

## Dissident Political Thought

Professor Flagg Taylor  
GO 323, Fall 2019  
Ladd 306A, x5244  
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Office Hours: M/W 1:00-3:00

### Course Description:

We will examine the writings of some of the key figures in twentieth century political thought. Our attention will be primarily directed to their reflections on the nature of “ideological tyranny” or “totalitarianism” and its effects on the human personality and human relations. This theme will provide an avenue into more general themes that resonate throughout a broad tradition in political philosophy: the questions of justice, tyranny, and political responsibility.

### Required Texts:

*The Great Lie*, F. Flagg Taylor IV ed. (ISI Books: 1-935191-36-5)  
*The Captive Mind*, Czeslaw Milosz (Vintage: 0-679-72856-2)  
*The Solzhenitsyn Reader*, Edward Ericson & Daniel Mahoney eds. (ISI Books: 978-1935191551)  
*The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Signet Classic: 0-451-52710-0)  
*Darkness at Noon*, Arthur Koestler  
*The Vaněk Plays*, Václav Havel (Theater 61 Press: 978-0-9770197-7-9)  
*Waiting for the Dark, Waiting for the Light*, Ivan Klíma (Grove Press: 978-0802142436)

Note: All other required readings will be in a reading packet or on Blackboard.

### Course Outline:

Sept. 5 Introduction: What is totalitarianism? Intro. to *The Great Lie*

#### I. Foundations of Ideological Tyranny

- 10 Francois Furet, *The Passing of an Illusion*, ch. 1  
*The Communist Manifesto* (pts. I & II); Intro. by M. Malia
- 12 Lenin, excerpts from *The State and Revolution*, “Fright at the Fall...”, and “How to Organize Competition”  
Leszek Kolakowski, “The Fortunes of Leninism” from *Main Currents of Marxism* (I have included the whole chapter, but sections 4, 5, 6, and 8 are required, the rest is optional)
- 17 Stalin, “The Year of Great Change”; Decree on the Liquidation of the Kulaks as a Class; Memoranda on Counterrevolutionary Attitudes of Students and Teachers  
Kolakowski, “The Marxist Roots of Stalinism” (ch. 10 of *TGL*)

## II. The Seduction

19 Arthur Koestler, "The God that Failed"

24 *Darkness at Noon*

26 *Darkness at Noon*

Oct. 1 Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (chs. 1,3)

**MOVIE NIGHT: WED. OCT 2, KATYN (Library 129, 8pm)**

3 *TCM* (chs. 4-5, 8)

## III. Humanity on Trial

8 Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, in *TSR*, pp. 216-253

10 Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag*, in *TSR*, pp. 253-307

15 Solzhenitsyn, "Our Muzzled Freedom" (ch. 9 of *The Great Lie*)  
Hannah Arendt, "Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government" (ch. 8 of *The Great Lie*)

## IV. Living in Truth

17 Václav Havel, "Dear Dr. Husák"

22 Jan Patočka, "The Spiritual Person and the Intellectual"  
Charter 77 Declaration  
Patočka, "What Charter 77 is and what it is not" (ch. 26 of *TGL*)

**\*\*NO CLASS THURSDAY, OCT. 24\*\***

29 Václav Benda, "The Parallel Polis" (ch. 27 of *TGL*)  
Martin Palouš, "Jan Patočka vs. Václav Benda" (ch. 30 of *TGL*)

31 Havel, "The Power of the Powerless" (chs. 3 and 28 of *TGL*)

Nov. 5 Havel, The Vaněk plays: *Audience*, *The Unveiling*

**MOVIE NIGHT: WED. NOV. 6, THE LIVES OF OTHERS (Library 129, 8pm)**

7 Havel, *Protest*

12 Ivan Klíma, *Waiting for the Dark*, *Waiting for the Light*

14 Klíma, *Waiting*

19 Klíma, *Waiting*

## V. Civilizational Crisis

21 Havel, "Politics and Conscience" (ch. 17 of *TGL*)

26 Leo Strauss, "German Nihilism" (ch. 13 of *TGL*)

**\*\*NO CLASS THURSDAY, NOV. 28 (THANKSGIVING BREAK)\*\***

## VI. The Legacy and Future of Totalitarianism

Dec. 3 Alain Besançon, "Moral Destruction" (ch. 33 of *TGL*)

5 TBA

10 TBA

**Final Exam: Wednesday, Dec. 18, 1:30-4:30**

### Course Requirements:

Class Participation, 5%

Essay #1 (5-6 pages), 30%

Essay #2 (5-6 pages), 35%

Final Exam, 30%

### *Essays:*

These are formal essays where you are expected to have an identifiable thesis with arguments to support it. They should demonstrate a command of the text at hand, and a thoughtfulness about the claims made therein. I will hand out topics approximately two weeks before the essays are due.

### *Final Exam:*

This will be a comprehensive, essay exam taken during the exam period.

### *General Expectations:*

**You are expected to read the assignments carefully and reflectively, remaining open to the possibility that what you are reading is right.** Your first duty as an attentive reader is to understand what is being said. This means grasping the argument of the author—identifying central claims and seeing how these claims are supported. When you encounter something you strongly disagree with, make sure you first understand the argument. You are expected to give reasons for your opinions.

You will be attentive in class and always display the demeanor of one who is interested in the material and respectful of others. You will take your share of responsibility for the quality of class time, coming prepared to discuss the assignments thoughtfully.

**No laptops are permitted in class unless you have a medical problem that prevents you from taking notes by hand. Cell phones are prohibited.**

