

SOC6201H (Sociological Theory III)

Conservative Social Thought: From the Intransigent Right to the End of History

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### **Course Description:**

In 1992, Perry Anderson identified four seminal authors as the intellectual basis for “the intransigent right”: F.A. Hayek, Carl Schmitt, Michael Oakeshott, and Leo Strauss. All coming of age in the inter-war period, these four authors have not only been tremendously influential among scholars and intellectuals. They have informed and inspired prime ministers, presidents, and their advisors.

At the same time, they provided much of the basic intellectual template for subsequent conservative social thinkers as they confronted rapid and dramatic social changes from the 1960s to the present: trenchant critiques of the ideas of progress, social engineering, and social justice; assertion of the national and particular over and against the cosmopolitan and the global; defense of human nature over and against relativism and constructionism; the dangers of emancipatory self-expression for the maintenance of political and social order; and more.

Given that the right remains as intransigent as ever, understanding its intellectual basis remains as important as ever. In this seminar, we will attempt to enter into and understand these ideas in their own terms, while also engaging with authors who have undertaken critical assessments of this intellectual tradition. Our primary focus will be close examination of ideas and texts, with an eye to how they have informed contemporary debates.

### **Assignments:**

- Bi-weekly discussion board post
- in-class presentation
- course paper

### **Introduction**

- 1) Getting to know the conservative mind (I) (Selections TBD)
  - “What is Conservative Social and Political Thought” (Jerry Muller)
  - “Conservative Thought” (Karl Mannheim, selections TBD)
    - Suggested:
      - “The Intransigent Right at the End of the Century” (Perry Anderson)
- 2) Getting to know the conservative mind (II)
  - a. *Conservatism: Dream and Reality* (Robert Nisbet, selections TBD)
  - b. *The Conservative Mind* (Russel Kirk, selections TBD)

**Part I: Basic Concepts from the Intransigent Right: the limits of rationalism, the conceit of progress, the abandonment of nature, and the critique of democracy.**

- 3) Michael Oakeshott
  - a. "Rationalism in Politics"
  - b. "On being Conservative"
  
- 4) F.A. Hayek
  - a. *The Fatal Conceit* (Selections TBD)
  - b. *The Mirage of Social Justice* (Selections TBD)
  - c. "Equality, Value, and Merit"
  
- 5) Leo Strauss
  - a. Natural Right and History (chs 1-3)
  
- 6) Carl Schmitt
  - a. The Concept of the Political
  - b. "When Parliament Cannot be Sovereign"

**Part II: Confronting social change**

- 7) Can there be a Great Society?
  - a. *The Unheavenly City Revisited* (Edward Banfield, Selections TBD)
  - b. *The Limits of Social Policy* (Nathan Glazer, Selections TBD)
  
- 8) Emancipation and its Critics
  - a. "The Two Cultures: An Ethics Gap" (Gertrude Himmelfarb, selections TBD)
  - b. "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism" (Daniel Bell)
  - c. "The Wisdom of Repugnance" (Leon Kass)
    - i. Suggested: "Pornography, Obscenity, and the Case for Censorship" (Irving Kristol)
  
- 9) A Global Order? North American Exceptionalism.
  - a. "In Praise of Particularity: The Concept of mediating structures" (Peter Berger)
  - b. "Intellectual conservatism: two paradoxes" (Peter Berger)
  - c. "In Defense of North America" and "Canadian Fate and Imperialism" (George Grant)
    - i. Suggested: "Marriage and the Construction of Reality" (Peter Berger)
  
- 10) The End of History, the Clash of Civilizations, and the politics of resentment
  - a. "The End of History?" (Francis Fukuyama)
  - b. "The Clash of Civilizations?" (Samuel Huntington)

- c. *Identity: The Demand For Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (Francis Fukuyama, selections TBD)

11) A return to virtue?

- a. *After Virtue* (Alasdair MacIntyre, selections TBD)
- b. *To Flourish or Destruct* (Christian Smith, selections TBD)

**Part III: Assessing Conservative Social Thought**

12) *The Reactionary Mind* (Corey Robin, selections TBD)

- a. *Republicans for Revolution* (Mark Lilla)
- b. *The Reactionary Mind: An Exchange* (Mark Lilla and Corey Robin)