

Part IIA Paper 5(a) Analysis of Politics
Human, Social and Political Sciences Tripos – Part I Paper POL1
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Aims and objectives

To provide a structured introduction to some of the central concepts and arguments of modern politics; to consider sixteen central political themes and ideas through particular texts and to understand their implications for understanding the practical politics of the modern world; to encourage students to see the continuing dependence of many aspects of modern political life on conceptions shaped in the European and American pasts; to teach students to read texts carefully, to engage with detail, and to reflect upon the construction of arguments; to introduce students to constructing their own arguments in politics; and to prepare students who choose Politics and International Relations for Part II for the papers in Part IIA.

Course Content

The modern state is the predominant basis on which political authority and power are constructed across the world today. Where there is no modern state, there tends to be civil war or occupation by other states. Where modern states are ineffective, politics is unstable and sometimes violent, and governments struggle to manage the economy. The first section of this paper looks at the origins of the modern state, the arguments that were first used to justify it, and the dangers and dilemmas that the power of the modern state created in politics.

Within modern states, representative democracy has become the predominant form of government in the world. It excites because it appears to offer equality, liberty and self-rule, but it also frequently disappoints in practice as it rarely does realise these values and the goods it promises frequently clash with each other. The second section of the paper looks at the origins of representative democracy in the United States, the paradoxes of representative democracy as a form of government that rhetorically invokes the 'rule of the people', the apparent historical success of representative democracy, and its relationship to the conditions of material prosperity and the distribution of wealth.

The final section of the paper examines the coherence and persuasiveness of critiques of the modern state and representative democracy and the nature of disagreement in politics. It considers the critique made by Marx of the democratic modern state as the capitalist state, Gandhi's rejection of violence and alienated sovereignty, and Nietzsche's assault on the moral civilization that had produced democratic ideas and the subjugation of the individual reach for greatness. It concludes by contemplating the nature of political disagreement itself in relation to human psychology.

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Modes of teaching

The paper is taught by lectures, supervisions and classes. There are classes in the Easter Term to help students to see the connections between the different ideas and arguments examined in the paper. The classes run for two weeks. Students will be divided into four groups.

Director of Studies will organise supervisions. The paper organiser will provide a list of supervisors for them to use.

Mode of assessment

The exam paper is divided into **three** sections. Candidates must answer three questions taking them from at least two sections.

Supervision essays

Students should write six essays for this paper, spreading them across at least two sections of the paper.

CAMTOOLS for the paper

Handouts for lectures will be placed on CAMTOOLS in the PPS-PtI section after lectures. Most of the individual chapters and articles listed in the reading below will be scanned and can be accessed through the Library CamTools portal. Please note that this is **not** the same as the separate Part I portal on CamTools. Instead it is accessed:

CamTools > SPS Library > Files (on the left bar) > Part I papers > Paper 1

If you do not have the SPS Library option on your front page, or if you notice that any of the scanned reading items have missing components, please do contact the library directly, via:

http://www.hsps.cam.ac.uk/sps-library/lib_about_contact.html

Readings

Bernard Crick, *Democracy: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

John Dunn, *Western political theory in the face of the future*, revised edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Raymond Geuss, *History and illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

David Runciman, *The politics of good intentions: history, fear and hypocrisy in the new world order*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006)

Monica Brito Vieira and David Runciman, *Representation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008).

Bernard Williams, 'Realism and moralism in political theory' in Bernard Williams (ed. Geoffrey Hawthorn), *In the beginning was the deed* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005), pp. 18-28.

For further information, please contact enquiries@hsps.cam.ac.uk or visit

<http://mws.hsps.cam.ac.uk/pps/current/undergraduate/>.