REQUIRED BOOKS

RECOMMENDED
The two quotations that appear at the end of this syllabus.

COURSE OVERVIEW
This course focuses on four seminal 20th century political theorists, who share a common preoccupation with the classics and who, in one way or another, employ the classics in an effort to gain critical perspective on modernity. None of these theorists is unequivocally opposed to modernity, but they are all critical of various aspects or propensities of modern political life. In their efforts to illuminate the problems of modern life, they touch on common themes that will become, for us, topics for reflection and comparison. The themes include (1) an effort to understand liberal education and political education (2) the question of what political philosophy is, (3) an attempt to describe aspects of modernity in terms of intellectual mistakes or vices (e.g., "rationalism," "gnosticism," "historicism," and "emotivism") and (4) an interest in religion and its relationship to philosophy and politics.

GOALS
The goals of the course are for students (1) to see how ancient and medieval texts can be employed to gain perspective on contemporary life; (2) to encounter and appreciate four great contemporary political philosophers and their ideas; (3) to make further
progress in becoming attentive, reflective readers; (4) to acquire the knack of writing about philosophic masterpieces; and (5) to master the art of conversing about serious issues in a calm and sometimes playful way.

ATTENDANCE:
As the fruits of this course come largely by way of classroom conversation, attendance is required. In accordance with Baylor’s policy on attendance, any student who misses more than seven scheduled class meetings will automatically fail the course, regardless of performance. Students who accumulate more than three absences should expect to see their grade for the course substantially affected. I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences, so there is no need to tell me why you were absent or to worry about a doctor’s note.

COURSE STRUCTURE:
The purpose of our class sessions is not to repeat what is in the readings, but to understand the readings more deeply. We shall do this through conversation, and our conversations will only be fruitful if you are prepared to offer insights and appreciate the insights of others. All this presupposes careful reading at home before every class. In fact, the backbone of the course (and the major determinant of your grade) is the time you spend engaged in careful, reflective reading outside of class. There is no substitute for this. If you read consistently and well, you will have no difficulty with (and might even enjoy) the five ways in which your grade will be determined:

A participation grade of 10% will be based on the contributions you make to classroom conversations. “Contributions” refers not only to the frequency with which you speak, but the quality of your reflections as well. It will also be based on attendance, insofar as repeated absences may subtract substantially from this grade.

Quizzes and study questions designed to assist you in reading consistently and well will constitute 20% of the grade.

There will be three papers of 5 pages each, which are designed to prepare you for your final paper and will total 30% of the grade. A final paper of 8-10 pages will be worth 20% of the grade.

Lastly, a final exam will constitute 20% of the grade.

Participation------------------------10%
Quizzes/Study Questions------------20%
Three Short Papers-----------------30%
Final Paper------------------------20%
Final Exam------------------------20%
GRADE SCALE:
100 - 90% = A 79 - 77% = C+
89 - 87% = B+ 76 - 70% = C
86 - 80% = B 69 - 60% = D

requirements of graduate students
If you are taking this course for graduate credit, you will be expected to write a 5-7 page paper every other week on some aspect of the readings for the week. You will also be asked to participate in four extra class sessions over the course of the semester in which we shall discuss each of our four thinkers in greater depth. Dates for the extra sessions will be announced after the first day of class.

------------------------------------------------------------------
COURSE SCHEDULE
------------------------------------------------------------------

I. Michael Oakeshott
T, 1/11 Lee Auspitz, “Michael Joseph Oakeshott (1901-1990)”;
Oakeshott, “Work and Play”
TH, 1/13 (No Class) “Political Education” in RP
T, 1/18 “The Study of Politics in a University” in RP
TH, 1/20 “Political Philosophy” (on blackboard)
T, 1/25 “A Philosophy of Politics” (on blackboard)
TH, 1/27 “On Being Conservative” in RP
T, 2/1 “Rationalism in Politics” in RP
TH, 2/3 “Religion in the World” (on blackboard)
T, 2/8 “The Tower of Babel” in RP
TH, 2/10 **First Paper Due: Oakeshott

II. Leo Strauss
Gregory Bruce Smith, “Who Was Leo Strauss?” (on blackboard)
Leo Strauss, “What is Liberal Education?” (on blackboard)
TH, 2/17 “Exoteric Teaching” (on blackboard)
“On a Forgotten Kind of Writing” in WPPh
T, 2/22 “What is Political Philosophy?” in WPPh
TH, 2/24 “The Three Waves of Modernity” (on blackboard)
T, 3/1 “Progress or Return” (on blackboard)
TH, 3/3 “On Classical Political Philosophy” in WPPh
T, 3/8 “Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections” in S-VCor
TH, 3/10 “Mutual Influence of Theology and Philosophy” in S-VCor
FR, 3/11 **Second Paper Due: Strauss

T, 3/15    SPRING BREAK
TH, 3/17   SPRING BREAK

III. Eric Voegelin
Sandoz, Voegelinian Revolution (excerpts on blackboard)
TH, 3/24   Voegelin, “Remembrance of Things Past” (on blackboard)
          “In Search of the Ground” (on blackboard)
T, 3/29    “Reason: The Classic Experience” (on blackboard)
          “On Classical Studies” (on blackboard)
TH, 3/31   Science, Politics and Gnosticism (excerpts)
T, 4/5     “The Gospel and Culture” in S-VCor
TH, 4/7    Third Paper Due: Voegelin
          Select correspondence between Strauss and Voegelin
          Select secondary essays in S-VCor

IV. Alasdair MacIntyre
T, 4/12    After Virtue
          Ch. 1: “A Disquieting Suggestion” (1-5)
          Ch. 2 “The Nature of Moral Disagreement Today & the Claims of Emotivism” (6-22)

TH, 4/14  DIADELOSO

T, 4/19    After Virtue
          Ch. 4: “The Predecessor Culture and the Enlightenment Project of Justifying Morality” (pp. 36-50)
          Ch. 5: “Why the Enlightenment Project of Justifying Morality had to Fail (pp. 51-61)

TH, 4/21   After Virtue
          Ch. 9: “Nietzsche or Aristotle?” (pp. 109-120)
          Ch. 14: “The Nature of the Virtues” (pp. 181-203)

T, 4/26    After Virtue
          Ch. 15: “The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition” (pp. 204-225)
Ch. 18: “After Virtue: Nietzsche or Aristotle, Trotsky and St. Benedict” (pp. 256-63)

TH, 4/28 Review and Closing Reflections

Final Papers Due at the final exam period.
Two Recommended Quotations:

(1) On reading and reflecting: R. G. Collingwood, "Philosophy as a Branch of Literature"
The reader, on his side, must approach his philosophical author precisely as if he were a poet, in the sense that he must seek in his work the expression of an individual experience, something which the writer has actually lived through, and something which the reader must live through in his turn by entering into the writer’s mind with his own. To the basic and ultimate task of following or understanding his author, coming to see what he means by sharing his experience, the task of criticizing his doctrine, or determining how far it is true and how far false, is altogether secondary. A good reader, like a good listener, must be quiet in order to be attentive; able to refrain from obtruding his own thoughts, the better to apprehend those of the writer; not passive, but using his activity to follow where he is led, not to find a path of his own. A writer who does not deserve this silent, uninterrupting attention does not deserve to be read at all.

In reading poetry this is all we have to do; but in reading philosophy there is something else. Since the philosopher’s experience consisted in, or at least arose out of, the search for truth, we must ourselves be engaged in that search if we are to share the experience. . . . What we can get by reading any book is conditioned by what we bring to it; and in philosophy no one can get much good by reading the works of a writer whose problems have not already arisen spontaneously in the reader’s mind. Admitted to the intimacy of such a man’s thought, he cannot follow it in its movement, and soon loses sight of it altogether and may fall to condemning it as illogical or unintelligible, when the fault lies neither in the writer’s thought nor in his expression, nor even in the reader’s capacities, but only in the reader’s preparation. If he lays down the book, and comes back to it ripened by several years of philosophical labour, he may find it both intelligible and convincing.

Conversation . . . springs from the movement of present minds disposed to intellectual adventure. Its enemies are the tedious, pertinacious talkers, resisting the flow without being able to give it a fresh direction; those who, like a worn gramophone record, distract the company by the endless repetition of what may have begun by being an observation but, on the third time round, becomes the indecent revelation of an empty mind; the noisy, the quarrelsome, the disputatious, the thrusters, the monopolists and the informers who carry books in their pockets and half-remembered quotations in their heads. Conversation cannot easily survive those who talk to win, who won’t be silent until they are refuted, those who won’t forget or who cannot remember, those who are too lazy to catch what comes their way or who (like men of putty) are too unresponsive to do anything but let it stick.