

PSCI 3320 (Lowe) – Midterm Paper (Due 24 March, 2015)

Instructions:

Pick one of the following questions and write a 4–6 page paper in response. You are also welcome to write on a topic of your choosing, but must discuss this topic with me prior to Spring Break. Please turn in a hard copy at the start of class *and* submit an electronic version through turnitin.com. (You may submit your papers to me via email in lieu of turning in a hard copy, but I need to have these by the beginning of class.) See the syllabus for the relevant turnitin.com information. Your paper will be considered on time as long as you turn in the hard copy at the start of class. For no reason should you skip class or be late to

submit a copy to turnitin.com. No paper grade will be released, however, until it is submitted to turnitin.com.

Requirements: *Staple* your papers. Each paper must have an *original title*; "midterm" is insufficient. Papers should be double spaced with 1-inch margins. Use 12 point and either Arial, Times New Roman, or Garamond font. *Number pages*. You may complete a paragraph on a seventh page, but do not start a new one.

Paper extensions will not be granted except for extenuating circumstances. In order to receive such an extension, you must request permission in writing at least two days before the due date. Grades on late papers will be reduced as indicated on the syllabus.

Papers should be argumentative essays, not summaries. Your task is to stake out a clear position with your thesis statement and then to

support that claim with evidence from the text. You should always *explain quotations* in order to demonstrate the point you are making by calling on them. You may cite quotations parenthetically by page number in our edition. A bibliography is unnecessary; simply use NO, GI, or NA before the page number where appropriate. This additional notation need only be used the first time unless you are using multiple sources, in which case you should employ it in all parenthetical citations.

In all things, remember that your first task is to ANSWER THE QUESTION

1. Many who consider themselves Realists root their theory in the notion that we should act in accordance with how things are and not how they *ought* to be. Machiavelli's *Prince* (esp. chapter

15) and Hobbes's *Leviathan* furnish a good part of the theoretical arguments which undergird realist thinking. But is Hobbes really that much of a realist? Does he not also – as he accuses Plato of doing – take sides with the *ideal* over the real? Argue whether or not Hobbes, in *Leviathan*, deals with human beings *as they are by nature* or if he imports an idealist reading of human nature into his philosophy. (If he is an idealist, it is certainly an idealism that is different – *lower* – than that of which he accuses Plato, but if this lower standard is how men *ought* to be rather than how they *are*, “idealism” would still apply.) If he is fundamentally an idealist, indicate the extent to which his idealism is practicable (able to be put into action) compared to theories that say men *ought* to be virtuous and self-denying for the sake of The Good and not merely *their own* good.

You may find it helpful to consider: the need for educational reform in the universities directed at teaching the principles of human beings he outlines in *Leviathan* and whether or not human beings are *actually* capable of the rational selfishness which Hobbes declares as the guiding force of human action, or whether human beings are actually much more *irrational* than Hobbes suggests. (Consider also in this context, perhaps, Lincoln's plea for rule by "Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason." (Lyceum Address January 27, 1838)).

1. The dedicatory letter that introduces *Leviathan* indicates that Hobbes wishes to walk a fine line between, on the one hand, those who are too ardent in their defense of liberty and, on the other, those advocates of despotism and authority. In other words, his claim is that *Leviathan*, his treatise on Commonwealth* strikes a balance between liberty and authority. To what

extent do you think Hobbes has struck this balance? Does he favor one over the other – authority over liberty, liberty over authority? For what reason? If he has struck a balance of sorts, how are liberty and authority related for Hobbes?

You may find it useful to consider: the rational considerations required for keeping one's promises, the relative influence of fear and/or desire in determining one's end or goal, and the tradeoff(s) between the natural and the civil state of man.

1. Hobbes famously states that human beings are all equal by nature. He rejects that this equality ought to be construed in terms of strength or intelligence (both of which are demonstrably false) and, instead, initially states that all are equal in their ability to suffer a violent death at the hands of another. In terms of capacity, Hobbes offers as evidence

of equality the "argument" that all are satisfied with their lot. Eventually, he says that *if* men are equal, it should be recognized in the contractual governing relationship and *if they are not* then we ought to act as though they are since those who are of the opinion that they are equals will not consent to governance under any other circumstances. Does Hobbes, then, actually think that human beings are equal? If so, to what extent and in what sense are they equal? If not, how does he account for those who are of the opinion that they are *not* equal and must act as though they are in order to enter into a governing contract? Does he expect them to *actually* act as equals, or does his theory of government somehow offer a place for these "elitists" while also controlling the harm that they can do to the broader population?

You may wish to consider whether or not Hobbes thinks that all are equally *capable* of governing

well or merely that all are equally capable of *consenting* to government (or recognizing that a government as such is necessary if not sufficient), and whether or not he understands his prohibition against revolution to be binding in the sense that a thorough education in Hobbesian political science will prevent entirely future discord.