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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 (where the paper is known as Part IB T2/ Part II Paper 4). 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, French and Haitian 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 society and politics. The line between the state and civil society, 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 political and civil status of women, the mounting challenge to slavery, the modern concept of empire: 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 political thought, including the foundations of 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. Lecturers are encouraged to place their outlines, bibliographies and other material on the paper’s Moodle site in advance of the lecture. 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-one named authors (section A) and thematic 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.
4. 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 thematic 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 Hegel
A9 Tocqueville
A10 John Stuart Mill
A11 Marx

Section B
B12 History, Progress and Enlightenment
B13 Theorists of the Condition of Women
B14 Revolutions
B15 Constitutions
B16 Culture and Politics in Germany
B17 Liberty, Law and the State
B18 Political Economy and its Critics
B19 Socialism before 1848
B20 Slavery, Free Labour and Citizenship
B21 Empire and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought
5. Introduction to the topics

Section A

A1 Hume
David Hume (1711-1776) is perhaps best known for his attempts to establish a truly empirical study of human nature, and for the sceptical challenge he thus posed to the Christian worldview, along with its supporting metaphysical systems and its influence on prevailing moral and political ideas. In his own time, however, he was equally (if not more) celebrated as an historian and political essayist. His Scottish background gave him an unusual sense of distance from the partisan politics of eighteenth-century England, and in his essays we find a notably clear-sighted appreciation of the political and economic changes reshaping European politics in his time.

A2 Montesquieu
Montesquieu (1689-1755) was a nobleman from southwest France whose *The Spirit of the Laws* of 1748 established him beyond question as the touchstone of eighteenth-century political science. Its careful attempt to work out the relations that linked such apparently diverse phenomena as manners, religion, commerce, climate and territory to law and politics, represented an extraordinary attempt to grapple with the diversity of political societies without abandoning the hope of achieving some insight into the general principles that might operate in all of them. But he is equally well-known for some of his more specifically political arguments, notably his account of the separation of powers, worked out through comparison between ‘modern’ (i.e. post-feudal) monarchies such as France and the hard-to-classify British system of government. This was among the developments that made his constitutional theories an important point of reference for the American and French revolutionaries and later liberal thinkers.

A3 Rousseau
Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) launched an excoriating critique of inequality in 1755 that reshaped subsequent debate on the character of the human psyche and its relationship with social life, civil government and property. His subsequent writings, including the *Social Contract* (1762) offered an important reworking of ideas about the relationship between popular sovereignty and government and the basis of republican government. The political debates of the French Revolution might be seen as an argument about his intellectual legacy, but his influence stretched further, and he was a key point of reference for thinkers in the German idealist tradition as well.

A4 Smith
Adam Smith (1723-1790) is best known as the author of the *Wealth of Nations* (1776) a text subsequently taken up by nineteenth-century economists as the foundation of their discipline (B18). This topic looks at his earlier *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Many nineteenth-century readers found the idea of writing on moral philosophy and writing a work of economics grounded on self-interest so puzzling that they assumed Smith must have contradicted himself. More recent studies have found in the *Theory of Moral
Sentiments a rich investigation into the moral foundations of social life that sheds fascinating light on Smith’s hopes and fears for modern commercial societies.

A5 Burke
Edmund Burke (1729-1797) is undoubtedly best known for the scathing and prescient critique of the French Revolution that he published in 1790. In the late nineteenth century, he was adopted as a kind of figurehead by British and later American conservatives, an appropriation that complicates understanding him in his own context. A Whig statesman from an Irish background, Burke was a proponent of political and religious reform in Britain and Ireland, a critic of the government’s mishandling of the crisis in the American colonies, and an avowed enemy of the British East India Company’s rule on the Indian subcontinent. Should this change the way we read the Reflections on the Revolution in France?

A6 Wollstonecraft
Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was a religious radical as well as a moral and political philosopher, best known for her analysis of the condition of women in modern society. She treats the problem of the status of women as inseparable from that of ‘the understanding of human relations within a civilization increasingly governed by acquisitiveness and consumption’ (Tomaselli, 2016). Her response to this challenge remains enduringly controversial within later feminist commentary, but repays close attention, both to her own texts and to the ways in which she engages with philosophers such as Rousseau (A3), Smith (A4) and Burke (A5), as well as with the debates stimulated by the French Revolution. Her life was cut short by death in childbirth, but her legacy fed not only into later discussions of the condition of women, but into early British Romanticism.

A7 Kant
The publication of Immanuel Kant’s (1724-1804) Critique of Pure Reason in 1781 established him, in the eyes of his many followers, as the preeminent philosopher of modern times. In addressing the problem of the conditions of possibility for our knowledge of the world around us, his ‘critical’ philosophy sought to navigate between the rationalism of Leibniz and Wolff and the ‘sceptical’ position associated with Hume. This has tended until relatively recently to overshadow his contributions to moral and political philosophy, but this has changed dramatically in recent decades. We will be looking at both the foundations of his moral philosophy, and at his contributions to legal philosophy, including his discussion of the nature of the republican state and his influential analysis of federalism as a means of resolving international conflict.

A8 Hegel
G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) is among the most influential thinkers of the modern age. Building especially on the thought of Rousseau (A3) and Kant (A7), he placed freedom at the centre of society and politics. While his language is certainly difficult, reliant upon a vocabulary that takes some time to get to grips with, his ideas were nonetheless transformative. In his main political treatise, the Philosophy of Right, he launched a powerful critique of (Kantian) moral consciousness and set about demonstrating that the value of liberty lay in its practical realization in the institutions of family, society and state. A dominant influence on a generation of younger German philosophers, including Marx...
(A11), reflection on his philosophy has been central to many later philosophical movements such as Marxism, British Idealism and Existentialism.

A9 Tocqueville
Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) may be best known for his seminal Democracy in America (1835-1840). That text was intended to answer many of the fears that continued to haunt France after the catastrophic experience of the Revolution. Was democracy compatible with liberty? What forms of government could serve to minimize its dangers? This topic focuses on his later Ancien Régime and the Revolution (1856), written after the 1848 Revolution and the advent of the Second Empire under Napoleon III. In this book he sought in the development of the pre-revolutionary French state and society answers to the question why France seemed fated to alternate between revolutionary excess and dictatorship. It is a seminal contribution to the understanding of the problem of revolution and of the nature and genesis of modern egalitarian politics, widely influential among later historians and social and political scientists.

A10 Mill
John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was a dominant figure in the intellectual life of Victorian Britain. His father, James Mill, was one of Bentham’s (B17) closest collaborators, and the young J.S. Mill, something of a prodigy, was raised as a paladin for the utilitarian cause. The pressure led to a breakdown in his early adulthood, and he subsequently sought to nourish himself on a more varied intellectual diet. His System of Logic (1843) examined not only the foundations of philosophical logic, but the possibility of a science of society. The Principles of Political Economy (1848 – see B18) became a standard textbook on the subject for a generation. Marriage to Harriet Taylor (B13) spurred him to more direct interventions in social and political debate, in the essays On Liberty (1859), Considerations on Representative Government (1861), Utilitarianism (1863) and The Subjection of Women (1869). He has long enjoyed the status of the classic representative of British liberalism. In recent decades, his views on empire have come under increasing scrutiny, as have the equivocations of his views on the British working classes. He is a fascinatingly complex thinker.

A11 Marx
Michel Foucault once wrote that ‘Marxism exists in nineteenth-century thought like a fish in water: that is, it is unable to breathe anywhere else.’ (The Order of Things, 1966). Many would demur, but it has certainly been an over-riding ambition of much recent scholarship to return Karl Marx (1818-1883) to the context in which he lived and wrote. This has reminded us, amongst other things, that we are dealing with a German philosopher deeply steeped in political debates about the future of the Prussian state, the radical potential of Hegelian philosophy (A8), the promise of French socialist thought (B19), the capacity of the British state to work through the problems of industrialization, and the relationship between the international order and the revolutionary potential of the working classes. The twentieth-century Marx can, for the moment, be left to students of twentieth-century political theory. What we are left with is a more interestingly creative thinker that we do not need to force into conformity with hackneyed expectations of ‘what Marx says’ or ‘what Marxism is about’.
**Section B**

**B12 History, Progress and Enlightenment**

The idea of ‘Enlightenment’, whether conceived as a process of moral and political progress, or as defining an era in the cultural and intellectual life of western civilization, has played an important role in historical and political reflection on the period covered by this paper. Central to thinking about the concept is the emergence of new ways of understanding the history of civil societies and of humanity at large. This topic looks at a range of major contributions to debates about the nature of historical change and progress, including works by Vico, Herder, Condorcet (see also B14 and B15) and Germaine de Staël (B17), as well as contributions from thinkers who can be studied in Section A, including Montesquieu (A2), Smith (A4), Kant (A7) and Hegel (A8). We will be looking at the role of divine and human agency, of reason and the imagination, of property and law, of culture and politics in explanations of the genesis and development of human societies, and at the implications of these theories for thinking about the future.

**B13 Theorists of the Condition of Women**

This topic spans the entire time period covered by this paper, which makes it a particularly rewarding way to get to grips with many of the overarching developments of political thought in this period. In the eighteenth century, we begin to find probing questions about marriage, education and the place of women within civil society posed by writers such as Mary Astell, Catherine Macauley, Mary Wollstonecraft (A6) and Olympe de Gouges (B14). At the same time, the rise of new modes of historical thought, and the transformations wrought by the advent of commercial society, prompted questions about the evolution of modern social forms and the changing status of women. The French Revolution sharpened the expectations of those who sought a fundamental transformation of relations between the sexes in domestic, social and political life. The status of women was a central concern of socialist thinkers in France, Britain and Germany (B19), as it was for radical liberals such as Harriet Taylor and her husband, John Stuart Mill (A10). Through this lens we are thus led directly into reflection on the central themes of this paper.

**B14 Revolutions**

The concept of ‘revolution’ underwent a transformational change in the late eighteenth century, coming to denote not merely a change of government, but a profound rupture in political and social life. The American Revolution of 1776 could not easily be presented as a restoration of pre-existing political norms. Many of its leading actors, such as Thomas Jefferson (B19) and Thomas Paine, were keen to stress the novelty of the undertaking, arguing that the Revolution had created a new society founded on the unshakeable principles of natural law. For European reformers this was a seductive vision. This topic looks at the ways in which this new language of revolutionary politics shaped the politics of the French Revolution through the writings of Condorcet (B12, B15), Sieyès (B15) and Robespierre (among others), and at the ways in which the American and French examples informed the efforts of Toussaint Louverture and other revolutionaries in the French colony of Saint-Domingue (afterwards known as Haiti) to destroy slavery, and ultimately colonial rule. In these revolutions of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world, we find the origins of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century tradition of revolutionary thought.
B15 Constitutions

One legacy of the American and French Revolutions was the elevation of the notion of popular sovereignty to a central place in nineteenth-century political thought. Covering the founding of the American republic; the rise, fall and rise again of ideas of representative government in France; the development of the principle of nationality as a complement to the idea of popular sovereignty in the Italian Risorgimento; and the attempts to accommodate new ways of thinking about sovereignty to the practices of British parliamentary government, this topic looks at the emergence of the modern representative republic. We will look at debates over the nature and origins of sovereignty and its proper limits; over federalism and centralization; on representative government; on the idea of nationality as a political principle; and at the evolution of thinking about parliamentary models of government.

B16 Culture and Politics in Germany

The debates generated by the Kantian ‘revolution’ in philosophy, combined with the political upheavals in France created a somewhat febrile atmosphere of intellectual excitement in Germany in the 1790s. Kant himself was known to be sympathetic to the aims of the French Revolution, and his legal philosophy could be read in this light (A7). Johann Gottlieb Fichte, building on Kant’s *Critiques*, began to sketch a position in which a forthright emphasis was placed on self-activity and the self’s ‘recognition’ of others as the foundation of ethical obligation. Fichte would exercise a commanding influence over the young Schelling, Hegel (A8), and the Romantic circle that formed around Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis. For this last group, the takeaway message from Kant and Fichte was that our freedom lay in our ability to act and to shape ourselves and the world around us; to be free was to be a kind of artist. There were parallels here with the position outlined by the playwright and philosopher, Friedrich Schiller; whilst Wilhelm von Humboldt, later celebrated as the founder of the University of Berlin, offered a staunch defence of the intrinsic value of individual diversity. Many of the seeds of nineteenth-century liberalism, radicalism, conservatism and nationalism can be found in these debates.

B17 Liberty, Law and the State

In a celebrated lecture of 1819, Benjamin Constant outlined what he took to be a fundamental distinction between the idea of liberty to be found in the republics of the ancient Greece and Rome, and that which characterized modern commercial societies. In the former, the individual was, he argued, subsumed within their membership of the citizen-body; liberty was conceived as a function of participation in political life. In the modern world, such an all-consuming idea of political life was neither possible nor desirable. Individuals wished to be free to define the parameters of their own moral, intellectual and religious lives and to pursue their own social and economic projects. This topic looks at the development of the idea of modern liberty in Britain, France, Switzerland, and the United States from the 1780s onwards. We will look at the development of a liberal tradition in France in the writings of Constant, Staël (see also B12) and Guizot; at sharp mid-century polemics over the role of the state and the moral and economic burdens it placed on the individual in the works of Bastiat, Spencer and Thoreau; at the evolution of utilitarian ideas of liberty in Bentham and Mill (A10), and at reactions to Mill’s thought from J.F. Stephen and T.H. Green.
B18 Political Economy and its Critics

Adam Smith opened Book IV of the Wealth of Nations (1776) by defining ‘political economy’ as a ‘branch of the science of a statesman or a legislator’ concerned with the enrichment of ‘both the people and the sovereign’. Political discussion of public finance had already a long history; speculation on the proper management of a household (in Greek, the oikos) one longer still. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourse of ‘Political Economy’ was born of their conjunction. This topic is concerned with the transformative effect this had and continues to have on political thought. Choosing from among four major contributors to the genre – Smith (see also A4), Malthus, Mill (A10) and Marx (A13) – we will look at the ways in which Political Economy became a vehicle for discussions of progress and its limits, distributive justice, the role of individual agency, the limits of governmental action, the politics of class relations, problems of international competition and the politics of empire.

B19 Socialism before 1848

Nineteenth-century socialism has often been approached through the distorting lens of the later history of Marxism. Marx (A11) and Engels (B13) were keen to establish their distance from near contemporaries to whom they owed much, and distinguished between their own ‘scientific’ socialism and the ‘utopian’ aspirations of their ‘predecessors’. We will be less interested in this kind of proleptic judgement than in studying early socialist authors on their own terms. The key figures are Robert Owen, Henri Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Louis Blanc, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Flora Tristan. There are notable differences of preoccupation and approach between all these figures, but recurring themes will include: the legacy of the French Revolution; the problem of education; the role of the passions in creating social harmony/disharmony; the role of religion in socialism; the significance of sexual difference to socialist visions of social life, and the link between feminism and socialism; the emergence of an analysis of class conflict and its link to property; the role (or lack thereof) of the state in early socialist theory; and the rejection or embrace of political democracy as a component of socialist society.

B20 Slavery, Free Labour and Citizenship

The expansion of the Atlantic slave trade over the eighteenth century stimulated an increasingly sharp debate in Europe and its colonies over the moral and political status of the institution of slavery and over the enslavement of Africans in particular. Existing European frameworks for thinking about slavery, primarily derived from the Roman law tradition, came under critical scrutiny and novel critiques were launched in the name of slavery’s incompatibility with Christian religious duty, natural law, or republican political values. The independence of Haiti and the abolition in the British Empire of first the slave trade (1807) and then slavery itself (1833) transformed the context of these debates and would have a deep impact on the increasingly fraught confrontation between defenders and opponents of slavery in the USA in the run-up to the American Civil War of 1861-5. This topic looks at a range of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century contributions to this debate, covering both critics and defenders of slavery and the slave trade from Britain, France, the United States, Haiti and the Transatlantic African diaspora. For supervision essays, it is suggested that students may like to concentrate in the first instance on either the French and British debates or on the American debates.
By the early nineteenth century, the global map of European overseas empire was shifting dramatically. The independence of Britain’s American colonies was followed by revolts in French Saint-Domingue (Haiti), and Spain’s American colonies. Portuguese Brazil soon followed its neighbours into independence. Though slave-holding interests remained significant in the Caribbean, and British territory would expand rapidly in Canada; European attention was increasingly focused on Asia, Africa and the Pacific. The British defeat in America, seemed to many compensated by its rise to military dominance in India. Following the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the territories governed by the East India Company would be placed under direct Crown government. Settler colonies were established in Australia, New Zealand, and amongst the Dutch colonists of the Cape Peninsula, South Africa. Other European states sought to rival the British, with the French investing greatly in the conquest and colonization of Algeria after 1830. The Ottoman and Chinese empires came under sustained pressure, whilst after 1881 the ‘Scramble for Africa’ divided almost the entire continent amongst European colonial states. This topic, focusing on debate within the British Empire, is intended to get to grips not only with the changing ways Europeans justified or criticised overseas empire, including arguments about civilizational ‘backwardness’, theories of racial hierarchy, and ideas about international security, law and trade; but also with the ways in which they envisaged the role of empire in future international order. Was ‘empire’ thought of as a permanent fixture of international order, or as a transitional phase in the emergence of a more ‘civilized’ world? What should be the relationship between the metropole and its colonies? Was the ideal of representative government compatible with settler colonialism, and if it was, how would that change the nature of empire? From the perspective of those who found themselves under colonial rule, particularly in India, different questions emerged. How could the success of European imperial conquests be explained? How was British rule to be judged? Was there anything to be hoped for from the evolving systems of government in British India? Was resistance desirable or possible, or was the lesson of 1857 and its aftermath that the path to self-government ran instead through the mobilization of reforming interests in Britain and India?
6. 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. It is not expected that students will attend all the lectures advertised, but you are strongly encouraged to attend lectures on the topics that you are covering.

Lecture handouts and announcements are made available through Moodle.

Lectures are organized by the History Faculty. Room locations will be made available via the online timetable, but if in doubt, consult the digital noticeboard in the lobby of the History Faculty building.

Lecture list TBC (July 2023)
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. Students taking the History and Politics or History and Modern Languages Tripos are also examined by the History Faculty.

Sample supervision questions will be found listed by topic in the guide below. Examiners’ reports for the last few years will be found in the Appendix to this course guide.

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

SECTION A

1. What role does the concept of convention play in Hume’s social and political thought?
2. What, for Montesquieu, distinguished despotism from other forms of government?
3. Why did Rousseau think that republican citizens had reason to fear the ambitions of republican governments?
4. Why did Smith distinguish justice from other virtues?
5. How did Burke reconcile the existence of distinctions of rank and wealth with the idea of moral equality?
6. What did Wollstonecraft understand by virtue?
7. Is there a role for prudence in Kant’s account of political judgement?
8. How did Hegel justify the claim that we can be at once free and dependent on others?
9. How did Tocqueville explain the failure of eighteenth-century efforts to reform the French monarchy?
10. What role, if any, do rights play in Mill’s thinking about liberty?
11. Does Marx provide a moral justification for revolution?

SECTION B

12. What role did the idea of ‘decline’ play in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century debates about progress?
13. To what extent did eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theorists of the condition of women believe it could be explained by the pretensions of men?
14. What was the relationship between the ideas of revolution and moral progress in late eighteenth-century political debate?
15. Did the idea of popular sovereignty complement or compete with the idea of constitutional government in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political thought?
16. To what extent were German theories of culture around the turn of the nineteenth century theories of republican politics?
17. To what extent was the defence of modern liberty a defence of the primacy of self-interest in politics?
18. What was political about political economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?
19. How did socialist thinkers before 1848 explain human sociability?
20. To what extent did eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics and defenders of the institution of slavery believe it to be compatible with the existence of republican government?
21. How did nineteenth-century political thinkers propose to reconcile the idea of representative government with the existence of empire?
9. The reading lists

For Section A, you are assigned one or more set texts for each topic. It is expected that you will be familiar with all of the set texts assigned for a given topic by the time you sit the exam, but for the supervision your supervisor may advise you to concentrate in the first instance on one text in particular, or on certain sections of a longer text. Your primary goal should be to engage carefully and analytically with the set texts.

The aim of Section B is to allow you 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. You need not master every one of the Section B primary texts but need to show evidence of engagement with texts relating to each topic. A good rule of thumb is to have engaged with 2-3 primary texts ahead of the supervision, but with shorter texts your supervisor may advise you to tackle more than this. Discuss with your supervisor which texts you will read ahead of the supervision.

Secondary reading lists are designed to indicate some useful introductory works or major interpretations of thinkers or themes, as well as offering pointers for further reading on particular aspects of a topic. They are not intended as a checklist, and there is no expectation that you will read every text on a given topic. Your supervisor will guide you in your reading for supervisions. You may then return to the reading list for further reading on any aspect of an author or topic that particularly interests you, and for revision reading. Though you may sometimes find it useful to begin by reading an introductory secondary text, make sure to prioritize the primary texts if pushed for time.

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

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover
(M) = Available via Moodle (see under ‘Library Resources’)


Essays Moral, Political and Literary, ed. E.F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1985) (E), esp. Part I 2-8, 12, 14, 21; Part II 1-9, 11-13, 16.

Secondary Readings:

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

Morals, 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. Moore, ‘Hume’s Theory of Justice and Property’, Political Studies, 24 (1976), 103-19 (E)
Paul Sagar, The Opinion of Mankind: Sociability and the theory of the state from Hobbes to Smith, (Princeton, 2018) (E)

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

**Suggested Supervision Questions:**

1. Does Hume’s political philosophy ultimately favour authority over liberty?
2. Why did Hume reject the idea that allegiance to government had a contractual basis?
3. According to Hume, what was required to establish large and lasting societies?
A2 Montesquieu

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover
(M) = available on Moodle

Set text:


Secondary Readings:

General and Introductory

Governments and Politics
*R. Douglass, ‘Montesquieu and Modern Republicanism’, Political Studies 60 (2012), 703-19. (E)

Commerce, Luxury, and the Distinction of Ranks
P. Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge MA, 2010), chapter 2, pp. 52-86. (E)
Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. Why was Montesquieu confident that modern monarchies could adapt to commerce?

2. Why did Montesquieu suggest that the English needed to be particularly jealous of their liberty?

3. Why did Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws* have so much to say about the condition of women?
A3 Rousseau

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover
(M) = available on Moodle

Set text:

‘Discourse on the Origins of Inequality’ in The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings, ed. V. Gourevitch, 2nd ed., (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 113-239. (E)


Secondary Readings:

General and introductory
M. Sonenscher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The division of labour, the politics of the imagination and the concept of federal government, (Leiden, 2020) (E)

Discourse on the Origins of Inequality
*F. Neuhouser, Rousseau’s critique of inequality: reconstructing the Second Discourse (Cambridge, 2014) (E)
R. Wokler, Rousseau, the Age of Enlightenment and their Legacies (Princeton, 2012), ch. 1. (E)

Of the Social Contract
J. Hope Mason, “‘Forced to be Free’”, in R. Wokler (ed), Rousseau and Liberty (Manchester, 1995), 121-38. (M)

Rousseau’s contexts
R. Whatmore, “‘A lover of peace more than liberty’? The Genevan rejection of Rousseau’s politics’, in Avi Lifschitz (ed), *Engaging with Rousseau. Reaction and Interpretation from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge, 2016), 1-16. (E)

Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. What is the role of artifice in Rousseau’s social theory?

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

3. Why is the general will always right, according to Rousseau?
A4 Smith

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover
(M) = available on Moodle

Set text:


Secondary Readings:

Major interpretations:
*A. O. Hirschman, The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph (Princeton NJ, 1977) (E)*
*N. Phillipson, Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life (London, 2010) (E)*
*D. Winch, Adam Smith’s Politics, (Cambridge, 1978) (E)*

*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

F. Forman-Barzilai, Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy: Cosmopolitanism and Moral Theory (Cambridge, 2010) (E)
C. Griswold, Adam Smith and the Virtues of Enlightenment (Cambridge, 1999) (E)
R.P. Hanley, Adam Smith and the Character of Virtue (Cambridge, 2009) (E)
D. Kelly, The Propriety of Liberty: Persons, Passions, and Judgement in Modern Political Thought (Princeton, 2010), chapter 3 (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)

Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. 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?

2. What is the role of sympathy in Smith’s account of the relationship between social ranks in The Theory of Moral Sentiments?

3. What is the relationship between beauty and utility in Smith’s social thought?

Secondary Readings:

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

Reflections on the Revolution in France
Reason of State, Conquest and Empire

Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. Is Burke’s Reflections an attack on moral equality?

2. Are there natural rights according to Burke?

3. What, according to Burke, were the benefits conferred on European society by the ‘age of chivalry’?
A6 Wollstonecraft

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover
(M) = available on Moodle

Set text:


Suggested additional primary texts:


Secondary Readings:

General and Introductory:
*S. Tomaselli, ‘The Most Public Sphere of all: The Family’, in E. Eger, C. Grant, C. Gallchoir and P. Warburton (eds), Women, Writing and the Public Sphere 1700-1830* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 239-56. (M)

Contexts and Concepts:
W. Gunther-Canada, ‘The politics of sense and sensibility: Mary Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay Graham on Edmund Burke’s Reflections on the Revolution in


**Suggested Supervision Questions:**

1. What was Wollstonecraft’s ultimate ambition for women?

2. If Wollstonecraft believed that humans were naturally benevolent, how did she explain what she thought of as the ills of her society?

3. If property was such a great evil, according to Wollstonecraft, why did she not call for its abolition?
A7 Kant

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set text:


Secondary readings:

General and Introductory

On Moral Theory:
C. M. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (Cambridge, 1996). (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

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 readings:
R. Maliks, Kant’s Politics in Context (Oxford, 2014) (E)

Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. In what ways, according to Kant, is the human race progressing?

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

3. Why did Kant argue that no state should forcibly interfere in the constitution and government of another state?
A8 Hegel

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set text:

*Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. Wood (Cambridge, 1991) (E)

Secondary readings:

General and Introductory

Hegel’s Social and Political Theory
*Elias Buchetmann, Hegel and the Representative Constitution* (Cambridge, 2023). (E)
*A. Wood, Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, (Cambridge, 1990) (E)

Further readings:
Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. What is the difference between civil society and the state in Hegel?

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

3. How does Hegel distinguish between morality and ethical life?
A9 Tocqueville

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set text:


Recommended additional primary readings:


Secondary readings:

General and biographical studies:
C.B. Welch (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Tocqueville* (Cambridge, 2006), esp. ch.2 (Elster) and ch. 8 (Gannett) (E)

Tocqueville, the *Ancien Régime*, and the French Revolution
S. Drescher, “Why great revolutions will become rare”: Tocqueville’s most neglected prognosis’, *Journal of Modern History*, 64 (1992), 429-54 (E)
Contexts: Tocqueville and Liberal Thought in Nineteenth-Century France
A. de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge, 2008), chap. 6 (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)

Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. 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]*?

2. What role did class divisions play in Tocqueville’s account of the end of the Ancien Régime in France?

3. What, for Tocqueville, distinguished the French Revolution from all previous political revolutions?
A10 Mill

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Set text:


Secondary Readings:


General and Introductory
D.O. Brink, Mill’s Progressive Principles (Oxford, 2013) (E)

Mill and Utilitarianism

On Liberty
G. Claeys, Mill and Paternalism (Cambridge, 2013) (E)
Representative Government
G. Conti, Parliament the Mirror of the Nation: Representation, Deliberation, and Democracy in Victorian Britain, (Cambridge, 2019), esp. parts 3-5. (E)
W. Selinger, Parliamnetarism from Burke to Weber, (Cambridge, 2019), ch. 6. (E)
N. Urbinati, Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government (Chicago, 2002).

On the Subjection of Women:

Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. How did Mill understand the relation of liberty to utility?

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

3. How did Mill distinguish duties to the self from duties to others?
**A11 Marx**

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

**Set text:**


**Secondary Readings:**

**General and introductory**


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


**Marx before 1848**


D. Losurdo, *Class Struggle: A political and philosophical history*, (New York, 2016) (E)


D. Moggach and G. Stedman Jones, eds, *The 1848 Revolutions and European Political Thought*, (Cambridge, 2018), chs 9 (by Moggach) and 11 (by Siclovan) (E)


Marx after 1848
G.C. Cominell, M. Musto, V. Wallis, eds, The International after 150 Years: labor vs capital, then and now, (Abingdon, 2015), chs 2-4.

Themes in Marx’s Political Thought
S. Lukes, Marxism and Morality (Oxford, 1987).

Suggested Supervision Questions:

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

2. ‘Communism is for us not a state of affairs to be established, an ideal to which reality must conform. We call communism the real movement that supersedes the present state of affairs’ [MARX, The German Ideology]. What did Marx mean by this?

3. ‘Under the current bourgeois relations of production freedom means free trade, freedom to buy and sell’ [MARX & ENGELS, Manifesto of the Communist Party]. Why was this concept of freedom inadequate for Marx?
Suggested primary reading:


Condorcet, *Sketch of an Historical View of the Progress of Mankind* (1795), in *Political Writings*, ed. by S. Lukes and N. Urbinati, (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 1-147. (E)


Immanuel Kant, ‘Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose’ (1784) and ‘Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History’ (1786) in *Political Writings*, ed. H. Reiss, (2nd ed., Cambridge, 1991) (E)


Secondary Readings:

*Abbr.*


General and Introductory


**Vico:**


**Montesquieu:**


**Smith:**


**Condorcet:**


D. Williams, *Condorcet and Modernity* (Cambridge, 2004). (E)

**Staël:**


**Kant:**


A. Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge1999), Chapter 7. (E)
Herder:
*E. Piirimäe, Herder and Enlightenment Politics (Cambridge, 2023) (E).
F.M. Barnard, Herder on Nationality, Humanity, and History (Montreal, 2003) (E).

Hegel:

Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. How did eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century philosophical histories account for human diversity?

2. Did cosmopolitan history compete with or complement histories of civil government in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century?

3. How did eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophers account for the progress of Enlightenment?
B13 Theorists of the Condition of Women

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:

Eighteenth Century


Nineteenth Century


Flora Tristan, *The Workers Union* (1843), ed. by B. Livingston (Urbana, IL, 2007)


Secondary Readings:

General and Introductory
H. Guest, Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810 (Chicago, IL, 2000)
N.J. Hirschmann, Gender, Class & Freedom in Modern Political Theory (Princeton, NJ, 2008) (E)
*S. Knott and B. Taylor (eds), Women, Gender and Enlightenment (Basingstoke, 2005), Part 2, Sections 6, 8, 9 and 10 (E).
K. Offen, European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History (Stanford, CA, 2000) (E)

Mary Astell and the early eighteenth century
W. Kolbrener and M. Michelson, eds, Mary Astell: Gender, Reason, Faith (Aldershot, 2006), chs 1, 3, 5, 13 (E).

The Enlightenment
Ariane Chernock, Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism (Stanford, California, 2010) (E)

The Revolutionary period

**Nineteenth-century Britain and America**


B. Bailey, K.P. Viens, C.E. Wright, eds, *Margaret Fuller and her Circles*, (Durham, NH, 2012) (E)


C. Capper, C. Giorcelli and L.K. Little, eds, *Margaret Fuller: Transatlantic Crossings in a Revolutionary Age*, (Madison, WI, 2007), chs 3-4. (E)


**Feminism, Socialism and Anarchism in the Nineteenth Century**


**Suggested Supervision Questions:**

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

2. From what did eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theorists of the condition of women argue women should be freed?

3. 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?
B14 Revolutions

(S) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:

Thomas Jefferson, ‘A Summary View of the Rights of British America’ (1774), ‘A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America in General Congress Assembled’ (1776) and ‘The Declaration of Independence’ (1776) in Jefferson: Political Writings, ed. Joyce Appleby and Terence Ball (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 63-80, 96-105. (S)

Thomas Paine, Common Sense (1776) and Rights of Man, Parts I and II, (1791-1792), in Paine: Political Writings, ed. by B. Kuklick, (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 1-45; 57-263. (S)


Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, ‘What is the Third Estate?’ (1789) in Sieyès: Political Writings, including the debate between Sieyès and Tom Paine in 1791, ed. by M. Sonenscher, (Indianapolis, 2003), pp. 92-162.


Secondary Readings:

Abbr.

General and Introductory
*K.M. Baker, ‘Political Languages of the French Revolution’ in CHPT C18, pp. 626-59 (E)
I. Hampsher-Monk, ‘British Radicalism and the Anti-Jacobins’ in CHPT C18, pp. 660-67 (E)

The American Revolution
The French Revolution
M. Forsyth, Reason and Revolution: The Political Thought of the Abbé Sieyes, (Leicester, 1987)
M. Gauchet, Robespierre: The man who divides us the most, (Princeton, NJ: 2022) (E)

The Haitian Revolution
M.L. Daut, Awakening the Ashes: An Intellectual History of the Haitian Revolution, (Chapel Hill, NC, 2023) [Forthcoming, October 2023]

The Revolution Debate in Britain

Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. To what extent did the American Revolution provide a blueprint for revolutionary political thinkers in France and Saint-Domingue?

2. What was the role of natural rights in the political thought of the late eighteenth-century revolutions?

3. How important was anti-monarchism to revolutionary political thought in the late eighteenth-century Atlantic world?
B15 Constitutions

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:


Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, ‘What is the Third Estate?’ (1789) and ‘Controversy between Mr. Paine and M. Emmanuel Sieyès’ (1791) in Sieyès: Political Writings, including the debate between Sieyès and Tom Paine in 1791, ed. by M. Sonenscher, (Indianapolis, 2003), pp. 92-162, 163-173.


Johann Kaspar Bluntschli, The Theory of the State (1851-2; 5th ed., 1875), 2nd ed, (Oxford, 1892), Bk VI, chs XIV-XVI, XX-XXIV; Bk VII, chs I-VII (pp. 397-438, 458-525).


Suggested additional primary reading:

Constitution of the United States of America (1789) in Hamilton, Madison and Jay, The Federalist Papers, ed. by Ball, pp. 545-65. (E)

Secondary reading:

Abbr.

General and Introductory
*K.M. Baker, ‘Political Languages of the French Revolution’ in CHPT C18, pp. 626-59. (E)*
J. Breuilly, ‘On the Principle of Nationality’ in CHPT C19, pp. 77-109. (E)
*J. Jennings, ‘Constitutional Liberalism in France: from Benjamin Constant to Alexis de Tocqueville’, in CHPT C19, pp. 349-73. (E)
*J. Thompson, ‘Modern Liberty Redefined’ in CHPT C19, pp. 720-47. (E)

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

French Revolutionary Constitutional Debates

M. Forsyth, Reason and Revolution: The Political Thought of the Abbé Sieyes, (Leicester, 1987)


Constitutionalism and Popular Sovereignty in Nineteenth-Century Political Debate


G. Conti, Parliament the Mirror of the Nation: Representation, Deliberation and Democracy in Victorian Britain, (Cambridge, 2019) (E)


A. Körner, America in Italy: The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763-1865, (Princeton, NJ, 2017), chs 2-3. (E)


B. Wilson, ‘Counter-Revolutionary Thought’ in CHPT C19, pp. 9-38. (E)

Suggested Supervision Questions

1. What was meant by ‘representative government’ in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century constitutional theory?

2. To what extent did the concept of ‘nationality’ transform understandings of popular sovereignty?

3. What limits, if any, did constitutional theorists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries believe could be placed on popular sovereignty?
B16 Culture and Politics in Germany

(Suggested primary reading:)


Johann Gottlieb Fichte, ‘Some Lectures concerning the Scholar’s Vocation’ (1794), in *Early Philosophical Writings*, ed. D. Breazeale (Ithaca, 1993), 144-84.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Vocation of Man* (1800), ed. by P. Preuss, (Indianapolis, 1987)


(Secondary Readings:)

General and Introductory


*A. Wood, Fichte’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge, 2016). (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)


*Eva Piirimäe, Herder and Enlightenment Politics (Cambridge, 2023) (E).


Herder:
F.M. Barnard, *Herder on Nationality, Humanity, and History* (Montreal, 2003) (E)
S. Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton, 2003), chap. 6 (E)

Humboldt:

Fichte:
A.J. La Vopa, *Fichte, The Self and the Calling of Philosophy*, 1762-1799 (Cambridge, 2001)

Novalis

Schiller:

Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. To what extent were German theories of culture at the turn of the nineteenth century also theories of progress?

2. What role did the notion of ‘individuality’ play in German theories of culture and politics around the turn of the nineteenth century?

3. Did the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century German thinkers who emphasized the political role of culture reject reason?
Suggested primary reading:


Germaine de Staël, *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution* (1818), ed. by A. Craiutu (Indianapolis, 2008), Part VI. (E)


Frédéric Bastiat, ‘The State’ (1848) and ‘The Law’ (1850) in “The Law,” “The State,” and Other Political Writings, 1843-1850, ed. by J. de Guenin et al., (Indianapolis, 2012), pp. 93-104; 107-146.


Secondary Reading


General and Introductory


J. Jennings, ‘Constitutional Liberalism in France: from Benjamin Constant to Alexis de Tocqueville’, in G. Stedman Jones & G. Claeys (eds), CHPT C19, pp. 349-73. (E)
*M. Sonenscher, After Kant: The Romans, the Germans, and the Moderns in the History of Political Thought, (Princeton, NJ, 2023)

**Liberalism in France**
A. Craiutu, Liberalism under Siege: The political thought of the French Doctrinaires, (Lanham, MD, 2003). (E)
A. de Dijn, French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society? (Cambridge, 2008). (E)
B. Fontana, Germaine de Staël: A political portrait, (Princeton, NJ, 2016) (E)
J. Jennings, Revolution and the Republic: A history of political thought in France since the eighteenth century, (Oxford, 2011). (E)

**Benthamite Utilitarianism** [See also readings for A10 Mill]
R. Harrison, Bentham, (London, 1983) (E)

**Thoreau and American Transcendentalism**
D.S. Malachuk, Two Cities: The Political Thought of American Transcendentalism, (Lawrence, KS, 2016). (E)
N. Rosenblum, Another Liberalism: Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought, (Cambridge, MA, 1987), ch. 5 ‘Heroic Liberalism and the Spectacle of Diversity’. (E)

**Late Victorian Liberalism**
M. Francis, Herbert Spencer and the Invention of Modern Life, (Stocksfield, 2007), Part IV. (E)
*J. Thompson, ‘Modern Liberty Redefined’ in CHPT C19, pp. 720-47. (E)
Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. From what threats did defenders of modern liberty seek to protect it?

2. Where did theorists of modern liberty believe the individual’s obligation to obey the state ended?

3. What was ‘modern’ about modern liberty?
Suggested primary reading:


Secondary Readings:


General and Introductory


*M. Sonenscher, Capitalism: The story behind the word*, (Princeton, NJ, 2022). (E)


*D. Winch, Riches and Poverty: An intellectual history of political economy in Britain, 1750-1834* (Cambridge, 1996)
Smith
S. Muthu, ‘Adam Smith’s Critique of International Trading Companies’, *Political Theory* 36 (2008), 185-212. (E)

Malthus

Mill
D.E. Miller, Mill’s “Socialism”, *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 2 (2003), 213-238. (E)

Marx
M. Heinrich, *How to Read Marx’s Capital: Commentary and Explanations on the Beginning Chapters*, (New York, 2021)


**Suggested Supervision Questions:**

1. To what extent were eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political economists concerned with questions of distributive justice?

2. What was the relationship between the interests of government and the interests of the governed, for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political economists?

3. What role does the concept of ‘class’ play in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political economy?
B19 Socialism before 1848

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

**Suggested primary reading:**


[https://archive.org/details/universitycinci06cincgoog/page/n8/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/universitycinci06cincgoog/page/n8/mode/2up]


Flora Tristan, *The Worker’s Union* (1843), ed. by B. Livingston, (Urbana, IL, 2007).

**Suggested additional primary readings:**


**Secondary Readings:**

**General and Introductory**


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


D. Moggach and G. Stedman Jones, eds, *The 1848 Revolutions and European Political Thought*, (Cambridge, 2018), chs 1-5, 9, 11, 18. (E)


**Robert Owen and Early British Socialism:**


**Henri Saint-Simon and Early French Socialism:**


**Charles Fourier and Fourierism:**


Louis Blanc:

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon:

Flora Tristan, Socialism and Feminism

**Suggested Supervision Questions:**

1. Did early socialists regard the state as a potential ally or as an enemy?

2. How did socialist writers before 1848 conceive of the relationship between humanity and nature?

3. Did early socialist thinkers seek to destroy Christianity or to reform it?
B20 Slavery, Free Labour, and Citizenship

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:

The French and British Atlantic Worlds
Guillaume-Thomas Raynal [et al.], The History of the Two Indies: A translated selection of writings from Raynal’s Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements des Européens dans les Deux Indes (1770), ed. by P. Jimack, (London, 2006); Bk. 11: ‘The Europeans go into Africa to buy men to cultivate the plantations of the West Indies. Conduct of this trade. What is produced by the labour of the slaves.’


Quobna Ottobah Cugoano [John Stuart], Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evils of Slavery (1787), ed. by V. Carretta, (New York, 1999).


The United States from Independence to the Civil War


Secondary Reading:

General and Introductory

The British Atlantic
R. Hanley, *Beyond Slavery and Abolition: Black British Writing, c. 1770-1830*, (Cambridge, 2019), esp. ch. 7 ‘Ottabah Cugoano and the “Black Poor”, 1786-1791’ (E)

The French Atlantic and Haiti
M.L. Daut, *Awakening the Ashes: An Intellectual History of the Haitian Revolution*, (Chapel Hill, NC, 2023) [Forthcoming, October 2023]
America from Independence to Civil War

**Suggested Supervision Questions:**

1. Were eighteenth- and nineteenth-century opponents of slavery critics or defenders of commercial society?

2. To what extent was the defence of slavery in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Atlantic world predicated on the defence of racial hierarchy?

3. To what extent did advocates for the abolition of slavery rely upon the same arguments as advocates for the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade?
B21 Empire and Civilisation in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought

(E) = e-book available from iDiscover

Suggested primary reading:


Secondary Reading

General and Introductory
* C. Bayly, Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire (Cambridge, 2012) (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)
*D. Bell, Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire (Princeton, NJ, 2016) (E)
A. Brewer, Marxist Theories of Imperialism, 2nd ed. (London, 1990), ch. 2 (on Marx) (E)
G. Claeys, Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850–1920 (Cambridge, 2010) (E)
D. Kelly, ed., Lineages of Empire: The Historical Roots of British Imperial Thought (Oxford, 2009), esp. ch 1 (E)
J. Levy and I. M. Young, eds, Colonialism and its Legacies (Lanham, 2011), esp. chs. 2, 7, 8, 10, 12 (E)
U. S. Mehta, Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought, (Chicago, 1999)
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)
B. Schultz and G. Varouxakis, eds, Utilitarianism and Empire, (Lanham, MD, 2005) (E)

Settler Colonies, Self-Government and Imperial Federation
J. Ajzenstat, The Political Thought of Lord Durham, (Kingston; Montréal, 1988) (E)
M. Birchell, ‘Mobilizing Stadial Theory: Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s colonial vision’, Global Intellectual History, (available online, 2022). (E)
D. Winch, Classical Political Economy and Colonies, (London, 1965)

British India
S. Dasgupta, Ethics, Distance and Accountability: The political thought and intellectual context of Rammohun Roy, (C.1772-1833), (New Delhi, 2021)
International Law


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

Suggested Supervision Questions:

1. To what extent was the concept of empire in nineteenth-century political thought conceived as distinct from that of the state?

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

3. What was the purpose of imperial government according to nineteenth-century theorists of empire?
Appendix: Examiner’s Reports

N.B. POL8 and POL10 are examined and marked separately. Reports prior to 2023-4 refer to an older syllabus, which differed in detail from the current syllabus. Reflecting the changes, the History Faculty has removed online access to past papers from before 2023-4. Those interested may still consult them in hard copy through the Cambridge Library System.

POL8 Examiners’ Reports

2021-22
Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins
One hundred and five candidates sat this paper, working remotely on an open-book basis, and with a three-hour time limit.

Overall, the general standard of answers was lower than in previous years. Eighteen candidates were awarded a mark of 70 or above; seventy-eight candidates received a mark in the 60-69 range; seven in the 50-59 range; one in the 40-49 range; and one received a mark below 40. The median mark was 66; the mean was 65.4. The shorter time allotted for the exam may have played a role in this, but it was also noticeable that a number of candidates were making extensive use of material that did not directly bear on the question asked. In at least some cases there was evidence to suggest the use of material from supervision essays or notes with little regard to its relevance to the question. As ever, it cannot be emphasised enough that strong answers focus closely on the question posed; a generic overview of the topic is not sufficient. The best candidates displayed in-depth, first-hand knowledge of the set texts and provided analytical rather than merely descriptive answers to the questions.

There were 177 answers on Section A topics and 138 on Section B topics. All questions received at least one answer. Overwhelmingly, the most popular A topic was Wollstonecraft (46 answers), followed by Rousseau (27), Mill (21), Marx (18), Burke (13), Bentham (11), Constant (9), Kant (7), Hegel (7), Hume (5), Smith (5), Montesquieu (4) and Tocqueville (4). For Section B, Gender and Political Thought was most popular (40 answers), followed by Empire and Civilization (34), Nationality and the Theory of the State (17), the French Revolution (14), the American Revolution (10), Luxury and Commercial Society (9), Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany (7), Socialism before 1848 (3), Social Science (3) and Natural Law and Sociability (1). The spread of marks across topics was less than it has been in some previous years, though candidates outperformed the mean mark on Natural Law and Sociability, Kant, Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany, Luxury and Commercial Society, Hume, Burke, Bentham, American Revolution, and Wollstonecraft. On average, candidates performed marginally better on Section A than Section B. The three topics with the lowest average mark were (in descending order): the French Revolution, Nationality and the State, and Montesquieu.

Turning to individual topics, I begin with Hume. This was a relatively straightforward question; weaker answers seemingly relied on lecture notes and were not fully in control of the conceptual linkages in Hume’s argument; the better answers were more textually grounded. The Montesquieu question caused problems, with a number of candidates taking the reference to ‘popular sentiment’ as a warrant to restrict their discussion to republican forms of government, rather than think about the broader
implications of the quotation. The Rousseau question received a few conceptually sharp answers, but there were rather too many instances of candidates giving a generic overview of Rousseau’s thought with insufficient focus on the concept of the general will. On Smith, most candidates had a sense of what was at stake in the question, but answers engaged less closely with Part IV of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* than would have been desirable. Burke attracted some solid answers, confident in the contrasts they drew between his treatment of the Glorious Revolution and the French Revolution. Several candidates were able to draw on Burke’s pre-revolutionary writings to elaborate their answer. The best answers gave a sophisticated account of his thinking about the foundations of political society, political judgement and the politics of necessity, drawing variously on Bourke, Bromwich, Pocock and Armitage. There were some very strong answers to the Wollstonecraft question, which combined full treatment of the first *Vindication* with thoughtful, and in some cases rather original, discussion of its relation to Wollstonecraft’s wider œuvre. Conversely, some candidates displayed only a limited knowledge of this text, and their answers suffered accordingly. For Kant, the standard of answer was generally high, though some candidates could have been clearer in distinguishing between the set texts. The question on Bentham gave scope for some nuanced treatment of the relationship between the principle of utility and variations in the positive law of different countries; the best answers took the opportunity to present Bentham as a more complex thinker than he sometimes appears. The question on Constant attracted a surprisingly large number of candidates who could not adequately define the word ‘usurpation’, and one or two whose knowledge of the primary texts did not appear to extend much beyond the lecture of 1819. Answers to the Hegel question tended towards the basic; it would have been good to see more discussion of the institutions of civil society and state. There were some good responses to the Tocqueville question, suggesting a decent knowledge of the text, though some candidates missed the significance of his comments about the homogeneity of opinion in the upper echelons of French society. The best answers on Mill gave a clear explanation of the ways in which his utilitarianism differed from that of Bentham and proceeded to investigate tensions within his thought. Some candidates displayed an impressive knowledge of the intellectual context of Mill’s works. Answers on Marx were typically constructed around a contrast between the discussion of alienation in the 1844 manuscripts and the analysis of commodification in *Capital* vol. 1. Done well, this could take answers quite far, but what was striking was that few candidates showed any awareness of the break with Feuerbach in 1845-6, or its implications for interpretation of the later works in the light of the early writings.

On Section B, leaving aside those topics for which the number of answers precludes meaningful generalization, we turn first to Luxury and Commercial Society. There was a pleasing breadth of material brought to bear on the question, with some good discussion of Melon and Ferguson. Over-reliance on Hont’s essay on the early Enlightenment Luxury debate, often an issue in the past, was less evident this year. The American Revolution attracted some strong answers, many of which made effective use of material from lectures. Weaker answers failed to give sufficient attention to the constitutional debates of the 1780s, focusing instead on the 1760s and 1770s. The French Revolution question divided candidates, with some struggling to adapt material on representation to the question. The best answers found inventive ways to think about the relationship between the changing political context and the political thought of revolutionary actors. On Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany, the standard of discussion of the set texts was generally high, but
almost all candidates could have usefully done more to distinguish criticism of the ‘centralised state’ from that of the ‘mechanistic’ or ‘absolutist’ state. The Gender and Political Thought topic attracted some very strong, conceptually-focused answers. Many candidates could marshal impressive amounts of exemplary material. Weaker candidates provided purely descriptive answers that lacked analytical depth. Nationality and the State was generally answered well with some strong discussion of Mazzini and Fichte. One candidate answered solely with reference to material from the Empire and Civilization topic; another answered predominantly with reference to C20th anti-colonial nationalism and the work of Benedict Anderson. In both cases the answers failed to adequately address the question. On the Empire topic, the standard was up on last year, with most candidates having something useful to say about the differences between settler colonies and the case of India, though some appeared to have only patchy knowledge of the Mill and Marx primary texts.

2020-21
Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins
Seventy-six candidates sat this paper; one additional candidate was assessed following special arrangements. In line with university guidance, the exam was sat remotely, on an open-book basis, with candidates writing three essays in a six-hour window.

Overall, the general standard of answers was higher than in previous years. Whilst there few truly outstanding scripts received, the proportion of candidates classed below a 2.1 was unusually low. This may perhaps be attributed to the longer span of time allotted for completing the exam and to candidates’ access to texts and notes. In total, of those who sat the main exam, twenty candidates were awarded a mark of 70 or above; fifty-four candidates received a mark in the 60-69 range, one in the 50-59 range, and one in the 40-49 range. The median mark was 67; the mean was 66.6. There were 134 answers on Section A topics and 94 answers on Section B topics. The most popular topic by some distance was Wollstonecraft (33 answers), followed by: Rousseau (26), Empire and Civilization (23), Gender and Political Thought (20), French Revolution (12), Burke (11), Luxury and Commercial Society (10), Constant (9), Marx (9), Smith (8), Hegel (8), Mill (8), Kant (7), American Revolution (7), Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany (7), Bentham (6), Socialism before 1848 (6), Nationality and the Theory of the State (5), Hume (4), Social Science (4), Montesquieu (3), Tocqueville (2). No candidate attempted the question on Natural Law and Sociability. There were notably strong answers on Kant, Hegel, the American Revolution, and Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany. Additionally, candidates tended to out-perform the average on Hume, Smith, Wollstonecraft, Constant, Tocqueville, the French Revolution, and Social Science. On average, candidates performed better on Section A than on Section B. The four topics with the lowest average mark were Nationality and the State, Gender and Political Thought, Socialism before 1848, and Empire and Civilization.

As in previous years, stronger answers were marked, firstly, by their focus on the question asked, as opposed to generic overviews of the topic; secondly, by detailed knowledge of the primary texts; and thirdly, by coherent, well-structured arguments. It was noticeable that a few candidates appeared to have attempted to repurpose answers to questions posed in previous years. Where this was the case, essays suffered from a want of close engagement with the terms of this year’s questions.
In turning to individual topics, I again confine my comments to those questions where some level of generalisation about the quality of answers is possible. I will begin with Rousseau. The standard here was higher than in recent years; most candidates understood well enough that the question required reconstruction of the argument of the Second Discourse. Some tried to draw out links to other texts, and in a small number of cases, this provided a useful supplement to the discussion. In others, however, generic accounts of the argument of the Social Contract added little to the question at hand, and took up space that could have been better employed more usefully on the origin of evil, rather than Rousseau’s proposed remedies. On Burke, most candidates offered a more or less sophisticated account of the distinction between the Glorious Revolution and the French Revolution. Better answers multiplied the instances of legitimate resistance, usually with reference to America or Ireland, and the best demonstrated a deeper understanding of Burke’s thinking about popular sovereignty, often drawing on the works of Prof. Bourke. Wollstonecraft attracted some very strong answers, and few weak responses. What distinguished the best answers was greater conceptual rigour, but it was noticeable also that some candidates made good use of the Short Residence in Norway, Sweden and Denmark to broaden their discussion. The question on Kant required a good understanding of the central arguments of the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, and this was uniformly on display, albeit with some variations in the quality of exposition. On Bentham, most candidates had something to say about his critique of natural rights, and most linked it to the theory of fictions. Some of the weaker essays tended to ignore the emphasis in the question on his ‘political’ thought; others gave a generic overview of his political thought, but without linking it consistently with the critique of natural rights. On Constant, there were one or two very strong answers, displaying great depth of understanding and, crucially, focusing on the ‘institutions’ element in the quotation, something neglected or under-emphasised by weaker answers. On Hegel, most candidates were able to give an overview of the ‘ethical life’ sections of the Philosophy of Right, but several evinced a rather sketchy understanding of his defence of constitutional monarchy. On Mill, there were a few good answers that made use of a range of Mill’s texts and gave thought to whether and how the idea of ‘civilizational progress’ might underpin his political thought at large; too many candidates treated this as if it solely concerned his thought about colonial empire. On Marx, one or two very knowledgeable answers aside, the standard was not the highest. Few candidates gave evidence of any great depth of understanding of Marx’s critique of capitalism, and whilst most were familiar with the concept of alienation, it was strikingly rare to see any candidate attempt to give any account of the development of Marx’s thought over time, or to register differences between the set texts.

On Section B, the responses to the Luxury topic were mixed. The best answers gave consideration to the different ways that ‘commerce’ featured in eighteenth-century political debate. Several recognised that Fénelon was not consistently hostile to commerce; some made good use of Ryan Patrick Hanley’s 2020 book on him. Weaker answers simply equated commerce with luxury and rehearsed standard characterizations of Fénelon as a critic of luxury, and Mandeville as its defender. The American Revolution was generally answered to a very high standard, with most candidates demonstrating an impressively detailed knowledge of the topic, and making good use of texts such as Pocock’s ‘1776: The Revolution against Parliament’ and Nelson’s The Royalist Revolution. The French Revolution was also generally well-answered, with some confident answers clear on the different conceptions of representation in play in revolutionary political debates. Equally, the
German Aesthetics and Culture topic attracted some excellent responses, with candidates demonstrating good knowledge of the texts, and, particularly salient to this question, of the eighteenth-century intellectual background. The Gender topic caused some difficulties. The best answers recognised that to adjudicate the question of whether principles were sacrificed in the name of partial reform, they would need to attend to what principles individual thinkers were defending. Weaker answers approached the problem as a clash between ‘radicalism’ and ‘reform’, so that any ‘reformist’ attitudes on the part of individual thinkers could be treated as reneging on ‘radical’ principles. Too often, what was invoked as ‘radicalism’ was an ahistorical conception of what feminist principles should be, rather than what the theorists under discussion were concerned to defend. On Socialism, candidates were often better in thinking about the ways in which thinkers were and were not critics of property, than in linking this to the critique of existing forms of government. On nationality, there were a number of poor answers which missed the point of the question, and simply provided some commentary on historical events that might have shaped debates on the issue, rather than reflecting on the use made of arguments about history by theorists of nationality. On empire, two issues stood out. Firstly, very few candidates attempted to define what they understood by ‘imperialism’ or ‘anti-imperialism’, with many using ‘imperialism’ simply to denote the negative consequences of empire. Even where it was noted, usually with reference to Hobson, that the concept was sometimes distinguished from others, such as ‘colonialism’, this rarely led to any sustained reflection on what was being rejected by ‘anti-imperialists’. Most candidates converged on the conclusion that most (or all) critics of empire endorsed some forms of colonialism. Too often this led to over-generalized characterization of debates about empire, in which distinctions between different positions got lost. A second source of problems concerned some candidates’ lack of attention to the stipulation that the answer should make reference to critics of empire ‘in nineteenth-century Britain’. One might make concessions for Marx (writing in Britain), and for Hobson (1902). It is rather a stretch to do so for Constant, Smith, Burke, or Fanon.

2019-20

Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins

A total of thirty-seven candidates sat the paper this year, a marked drop occasioned by the novel exam arrangements introduced in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This exam was classed as a formative assessment and was conducted remotely on an ‘open-book’ basis. In light of restricted digital access to some of the set texts, it was agreed with the chair of examiners that candidates would not be unduly penalised for failure to make use of material thus affected. It was further agreed, with the support of relevant exam boards in the History Faculty, that certain exam questions would be revised where lack of access to specific texts would materially compromise candidates’ ability to answer. Two questions were amended on this basis in advance of the date of the exam.

The standard of answers was broadly in line with previous years. Nine candidates received marks of 70 or above; twenty-four candidates received marks in the range 60-69; one candidate in the range 50-59; two in the range 40-49; and one below 40. The median mark was 66; the mean was 65.2. There were 63 answers on Section A topics; 48 answers on Section B topics. No instances of plagiarism were identified. As ever, some clustering was in evidence, but despite the fact that fewer candidates sat the paper, there was still a pleasing spread of topics covered. The most popular topics were Rousseau (14 answers) and Gender (13), followed by Nationalism (11) and Wollstonecraft (10). Other popular
topics included Empire (8), Burke (7), Mill (6), and Luxury and Commercial Society (6). Montesquieu, Smith, Kant, Marx, and the French Revolution each attracted 5 answers. The question on Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany was answered by 3 candidates, and 2 candidates answered on Hegel. The questions on Hume, Bentham, Constant, Socialism before 1848, and Social Science each received 1 answer. No candidate chose to tackle the questions on Tocqueville, Natural Law, and, most unusually, the American Revolution.

Leaving aside those topics answered by only one or two candidates, the question on Smith attracted some very strong answers, and the standard for the Marx and the Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany topics was also high. Candidates tended to outperform the average when answering on Nationalism, Gender, Empire, the French Revolution and Burke. It is notable that many candidates performed better when answering on Section B topics than on Section A. At the other end of the spectrum, Rousseau once again proved challenging to a number of candidates, with marks clustered at the lower end of the 2.1 spectrum; the same was true of Mill. The question on Luxury and Commercial Society was not, as a rule, well-answered, with many candidates unsure what to do with the ‘ancients/moderns’ distinction. There was, however, one answer of outstanding quality on this topic, and there were also notably strong individual answers on Smith, Wollstonecraft, Gender, and Empire.

It was not evident that the shift to an ‘open-book’ assessment had any great impact on the standard of answers. To perform well, candidates needed: firstly, to answer the question in front of them, rather than offer a generic overview of the topic; secondly, to demonstrate first-hand knowledge of the specified texts; thirdly, to produce a coherent, logically-structured argument. Weaker answers were deficient in respect of one or more of these requirements.

In turning to individual topics, I again confine my comments to those questions where some level of generalisation about the quality of answers is possible. For Section A, I will begin with Montesquieu. This question invited reflection on a number of Montesquieu’s primary intellectual concerns. Most candidates rightly made much of the phrase ‘modern liberty’, but weaker answers confined their attention to threats to liberty arising from constitutional arrangements, to the neglect of other factors, such as the growth of commerce. On Rousseau, most candidates linked the question to the problem of perfectibility, and some saw the pertinence of recent scholarly literature, with Neuhouser proving a popular interlocutor. However, weaker candidates struggled to make sense of the reference to ‘reason’, and not every candidate appeared to be entirely at home with the argument of the Second Discourse. Answers on Smith, as noted, were of generally high standard, with candidates displaying high levels of conceptual precision, and close familiarity with both the Theory of Moral Sentiments, and the secondary literature. The question on Burke received a mixed response. Better answers focused closely on the problem of ‘moral equality’, but rather too many defaulted into generic accounts of Burke’s attitude towards revolution and reform. There were few very weak answers on Wollstonecraft, but there were quite a number that offered merely descriptive responses that did little to interrogate the notion of the ‘good life’ with any great analytical rigour. On Kant, answers veered between those that were informed by close textual analysis, and a series of generic answers that failed to engage with the question adequately, for instance, by offering an overview of Kant’s views on revolution, rather than focusing on the problem of progress per se. One strong answer aside, responses to the question on Mill also suffered from a want of attention to the specific premise of the question, with few candidates
showing more than passing interest in the contrast between ‘social’ tyranny and ‘political’ oppression, or in-depth knowledge of the relevant sections of On Liberty. On Marx, the best answers were able to relate the discussion of commodity fetishism to a range of texts other than Capital, but even at the upper end of the range there was only a limited sense of the interpretive questions that can be asked about the relationship between the early and later writings.

For Section B, as noted, the Luxury and Commercial Society topic was, in the main, poorly answered. This topic often attracts generic answers that rehearse the arguments of Fénelon and Mandeville with little reference to the question, frequently relying more on the secondary literature than on the primary texts themselves. This year was no exception, but this was compounded by confused treatment of the ‘ancients/moderns’ distinction. There was one exception – an answer that demonstrated an outstandingly sure grasp of the secondary debates and close reading of the primary texts. Beyond this, Section B topics were generally well answered. On the French Revolution, candidates took the reference to ‘the British model’ in their stride, and there was some good comparative discussion of the primary texts. ‘Culture and Aesthetics’ was answered with some degree of conceptual precision, and candidates made use of a wide range of primary texts. On Gender, most candidates focused squarely on rights, though the question of change was handled with less confidence. There were signs that the Nationalism topic is starting to generate more conceptually ambitious answers – some candidates appeared to have found Kelly’s article on Bluntschli particularly illuminating – though at the weaker end of the spectrum it remained the case that some answers made little attempt to draw out connections or comparisons between the set texts. On Empire, it was pleasing to see some candidates drawing on theoretical perspectives from sociology and anthropology, though this sometimes came at the expense of any close engagement with the primary texts.

Overall, candidates are to be commended on their performance under exceptionally challenging circumstances.

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.
2021-22
Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins
Ten candidates sat this exam, which was conducted remotely, on an open-book basis, and in a three-hour window. The standard of answers was high. Four candidates received marks of 70 or above; five received marks in the 60-60 range; one received a mark in the 50-59 range. The mean mark was 66.4; the median mark was 66. In total, there were sixteen answers on Section A topics and fourteen on Section B. In two instances there was evidence to suggest more or less extensive use of previously-prepared materials with a corresponding drift in focus from the specific question at hand.

As was the case last year, answers were spread across a range of topics: four answers on Rousseau; three each on Wollstonecraft, the French Revolution, Gender and Political Thought, and Empire and Civilization; two on Kant and on Socialism before 1848; and one each for Hume, Montesquieu, Smith, Bentham, Constant, Hegel, Mill, Natural Law and Sociability, Luxury and Commercial Society, and Nationality and the State. Natural Law, Luxury and Commercial Society, Bentham and Constant attracted particularly strong answers; the weakest answers were on Wollstonecraft and the Gender topic. In the former case, weaker answers failed to give adequate attention to the concept of natural benevolence; in the second, weaker answers were very limited in conceptual depth. A similar remark might be made about the spread of marks in answers to the Rousseau, French Revolution and Empire and Civilization questions; what distinguished the better answers was a clear focus on the question, good knowledge of the primary texts and the issues they raise, and an analytical approach to the material. The same qualities characterise the best answers on this paper year in, year out.

2020-21
Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins
Seven candidates sat this exam, which was conducted remotely, and on an open-book basis. One candidate was awarded a first-class mark; the rest received marks in the 2.1 range. All told, there were ten answers on Section A topics, and eleven on Section B. There was a pleasing spread of topics covered: three answers on Kant; two each for Smith, Burke, the French Revolution, and Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany; and one each for Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hegel, Luxury and Commercial Society, the American Revolution, Gender and Political Thought, Socialism before 1848, Nationality and the State, Empire and Civilization, and Social Science. Given this spread, generalizations about individual topics are out of the question, but as in previous years, stronger answers combined excellent textual knowledge, a focused approach to the question at hand, and clear argumentation.

2019-20
Examiner: Dr Tom Hopkins
Eight candidates sat the exam in this sitting. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic the exam was conducted remotely on an ‘open-book’ basis. In light of restricted digital access to some of the set texts, it was agreed with the chair of examiners that candidates would not be unduly penalised for failure to make use of material thus affected. It was further agreed,
with the support of relevant exam boards in the History Faculty, that certain exam questions would be revised where lack of access to specific texts would materially compromise candidates’ ability to answer. Two questions were amended on this basis in advance of the date of the exam.

Two candidates received first-class overall marks, one of which would have qualified for a distinction. A further five candidates received a mark in the 2.1 range. One candidate received an overall 2.2. The median mark was 65.5; the mean marginally higher at 65.75. Whilst not an outstanding year, the mark profile was broadly in line with previous years, and under the circumstances this is to be welcomed. A wide range of questions were attempted. Kant and the Culture and Aesthetic Politics in Germany questions each received three answers. Hume, the American Revolution, Nationalism, and Empire each received two answers. Rousseau, Burke, Wollstonecraft, Bentham, Constant, Hegel, Tocqueville, Marx, the French Revolution, and Gender received one answer each. No candidate attempted the questions on Montesquieu, Mill, Natural Law, Luxury and Commercial Society, Socialism before 1848, or Social Science.

The very best answers were resolutely focused on the question posed, rigorously argued, and displayed outstanding critical understanding of the primary texts and of relevant secondary debates. There were few instances of an outright failure to answer the questions posed, though a number of candidates produced somewhat generic answers that were insufficiently focused. Weaker candidates tended to display a more superficial level of analysis, a weaker grasp on the primary texts, and looser argumentation. Some candidates, perhaps encouraged by the ‘open-book’ format, reproduced long strings of quotations, without sufficient analysis or attempt to weave them into a compelling argument. Given the range of topics covered by a small number of candidates, it is difficult to generalise about responses to individual questions, so I will merely highlight a few particular issues arising, where these do not fall under the generic categories listed above. For Burke, the legal origin of the term ‘prescription’ should have been attended to. On Wollstonecraft, candidates would have been advised to give more consideration to the philosophical and theological concerns underpinning her account of progress. On Kant, the question required a clearer account of the argument of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and the relationship between this text and Kant’s doctrine of right, than some candidates were able to give. The question on the American Revolution was poorly answered; candidates demonstrated very little conceptual and historical precision in handling ‘democracy’, and there was some evident confusion about the political affiliations of some of the authors of the specified texts. Answers on the Nationalism topic suffered from limited knowledge of the primary texts, though it was notable that candidates made a concerted effort to draw out comparisons between individual authors. On Empire, candidates showed much greater confidence in discussion of the secondary debates than in treating the primary texts.

This was an examination taken under unique circumstances, and all candidates are to be congratulated on their performance in the face of unprecedented challenges.

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 be 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’.