

LECTURE / DISCUSSION / DEBATE
LIBERALISM AND KANT

Terms and concepts to know:

Hobbes and Locke	“State of nature”
<i>Leviathan</i> and <i>Second Treatise</i> ...	The “social contract”
Voltaire / Montesquieu / Rousseau	Natural law (English and French)
Bentham and “utilitarianism”	“Bureaucratic expert”
Adam Smith / <i>Wealth of Nations</i>	Laissez-faire
Utilitarianists v. deontologists	Rawls / <i>Theory of Justice</i>
Neoliberalism	Kant

Study and discussion questions:

1. Discuss the differences between Hobbes’ and Locke’s views of the “state of nature.” Whom do you think gave the more correct interpretation?
2. Discuss the notion of a social contract. Do you agree with Locke that people have the right to replace a government that they do not approve of?
3. Discuss Paul Street’s article and expand on whether you agree with his notion that blaming Trump for everything is “lazy” thinking on liberals part and whether that might just propel him into second term in the upcoming election.
4. Discuss Bentham and “utilitarianism,” or the idea that the value of an action can be measured by its utility to individuals. Are there problems with using the concept of “the greatest pleasure for the greatest number” as a measure of what constitutes “good” policy?
5. Discuss Adam Smith’s theories on laissez-faire and the “invisible hand.” Is individual activity (without government control) the best vehicle for promoting human progress?
6. Examine the utilitarian v. deontological argument. Should values be based on their utility to humans or do values “transcend” individuals?
7. Discuss Rawl’s theory of justice and his notion that “individual or group self-interest cannot be allowed to determine the allocation of benefits.”
8. Discuss at length Kant’s liberal philosophy: “transcendental idealism” (114); determinism v. free will (114); Decartian dualism (114); do we “know” to postpone satisfaction of immediate desires in the interest of longer-term goals (122); how can people acquire the motivation to do the right thing (122); nature v. nurture (124); and his “three questions:” What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope?

Readings:

Heineman. *Political Science*, Chapter 4.
Stevenson. *Twelve Theories of Human Nature*, Chapter 8.

Video: *Surviving Progress*.