

Bob Maranto, Ph.D.
Spring 2008
Hours: M, W 10:30-noon or by appointment
Class M 7:30 in Bartley 27A

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St. Augustine Center 259

PSC 8000: Politics and Literature

Capitalism is dog eat dog
And communism is just the reverse.

Eric M. Uslaner

Science fiction is often described,
And even defined, as extrapolative.
The science fiction writer is supposed
To take a trend or phenomenon of the here-and-now,
Purify and intensify it for dramatic effect,
And extend it into the future.
“If this goes on, then this is what will happen.”
...Is it any wonder that no truly respectable society
has ever trusted its artists?

Ursula K. Le Guin

Goals: As common references to utopian schemes and Orwellian newspeak show, some of the most important works of political theory and practice are fiction.¹ Such novels as Looking Backward and Uncle Tom's Cabin sparked debates lasting for generations. Well crafted works of political fiction are often the best introduction to politics since they use virtual people to develop abstract concepts. For the most part, we will avoid Washington themes (*e.g.*, Advise and Consent) and instead focus on more comparative and universal works. This course introduces you to such social scientific concepts as freedom, equity, social engineering, social class, power, alienation, colonialism, Marxism, capitalism, oppression, and utopia. Mainly, we will focus on the individual v. society.

Requirements: Though we have a few works of social science, for the most part this course should work well for students who love to read lots of fiction. For the class to work, you must show up for each class ready to discuss the required readings. (After week five you can skip one book. Just tell me which in advance which one.) Readings average about **180 pages a week---** perhaps five to eight hours for the average reader. A novel is more fun than a textbook. Still, this is a lot of work, and should not be taken lightly. In addition, you'll have to write a roughly 4-7 page paper on Gaventa's Power and Powerlessness (due week 2), a minimum of **five** short (3-4 pages typed) response papers on the readings of the week (three before spring break), and an 8-15 page “Big” paper integrating themes across course readings, due during finals week. If you write more than five short papers, we'll drop your lower grades unless you want to drop your *higher* grades---no one has ever chosen that option. All papers are due at the **start** of class **before** the topic is discussed. Late papers lose a letter grade a day, and are held to higher standards.

¹ In fact, much of social science may be fiction, but that's another story. ...

Since writing is very important, papers **lose a point per grammatical error or typo**. You get five freebies, however, for each mistake you find in my formal writing. (E-mails don't count.) I will normally return papers within a week. Grades reflect:

15% class participation²

15% 5-8 page power paper due 1/28.

50% five or more short papers on the week's readings, due **before** we discuss them in class. Again, you must do three of these before spring break. The short papers should run 3-4 pages typed, and should apply political science concepts (power, freedom, equality, social class, etc.) to the reading of the week.

20% Big (8-15 page) integrative paper due on 5/5.

We will uphold Villanova's Academic Integrity Policy, which was written by students and reflects our community's Augustinian traditions. Academic dishonesty will result in an "F" for the assignment and will be reported, as per regulations in the student catalog. **Students should feel free to discuss books and assignments with each other, and are encouraged to study in groups.** On paper assignments, feel free to ask advice from friends or from the instructor, but acknowledge such help in a footnote and do not present others' work as your own.³ For example, it is fine for a friend to read a draft and suggest that you fix a flaw in a paper, so long as you acknowledge their help---it is not fine for a friend to fix it for you.

Please procure the following right away. Any edition will do.

Power and Powerlessness by John Gaventa

Politics by Kenneth Minogue

Anthem by Ayn Rand

1984 by George Orwell

Darkness at Noon by Arthur Koestler

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

Babbit by Sinclair Lewis (Note that you need not buy Babbit since it is available on line.)

In Dubious Battle by John Steinbeck

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe

The Dispossessed by Ursula Le Guin

Primary Colors by Anonymous.

This course will not be easy, but if you like to read and think, it will be FUN! A rough course schedule follows.

I. INTRODUCTION AND POWER

1/14 WEEK 1. INTRODUCTION: Lectures on capitalism and freedom, legal and substantive equality, Continental European v. Anglo-American democracy, pluralism, and Marxism.

1/21 No Class for MLK day.

² The very shy can write an extra paper, but must inform me by week 7 of your plan to do so.

³ My wife April proofed this syllabus, finding several errors. (Any remaining mistakes are her fault!)

1/28 WEEK 2. Read chapters 1-4 and 11 in Minogue's Politics; and Gaventa's Power and Powerlessness: Read chapters 1-6 carefully, as well as pp. 192-93. The rest is recommended.

From Minogue, why don't despots like politics? Consider the contributions of the Greeks, Romans, and Christians. From Minogue ch. 11, what is political science? From Gaventa, how do pluralists tend to view politically inactive, low income communities?

POWER PAPER due on 1/28. Read Power and Powerlessness For your 5-8 page paper, explain the concept of power. How is it more complex than pluralists suggest? Explain how the company took and kept power in the Clear Fork Valley. List all the factors you can, and if possible, apply this to cases from other classes.

II. FREEDOM!

2/4 WEEK 3. FREEDOM! Read "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut and Anthem by Ayn Rand. How did each society get that way? Are people happy there? What social goals does each emphasize? **You may want to do a paper** on the common themes of Anthem and "Harrison Bergeron," noting counter-arguments. Or, using these works, you might compare equality and freedom as values around which to organize society.

III. TOTALITARIANISM: Totally Depressing

2/11 WEEK 4. SLAVERY! Read Orwell's 1984. Interestingly, Orwell's original subtitle was The Last Man in Europe; one of his original titles was 1948. Consider the class system of the society. **You may want to write on one of the following:**

Apply Gaventa's three levels of power to 1984.

Discuss and give examples of the use of language in 1984.

Are Oceania people happy? Does this society fill human needs as well as our own does?

Discuss how the party undermines private life.

Discuss how the past controls the future.

Discuss the concepts of thoughtcrime and facecrime. Do you know of any examples in America?

Discuss the importance of war in social regulation.

Discuss the different social classes/groups.

Could a society like this exist? Could it last?

To help you prepare for next week, I'll lecture on the Communist cell structures and the history of the movement in the late 1800s through the Stalin period, including salami tactics, front groups, show trials, and open and secret cadres.

2/18 WEEK 5. HITLER & STALIN. Read the last chapter of Steiner's The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H. (handout); Minogue's Politics ch. 5-7, and 12. Also get a start on Darkness at Noon. For those interested, I recommend Koestler's essay in The God That Failed (on reserve).

Regarding The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H., the previous 178 pages disappoint, but this last chapter is amazing and bizarre. To set it up for you, the novel is set in 1979. Over the previous 16 chapters a group of Israeli commandos found Adolf Hitler, 90, alive in the Amazonian jungle, and journey through the wilderness to bring him to Israel for trial. After a harrowing trek, the commandos fall ill and fear they will never return to civilization. They try Hitler in the jungle, and in this chapter he presents his defense. Does his case make any sense?

From Minogue ch. 5 note the growth of the modern state and court politics, and Hobbes v. Locke on the nature of the state. From ch. 6 note the distinction between the state and society. From ch. 7, why do states go to war? Why is economic growth positive-sum while political growth is zero-sum? Why are idealists gradually defeating realists? From ch. 12, note the rise and fall of Marxism.

2/25 WEEK 6. Stalin! Read Darkness at Noon, for my money the best political novel ever. Koestler based this on several episodes from Stalinist Russia, perhaps as close as any society has come to 1984. Note Rip Van Winkle, Arlova, the submarine controversy, how Ivanov and Rubashov differ from Gletkin (much as Winston Smith differs from Parsons), Little Loewy, we and I, subjective good faith, means and ends, the grammatical fiction, Rubashov's theory of history starting "The Third Hearing," and the party's impacts on private and family life.

Suggested paper topics are:

Compare the justifications for totalitarianism of Gletkin, Ivanov, and Rubashov.

Apply Gaventa's level of power to this society.

How are the arguments of Gletkin similar to those of Hitler? How might they differ?

Apply any of the concepts of Minogue to this society.

SPRING BREAK 3/3! You've earned it.

IV. CLASS AND CLASS CONFLICT

3/10 WEEK 7. WHAT IS HAPPINESS? Read Brave New World by Aldous Huxley; "Race, Genes, and IQ" by Murray and Herrnstein, The New Republic, October 31, 1994, which I'll e-mail you.

What is the key value of this society? Is it right? Are these people adults? Yet how is it like modern American society? Compare it to the attempted utopias in the other course works. Compare it to the Savage reservation. At what price comes stability? Most important, how are the themes of Murray & Herrnstein captured in Huxley? Give arguments for and against their views.

3/17 WEEK 8. MIDDLE CLASS ALIENATION. Read Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis, the supreme novel about upper middle class life. Though it is set in the 1920s, arguably, not much has changed in some places. These are the folks who run the local Republican party. It might be fun to write a paper comparing Babbitt to the Communist elites. How is each re-shaping his society? Compare beliefs and methods. What does Babbitt live for? What does he believe in? (You might want to make a list of his favorite words and phrases.) What is his mid-life crisis about? Is he useful to society? Family life? How does he sell? How does Sinclair Lewis view capitalism? How does Babbitt view the working class? Who runs Zenith? Note the Overbrook dinner, and Babbitt's religion. Is Babbitt a success? Is he happy? Is he free? How does he grow by the end of the book? How would a Babbitt type differ today? How do elections in Babbitt's time differ from ours?

3/24 Easter Break

3/31 WEEK 9. AMERICAN REDS. Read Minogue ch. 8 and Steinbeck's In Dubious Battle, which describes the working poor of roughly the same period as Babbit, and how they could be manipulated by businesses, union organizers and Communists.

In what ways are Mac and Jim Minogue style activists? Explore the three levels of power. How does each side manipulate the workers? How does Mac manipulate London, both Andersons, and Dakin? Why are London and Dakin natural leaders? What motivates each side? Can you summarize their views? Why doesn't the press cover the strike fairly? Compare Mac and Jim to Rubashov and Gletkin. How is each trying to reshape his nation? Was America democratic? Why do the growers have so much more power than the pickers? Describe Bolter's views. How do growers in California differ from the Babbits of the Midwest? How do politics in this time differ from ours? Or do they?

4/4 is the final date to drop without penalty

V. COLONIALISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

4/7 WEEK 10. COLONIALISM. Read Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe. This is tragedy greater than Macbeth or Lear, because the tale of the Okonkwo seems truer. Lecture on the balance of power.

How was Ibo society like our own? What motivated Okonkwo? His father? His son? How does he differ from Babbit or Rubashov? How did the missionaries recruit people? Whom did they recruit? How was colonialism imposed, and how did that reflect weaknesses of the old society? To what degree was it imposed, and to what degree chosen?

VI. A FEMINIST UTOPIA

4/14-21 WEEKS 11-12. FEMINISM AND UTOPIA. Read the handout from Lisa Birnbach's College Book on Deep Springs College; and most important, The Dispossessed by Ursula Le Guin. Finish the first half of Le Guin by 4/7 and all of it by 4/14. Note the use of language on Anarres. How do they control people without law on Anarres? List all the ways. On which world are people happier? Where would you rather live? Which is more innovative? Describe the system of government on each. Is Urras really capitalist? Would you go to Deep Springs College? State its values. How is it like/unlike Anarres? On Urras (and earth), why don't more women study physics? Using Gaventa's models, describe power relationships in each society. Is either likely to change? How? Assess patriotism. Is it good or bad?

VII. MODERN AMERICAN POLITICIANS

4/28 WEEK 13. Read Minogue ch. 8 on becoming an activist and ch. 13 on modern politics, as well as all of Primary Colors, a fictional account of Bill Clinton's 1991-92 race for the White House.

From Minogue ch. 13, in what ways are postmodern politics and policy technical and uninteresting? Does Primary Colors suggest that? In what ways is Jack Stanton a Minogue style activist? In what ways does he fall short? How does he use power? How does he seduce Henry Burton? Why? Is he a good politician? A good man? You might want to compare his strengths and weaknesses with those of the current president. How does presidential selection process tend to select Stanton types? How do politicians view the people? The press? Each other? Should we

reform campaigns to get a different kind of president? What does this say about Hillary's campaign for president?

In lieu of a final, the Big Integrative Paper (BIP) is due on May 5. In 8-15 pages you should discuss themes common to a number of course works. I suggest one of the following topics.

1. Describe the role of social class in the various societies. Why does each have a class system? What is good/bad about class?
2. Using Gaventa's framework, describe how elites hold power in each society studied.
3. Give arguments for and against social engineering.
4. Describe how societies in this course practice social engineering, noting differences and commonalities. How could it be more effective? More humane?
5. In each of at least three course works, describe the use of language to control people.
6. Babbit, Okonkwo, Gletkin, Dakin, and Pae are all in some way trying to better themselves materially, facing barriers from their societies and their own decisions. Describe how opportunities and barriers to advancement vary across the societies, as well as the price each had to pay in order to advance.
7. Sometimes people are truly free, but more typically they must serve as the agents of others. Explore this theme in any three works.
8. The centralization of power offers dangers, as well as possibilities. Explore this theme in any three works.
9. Utopias and dystopias are common themes of political fiction. Use at three course novels to outline their similarities and differences. What might that tell us about human realities and possibilities?
10. Address the themes of patriotism and solidarity in any three of the novels. Do these emotions do more good or harm?

HAPPY SUMMER! YOU'VE EARNED IT!!

Please read over the following before writing the papers:

NOTES ON WRITING

The ability to write clearly may be the most important thing you can take with you on leaving school. Accordingly, writing counts in class assignments. With this in mind, it's a good idea to remember the following points. In fact, save the last two, you should take these to the grave!

1. Avoid cumbersome sentences. They are generally murky and hard to follow. As a rule of thumb, a sentence with over 30 words (or three commas) is usually cumbersome. Remember that in the natural order of things each sentence, however profound, must come to an end. No sentence should wander like a wounded snake, slithering...bleeding words...yet refusing to die.
2. Similarly, words are precious. Don't waste them! Don't use ten words when five can do the job. Dirty Harry doesn't talk much, but people still listen. Harry would never say: "In my

opinion at that point in time the Articles of Confederation were surrounded by an inevitable doom." Regarding this and #1, NEVER write a sentence such as:

"To put it simply, Prime Minister, certain informal discussions took place involving a full and frank exchange of views, out of which there arose a series of proposals, which, on examination, proved to indicate certain promising lines of inquiry which, when pursued, led to the realization that the alternative course of action might in fact in certain circumstances be susceptible of discrete modification, leading to a reappraisal of the original areas of difference and pointing the way to encouraging possibilities of compromise and cooperation which, if bilaterally implemented with appropriate give and take on both sides might, if the climate were right, have a reasonable possibility at the end of the day of leading rightly or wrongly to a mutually satisfactory resolution."

[TRANSLATION: We did a deal.]

from Yes Minister

3. Related to #2, do not use unnecessary to-be (TOBE?) verbs. Don't say "What I think is that..." Instead say: "I think that..." The latter is shorter, more direct, and implies that you are a real live thinking individual, not a blank entity whose thoughts are placed into you by Martians.

4. Use commas properly!

5. Remember, sentences need active verbs. Examples of "sentences" without an active verb are: "The kind of power needed to pass tough legislation."

"A sort of brotherhood that shares a common goal."

6. Make sure a sentence means what you want it to mean. Example: "Americans have long supported the need for affirmative action." The "need" for affirmative action, if there is one, is racism! While the sentence may be true, it was not what the writer intended! From the same paper comes:

"Around the same time as blacks were mounting their attack on equal rights..."

7. Don't use words unless you know what they mean. Examples are:

"Everyone also wrecks the benefits..."

"There is virtuously no usefulness of it in modern society."

8. Don't be redundant. Some examples within sentences are:

"...to overthrow the existing ruling government that exists."

"...substantially less qualified than him in the qualifications."

"The Electoral College is outdated, and has outlived its usefulness."

"The two held different views, yet disagreed."

Remember that repetition can be a problem within a paragraph, page, or whole paper just as within a particular sentence.

9. Read my comments. We all make mistakes, but avoid the incredibly dumb ones. I once taught a course on the Supreme Court. The text was titled The Supreme Court. Despite written correction on each paper, one student continued to write of the "Supream Court." I sure hope she

does better in life than in that class. In a class on "American Bureaucracy," one student wrote his first paper on the "Evolution of the Burrocracy." I thought that clever sarcasm implying asses in government. Actually, it was just bad spelling.

10. Don't confuse possessives and plurals. "Universities" is a plural---not a possessive. "University's" is possessive. "Universities'" is the plural possessive.

11. Be sure verbs reflect the singularity or plurality of the nouns they apply to. Don't use sentences like: "Federalism are the system that..."

12. Don't attribute a statement when its author is obvious. In one case, sentence after sentence ran: "Marshall feels that...Then Marshall says...Marshall goes on to say..."

The first "Marshall" would have about done it. For the next two or three sentences we could assume that M was still speaking.

There are two final points, which are vital to this class, but can be forgotten later---maybe.

13. In general, I think it improper to address broad social groups (blacks, whites, Asians, Democrats, etc.) as if they are unitary in nature. Examples:

"Women felt that they too have been..."

There are lots and lots of women out there with a wide variety of views, experiences, etc. Maybe sometimes they must be lumped together, but only rarely and with great care. Similarly, when speaking of millions of African Americans, it's not good to say:

"The black feels that he..."

14. Footnote if you like, but it might be easier to attribute ideas by naming the writer in the sentence, as in number 11 above, or just placing the name in parentheses at the end of the sentence or series of sentences, as:

"Bureaucracies are large, efficient organizations. (Weber)" That's usually enough, but direct quotes should be identified by page number. For example:

"Fung maintains that `societies enjoying mate selection dominated by the ideals of romantic love are cursed with abnormally high divorce rates' (p. 375)."

Finally, you don't need a bibliography if you stick to sources used in this course. If you use others (which is great!), you need to list the author, title, and date of publication.

Remember, good writing isn't easy, but it is important. I'm not a good writer yet, but I am working at it. You can too.

Robert Maranto (B.S. Maryland, 1980; Ph.D. Minnesota, 1989) teaches political science and public administration at Villanova University. He previously taught at numerous schools including James Madison, Penn, and Southern Mississippi, and served President Clinton's administration, only 12 levels below the President. Bob has done extensive research on political appointees in government, civil service reform, and education reform (particularly charter schools), producing more than 50 scholarly publications. In concert with others he has written or edited books which have sold dozens of copies and are so boring that his own mother refused to read them. These include *Politics and Bureaucracy in the Modern Presidency* (Greenwood 1993), *The Politics of Civil Service Reform* (Peter Lang 1998), *School Choice in the Real World: Lessons from Arizona Charter Schools* (Westview 2001), *Radical Reform of the Civil Service* (Lexington 2001), *Beyond a Government of Strangers: How Career Executives and Political Appointees Can Turn Conflict to Cooperation* (Lexington 2005), *A Guide to Charter Schools* (Rowman and Littlefield Education 2006), *The Second Term of G.W. Bush* (Palgrave 2006), *The Politically Correct University* (AEI, forthcoming 2008), and *Judging Bush* (Stanford University Press, forthcoming 2009). His op-eds have appeared in newspapers including the *Washington Post*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Daily News*, *WallStreetJournal.com*, *Baltimore Sun*, and *Hartford Courant*, and magazines including the *Washington Monthly*, *Education Next*, and the *Weekly Standard*. He played for the 1987 national champion College Bowl team while in graduate school at the University of Minnesota. He is married to April Gresham. Their bosses, Tony and Maya, are pictured below. Bob is at 610-519-7142 or robert.maranto@villanova.edu.