

Understanding the Modern State: the *Leviathan* of Thomas Hobbes

**IDH2930
Class number 29637**

**Spring 2024
Tuesday, 10:40-11:30 (4th period)
Little 119**

Prof. Jeffrey Collins
Email: jeffrey.collins@ufl.edu
Office: CSE 405
Office Hours: Tuesday 12-2 or by appointment.

Course Description:

Thomas Hobbes's masterpiece, *Leviathan*, is arguably the most influential work of political theory ever written. Appearing after the bloody English Civil War and the execution of King Charles I, it was a work of brilliance, controversy, and influence. Through a close reading of *Leviathan*, this course will explore Hobbesian themes of perennial relevance: state sovereignty, natural rights, human equality, the definition of freedom, and the relationship of politics and religion.

Text:

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis) ISBN 978-0872201774.

Course Requirements:

In class participation: 40%
Weekly Canvas Comments: 30%
Course paper (5-6 pages): 30%

Learning Outcomes:

1. **Critical Thinking:** students will develop their skills as close readers and textual interpreters. In dialogue with the course instructor, they will consider the role that historical context plays in shaping the meaning of texts. They will consider the longer term influence of a canonical work of political thought over modern political history.

2. Communication Skills: students will develop their capacity to clearly and professional communicate analysis in an oral setting. They will also hone their skill at writing textual analysis.
3. Subject Mastery: Students will develop a close and detailed knowledge of the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes.

Course Expectations

This is a discussion oriented directed reading group. For their own benefit and the success of the class, students are expected to complete the readings weekly. They are dense and somewhat complex, but not long. Each student should complete a weekly canvas commentary of approximately 3-5 sentences, reacting to the week's reading or some dimension of it. These comments are not meant to be mere summaries of the text, but reactions, opinions, to which other students might agree or disagree. The idea is to generate discussion and debate. A successful course will depend on respectful and sustained interaction between students in the classroom. Come prepared to speak, listen, and react. Attendance is of course required, but passive attendance alone is not sufficient for a good mark.

Canvas comments (posted on our canvas page) will be due by 5pm on Monday before each Tuesday class.

Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is required for excused absences, per UF attendance policy. Excessive unexcused absences (6 or more) will result in failure of the course.

The course paper will be on a theme or question of your own devising. It will consist of analysis of *Leviathan* itself, in light of information provided by the instructor in class. No other outside sources will be required. The paper will be marked for content and style.

Other Policies:

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned a final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Completion credit.

Students who require academic accommodations should, as soon as possible, contact the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>.

Guidance on how to give feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/> . Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/> . Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Students are bound by the university Honor Code and general principles of academic integrity and honesty. The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) explains expectations in more detail. Violations of the honor code should be reported. If you have questions regarding academic integrity matters, please discuss them with the instructor.

Classes may be recorded for limited purposes only. Any student wishing to record the class should inform the instructor.

Students requiring additional assistance with writing should consult <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or visit 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

Schedule of Readings:

Please note that readings are indicated not by pages numbers but by book, chapter, and sometime paragraph numbering.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Jan. 9 | Class Introduction: Hobbes's biographical and political context (no reading) |
| Jan. 16 | Introduction and the Human Mind.
<i>Leviathan</i> , letter dedicatory, introduction, and I.i – I.vi. |
| Jan. 23 | Knowledge and Manners.
<i>Leviathan</i> , I.vii – I.xi. |
| Jan. 30 | Religion
<i>Leviathan</i> , I.xii. |
| Feb. 6 | The Laws of Nature and the Person of the State
<i>Leviathan</i> , I.xiv – I.xvi. |
| Feb. 13 | Origins of the Commonwealth
<i>Leviathan</i> , II.xvii – II.xx. |
| Feb. 20 | The Liberty of Subjects
<i>Leviathan</i> , II.xxi. |
| Feb. 27 | Features of the State
<i>Leviathan</i> , II.xxii – II.xxv. |
| Mar. 5 | Laws
<i>Leviathan</i> , II.xxvi – II.xxviii. |
| Mar. 12 | Spring Break |

- Mar. 19 Dissolution of Commonwealths
Leviathan, II.xxix – II.xxxi.
- Mar. 26 Christian Commonwealths
Leviathan, III.xxxii – III.xxiv.
- Apr. 2 Prophets and Miracles
Leviathan, III.xxxvi – III.xxxviii
- Apr. 9 Church Power
Leviathan, III.xlii
- Apr. 16 Kingdom of Darkness
Leviathan, IV.xlv and IV.xlvi-xlvii
- Apr. 23 Hobbes's summation
Leviathan, IV.xlvii and "Review and Conclusion"