



Code: GSPS O3/A

Credits: 9

Subject: History of Contemporary Political Thought

Main language of instruction: Italian

Other language of instruction: English

Teaching Staff

Head instructor

Prof. Andrea Di Lorenzo- andrea.dilorenzo@unicusano.it

Prerequisites

There are no mandatory requirements. However, knowledge of the fundamental elements of 20th-century European history and of the basic concepts and categories of Western political thought is desirable to place the contents in their historical context throughout the course.

Introduction

The course in History of Contemporary Political Thought builds upon the tradition of the History of Political Doctrines—understood as the systematic body of reflections, theories, and discourses that have accompanied the development of political institutions, social change, and political language. Specifically, the course focuses on these developments within the historical, political, and social context of the 20th century, bringing out its theoretical and historical peculiarities. Its main goal is to provide conceptual tools to understand the contemporary era, not just as a historical subject, but as a lens for interpreting current political dynamics. It also examines how classical political categories were reshaped by the crises of capitalism and democracy.

Objectives

The course in History of Contemporary Political Thought has the following objectives:

1. To analyze the main categories of contemporary political theory, born as a critical response to the crises and transformations of capitalist and democratic systems.



2. To provide mastery of the fundamental political lexicon necessary to decipher the dynamics, tensions, and dilemmas that characterize our present, with particular attention to the debate on democracy and capitalism.
3. To introduce students to the classics of 20th-century political thought, focusing on their analysis of the internal critical issues of democratic and capitalist systems and their historical context.
4. To provide an interpretative framework for understanding contemporary society, focusing on the dynamics of power, conflicts, and social relations generated by the intertwining of capitalism and democracy.

Competencies:

At the end of the course, the student is expected to have:

- Acquired the fundamental concepts and lines of thought of 20th-century Western political and social theory, placing them in their historical context;
- Developed the ability to critically navigate the debates that defined the century, recognizing their influence and relevance in the contemporary political and cultural landscape;
- Developed the ability to use the theoretical tools acquired to critically analyze major political and social issues, both national and international, reading the present through the lens of the 20th-century debates that generated them;
- Developed the ability to formulate informed and critical judgments on the political theories of the 20th-century Western tradition;
- Acquired a solid foundation of transferable skills and autonomous learning abilities, applicable in professional paths related to the analysis and management of political and social processes;
- Developed the ability to clearly present and critically analyze the central themes of 20th-century political and social thought, mastering its specific lexicon both in an oral exam and in a brief written test.

Syllabus

Programme:

Topic 1. The Crisis of Modernity: Capitalisms and Democracies on the Threshold of the New Century

Topic 2. Between WWI and WWII: Totalitarianisms, Democracies, and Pathologies of Modern Reason

Topic 3. Anatomy of Power in Contemporary Society: Democracy, Capitalism, and the Crisis of Ideologies

Evaluation system and criteria

The exam consists of an oral and/or written test aimed at assessing the ability to analyze and reinterpret the concepts acquired during the course in virtual classrooms. In this way, the expected learning outcomes are evaluated with regard to knowledge of the subject, the ability to apply it, communication skills, the ability to draw conclusions, and self-learning skills.

The final exam can be taken orally or in written form at the Rome campus, upon prior reservation by the student.

The oral exam consists of an interview to ascertain the student's level of preparation. The written exam follows the "3+3" model (3 closed-ended questions and 3 open-ended questions):

- The 3 closed-ended questions, relating to different contents of the exam syllabus, are worth 2 points for each correct answer;
- The 3 open-ended questions are assigned a maximum score of 8 points each, based on the instructor's assessment of the expected learning outcomes.

Bibliography and resources

1. Materials to consult:

- Haddock, B., *A History of Political Thought: 1789 to the Present*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2005 (from Chapter 5 to Chapter 10).
- Delanty, G., Turner, S., *Routledge International Handbook of Contemporary Social and Political Theory*, Routledge, USA, 2011 (pp. 99-159; 215-225).
- Cadeddu, D., *Trusting the Process: Current Fashions in History of Political Thought*, in «Scienza e Politica», vol. XXXV, no. 68, 2023, pp. 239-250. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1825-9618/18143>

2. Recommended bibliography:

- Marcuse, H., *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1991.
- Foucault, M., *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Penguin Classics, London, 2020.



- Dunn, J., *The History of Political Theory and Other Essay*, Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Fisher, M., *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Zer0 Books, UK, 2022.
- Fraser, N., Jaeggi, R., *Capitalism. A conversation in Critical Theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2018.