

Teaching Materials

Classics of Social and Political Thought I Jigsaw Activity Questions (Book III, Aristotle's *Politics*)

Before class, I broke up the day's readings (Book III) into the four themes below. At the start of class, I sorted the 16 students into these four groups and gave them the discussion questions below to help them become "experts" on that theme. Then, I re-sorted them into four new groups composed of one member from each of the previous theme groups (each group had one on citizenship/city-states, one on constitutions, one on authority/kingship, and one on justice) and challenged the students to synthesize their respective areas of "expertise" across Book III into a coherent thesis concerning Aristotle's overall argument.

Aristotle Citizen/City-State Group

- 1) Briefly and concisely reconstruct Aristotle's arguments on citizens and city-state in Book III, paying particular attention to chapters 1-5, 9, and 10.
- 2) What are the major themes of Aristotle's argument on cities and city-states?
- 3) How might you compare and contrast Aristotle's argument on cities and city-states with Plato's argument in the *Republic*?

Aristotle Constitutions Group

- 1) Briefly and concisely reconstruct Aristotle's arguments on constitutions in Book III, paying particular attention to chapters 6-8, 17, and 18.
- 2) What are the major themes of Aristotle's argument on constitutions?
- 3) How might you compare and contrast Aristotle's argument on constitutions with Plato's typology of regimes in the *Republic*?

Aristotle Authority/Kingship Group

- 1) Briefly and concisely reconstruct Aristotle's arguments on authority and kingship in Book III, paying particular attention to chapters 10-13, and 14-16.
- 2) What are the major themes of Aristotle's argument on authority and kingship?
- 3) How might you compare and contrast Aristotle's argument on authority and kingship with Plato's arguments about rule in the *Republic*?

Aristotle Justice Group

- 1) Briefly and concisely reconstruct Aristotle's arguments on justice in Book III, paying particular attention to chapters 9, 12, and 13.
- 2) What are the major themes of Aristotle's argument on justice?
- 3) How might you compare and contrast Aristotle's argument on justice with Plato's arguments on justice in the *Republic*?

Classics of Social and Political Thought II Quizzes

The quizzes in this course were designed to serve as a brief written means for students to demonstrate their ability to recall class content and assess arguments about class texts. They were also intended to help students develop the writing skills for the final essay. There were four with ascending weight in grading (5%, 10%, 10%, 15%). Quizzes involved two parts and were open book, but no extra-textual notes or devices (i.e. computers, phones, etc.) were allowed. The first part consisted of two short-answer questions that required recalling previous course content. Students were expected to bring the relevant texts to class for that period. The second part was a take-home essay (250-500 words) in which students argue a position based on a prompt. I found, through evaluations, that quiz 4 was quite difficult even for the well-prepared students and, as such, I will revise it for future use.

QUIZ I [10 minutes]

Name:

Short Answer [2-4 sentences each]

1. *What is Hobbes' theory of the state of nature and the commonwealth? Be sure to not only describe the two, but also how Hobbes views the transition between them. (1 POINT)*

2. *What leads to the dissolution of a commonwealth for Hobbes? State the general cause and list five examples. (1 POINT)*

------(tear here and take the bottom slip home)-----

Take Home

3. *Write 250-500 words (12pt font, normal margins, double-spaced) either defending or challenging the following claim: "Although Hobbes is often seen as an authoritarian who provides no means for citizens to resist their government after it is established, he actually provides a robust defense of individual liberty." (3 POINTS)*

QUIZ II [15 minutes]

Name:

Short Answer [2-4 sentences each]

1. *What is Locke's theory of the state of nature, the state of war, and political (or civil) society? Be sure to not only describe the three, but also how Locke views the transitions between them. (2 POINTS)*

2. *What leads to the dissolution of government for Locke? Give three examples of internal dissolution. (2 POINTS)*

------(tear here and take the bottom slip home)-----

Take Home

3. *Write 250-500 words (12pt font, normal margins, double-spaced) either defending or challenging the following claim: "Hobbes and Locke have the same conception of the state of nature and how humans came to develop civil society." (6 POINTS)*

QUIZ III [15 minutes]

Name:

Short Answer [2-4 sentences each]

What is Montesquien's critique of Hobbes' account of the state of nature? How does Montesquien view people in the state of nature? (2 POINTS)

*In the chapter on the constitution of England, what three powers does Montesquien list as part of government? What main difference is there between Montesquien's powers and Locke's powers in *The Second Treatise*? (2 POINTS)*

------(tear here and take the bottom slip home)-----

Take Home

Write 250-500 words (12pt font, normal margins, double-spaced) either defending or challenging the following claim: "Montesquien's account of the balance of powers is more compelling than Locke's." (6 POINTS)

QUIZ IV [20 minutes]

Name:

Short Answer [2-4 sentences each]

What is Rousseau's account of people in the state of nature? How does it compare/contrast with those of Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu? (3 POINTS)

What is the relationship between property and inequality in Rousseau's Second Discourse? How does his account of property compare/contrast to the accounts of property offered by Hobbes and Locke? (3 POINTS)

------(tear here and take the bottom slip home)-----

Take Home

*Write 250-500 words (12pt font, normal margins, double-spaced) either defending or challenging the following claim:
"Rousseau's account of inequality sufficiently counters Hobbes' and Locke's frameworks but neglects Montesquieu's argument that inequality can produce benefits for political life." (9 POINTS)*

Classics of Social and Political Thought III Author Analysis Assignment

I have included the rubric for this presentation-based assignment as well as group evaluation questions I required each individual student to fill out after their group presentation.

The author analysis serves as a verbal means of evaluating the students' ability to assess the claims of the course's texts and develop a nuanced reading (i.e. thesis) for submission to peer review. In order to balance varying degrees of exposure to the course material and the type of argumentation required in this course, author analyses will be conducted and evaluated in groups. Groups will spend the first ten to fifteen minutes of their presentations explaining their thesis, supporting textual evidence, and responses to potential counter-arguments. The next fifteen to twenty minutes will be a free-range discussion where others may offer constructive feedback in the form of contrary textual evidence, unclear points or themes, or other things that come to mind. Presenting students will be evaluated on their thesis, use of evidence, counter-arguments, and responses to classroom feedback. Non-presenting students will also be evaluated on the quality of their feedback. I will provide more details in the first week. Student groups are required to meet with me at least twenty-four hours in advance of their presentation to discuss their group's thesis and evidence.

Groups will be arranged by end of the first week. I will post a forum on Chalk on the Monday of week two at 7AM. Before the following class (Tuesday), groups will collectively decide on which author they would like to present. Only one group is allowed per author. I encourage you to start the analysis process early and be active as you read "your" author. Preparation for this cannot be done in a night; all of these authors are complex. Below you will find the grading breakdown for presentations as well as a group evaluation sheet. After your presentation, each individual in the group will fill out the evaluation sheet and email it back to me no later than **5PM the following day**. Failure to turn in a group evaluation sheet will result in the lowering of your final grade by one-third (i.e. B to B-). Be forewarned: I take the evaluation sheet seriously, and your group partner's feedback could affect your grade on this assignment. Thus, it is in your interest to work collaboratively with each other to produce the best possible presentation you can. I am available to discuss how to best prepare for and execute the author analysis presentation. Furthermore, I will also demonstrate this with Montesquieu. (We will not do author studies for the American Founders, Burke, or Robespierre.)

Grading

25% – Author Analysis Presentation

- Pre-presentation group meeting with instructor (5%)
- Thesis (5%)
- Analysis and Use of Evidence (5%)
- Counter-arguments (5%)
- Q&A Responses (5%)

5% – Feedback for other Author Analyses

- *For example: if your group is doing your presentation on Tocqueville, part of your grade comes from offering feedback to each of the other author analyses (e.g. Mill, Marx, Nietzsche, DuBois, Arendt)*

Group Evaluation (after presentation)

On a scale of 0-100 points, what grade would you give your group as a whole? Why?

On that same scale, what grade would you give each member of your group (including yourself)? Why?

What was most and least productive about the group process? What would you change?