 borderline.

In general, the scripts were reasonably well done, by candidates who were familiar with the exercise of writing exam-length answers on questions in the history of political thought. With only a small number of candidates sitting the paper, it is hard to offer general reflections about how particular questions were handled, though four questions attracted three answers—on Hume, Rousseau, luxury, and early socialism. With regard to these questions, I think it is fair to say that the Hume essays were a mixed bag; the Rousseau essays evinced a tendency to say a bit too much about the law-giver, though the conceptual side of things was usually treated well; the answers on the luxury debate were not focused nearly sharply enough on the particular question that had been asked, and did not have a tight enough grip on what was going on; and Saint-Simon and Owen were consistently handled better than Fourier when it came to the early socialists, with candidates not quite realising how important Fourier was for the matters under discussion.

2015-16
Examiner: Dr Ruth Scurr

9 candidates sat this paper, 4 obtained Firsts, 4 II.1s, and 1 II.2.

The most popular questions were on the French Revolution (5 answers) and German Theorists (3 answers). Other questions had two, one or no answers.

As in previous years, those who read widely and were able to assemble their learning in a well-structured and fluent answer to the question (as opposed to just displaying their knowledge and erudition in the round) did best. Relevant knowledge of both primary texts and their context is required for successful answers in this paper. Those who did least well had not done enough work. Some candidates did not focus sharply on the question and provided a general overview instead of a specific answer.

Most candidates rose to the challenge of answering the intricate and thought-provoking questions. 6 out of the 9 candidates chose to answer two questions from Section B. In many cases it was clear that attending lectures had greatly benefited their answers. The best were able to combine the information obtained from lectures with wider reading to craft nuanced and informed answers.

In general candidates made good and clear use of primary and secondary texts. Answers on the German Theorists were particularly strong this year, in all cases displaying a subtle and historically informed approach.

None of the candidates came close to breaking the ‘Avoid overlap between your answers’ rule.

It was a very good year for the History of Political Thought 1700-1890 Paper.