Faculty of Economic, Social and Political Sciences

COPS1126 History of Political and Social Ideas

[30h] 3 credits

Teacher(s): Luc Courtois
Language: French
Level: First cycle

Main themes

1. General issues
a. The interaction of political and social issues
It is not easy to distinguish between what is a political and what is a social issue. It was wrong to believe, as Littré stated in the 19th century, that social and political issues stand in opposition to one another. From the 18th century on, social ideas (doctrines in particular) have examined the interaction between forms of government, institutional structures and social objectives. The two fields have influenced one another. Political liberalism for example has social objectives attacked by socialist ideas with their own political agenda.
b. A history of ideas
This course is not intended to describe political and social acts. Its principal focus is on the history of ideas and by reading work from a series of writers, students will gradually gain an overview of this development as well as the key doctrines and movements (the 19th century had no great theoretical writers on democracy). The course will also show the conditions which had to exist in order for certain ideas to emerge. Socialism could not be understood without reference to the social question; a generation apart, Hobbes and Locke reveal the profound upheaval in 17th century England, which went from an absolutist and tyrannical regime (seen in the 1651 Leviathan) to a liberal parliamentary monarchy (seen in the 1690 Second treatise of civil government).
c. The issue.
This dual investigation of the history of political and social ideas can be read in Marcel Gauchet's thesis, which reveals a process of disenchantment and detachment from all meta-political and meta-social references. By the 19th century, the foundations, the why (the key issue raised by the contractualists) was no longer in question: instead, it was the how that came under scrutiny, how to manage social and political issues.
2. Chronological approach
The approach here is to examine a limited chronological period, which fits in well with the time constraints imposed by the course itself. The period studied is the early modern period, from the 15th to the 19th century. The contemporary period is dealt with in another course. The topics covered are:

Content and teaching methods

1.Factors in the emergence of modern politics
2.The arrival of secular thinking:
- Marsilius of Padua versus theocracy
- the Reform and the advent of free thinking.
3. Absolutist tradition
- Machiavelli
- Bodin
- Hobbes
4. The democratic and liberal tradition
- Locke
- the human rights revolution
- S. Mill
- economic liberalism
5. Opponents of democratic and liberal tradition
A. The Right
- Montesquieu
- Constant, Bonald and Maistre
- Tocqueville
- The social doctrines of the Counter-Revolution
B. The Left: emergence and development of social ideas
- Rousseau
- Marx
- non-marxist socialist ideas
C. Christian democracy and the Church's "social doctrine".

Other credits in programs

ANTR1PM	Année d'études préparatoires au master en anthropologie	(3 credits)	
ARCH22	Deuxième année du programme conduisant au grade d'ingénieur civil architecte	(3 credits)	
COMU13BA	Troisième année de bachelier en information et communication	(3 credits)	Mandatory
ECGE11BA	Première année de bachelier en sciences économiques et de gestion	(3 credits)	
ETES9CE	Certificat universitaire en éthique économique et sociale	(3 credits)	
GRH1PM	Année d'études préparatoires au master en gestion des ressources humaines	(3 credits)	
HIST13BA	Troisième année de bachelier en histoire	(3 credits)	
HUSO11BA	Première année de bachelier en sciences humaines et sociales	(3 credits)	Mandatory
SOC1PM	Année d'études préparatoires au master en sociologie	(3 credits)	
SOCA11BA	Première année de bachelier en sociologie et anthropologie	(3 credits)	Mandatory
SPED1PM	Année d'études préparatoires au master en sciences de la population et développement	(3 credits)	
SPOL11BA	Première année de bachelier en sciences politiques	(3 credits)	Mandatory
TRAV1PM	Année d'études préparatoires au master en sciences du travail	(3 credits)	