What holds a society together? This course will explore one influential answer to this foundational question within philosophy and social theory, namely social contract theory as it developed within early modern European political philosophy. Modern assumptions about the relationship between individual and society, private property and ownership, rationality, economics and the market, and rights and responsibilities of citizenship have all been shaped by social contract theory. But, even though this theory has enjoyed great influence, it has been severely criticized as unrealistic and biased towards individualism and property holders. We will read the foundational social contract works in this course and try to understand their assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses.

Learning Goals:
1. Students will gain an introductory knowledge of the methods, assumptions, and results of the classic social contract authors. Students will be able to discuss the classic social contract authors' results and assumptions in comparison. Finally, students will learn the theoretical limitations of the social contract method and its assumptions
2. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the methods, assumptions, and results of the classic social contract authors in discussions and in writing assignments.

Required Readings*


*Note: All texts have been ordered at the New York University bookstore. Students should use the editions cited above.

Course Requirements:
1) Attendance: Attendance is mandatory.
2) Papers: Your written work should be a genuine attempt to fulfill the paper topics. If I find your paper not to be a genuine attempt I will tell you. All papers must be handed in. No late papers are accepted. There are no extensions for papers. Papers must be typed and double-spaced. See paper requirement options below.
3) Class Participation: This class is a seminar so regular participation is required. A seminar class won’t work if you don’t participate in discussions. Each day of class students will come prepared to discuss the text assigned to be read by that day.
4) Being prepared to discuss the text entails bringing questions about the text to class. Students are required to bring two questions to class every day. These questions are to be written down and handed in at the beginning of class.

Grade Breakdown:
Class participation: 25%
Paper grades: 75%

Paper Requirement
There are two options that fulfill the paper requirement. You can choose either one.

Paper requirement option A: one term paper
Requirement A is a 5000-word term paper on a topic of your choice relevant to the course. All papers must be handed in by Noon on Monday, December 19. Papers are due by email. A 300-word description of your topic is due no later than Saturday, November 12. Please send your topic descriptions to my email address.
Paper requirement option B: four papers
Requirement B is four papers each 1250-words in length.
Paper 1 is due on Saturday, October 8, by noon. Papers are due by email.
Paper 2 is due on Saturday, October 29, by noon. Papers are due by email.
Paper 3 is due on Saturday, November 19, by noon. Papers are due by email.
Paper 4 is due on Monday, December 19, by noon. Papers are due by email.

Topics for paper 1 requirement B
Select one:
1. Discuss Hobbes' conception of human nature. Argue for or against his conception
2. Discuss Hobbes' conception of justice. Argue for or against the use of his conception in political philosophy.
3. Discuss Hobbes' argument for the formation of states. In light of what we know today, does his argument make sense?
5. Argue whether or not Hobbes provides a theory of political revolution.

Topics for paper 2 requirement B
Select one:
1. Discuss the different theories of state formation and/or human nature in Hobbes' The Citizen and Locke's Second Treatise. Argue why one of their theories concerning state formation and/or human nature is superior or inferior to the other.
2. Discuss the capacity for democratic political arrangements in Hobbes' The Citizen and Locke's Second Treatise. Is it possible to derive an argument for democracy from either of their writings?
3. Discuss Locke's theory of property. Argue for or against his theory. Or argue if his theory of property can be applied to problems of environmental crisis.
4. Argue whether or not Locke provides a theory of political revolution.

Topics for paper 3 requirement B
Select one:
1. Discuss Locke's and Rousseau's theories of property. Argue why one of their theories of property is superior to the other.
2. Discuss Rousseau's and Hobbes' or Locke's theories of state formation. Do either of their theories on state formation assist us in evaluating our political world?
3. Argue whether or not Rousseau provides a theory of revolution.
4. Discuss Rousseau's and Hobbes' or Locke's theories of human nature. Argue why one of their theories of human nature is superior or inferior to the other.

Topics for paper 4 requirement B
Select one:
1. Discuss Kant's theory of justice with any other author read in this course. Which author offers a superior means of analyzing our political world?
2. Is Kant's kingdom of ends a social contract theory?
3. Discuss Mill's On Liberty and any other author in this course. Which author offers a more democratic vision of statecraft?
4. Discuss Marx's theory of history materialism and a social contract theory of Hobbes, Locke, or Rousseau. Does Marx or the social contract theorists provide a better account of state theory?

Gallatin Statement on Academic Integrity:
"As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating."
The above statement and additional information can be found at the following link:
http://gallatin.nyu.edu/gateways/faculty/plagiarism.html

Schedule of Readings:
9/9, First day of class, read Hobbes The Citizen: pp. 89-106, chapters I, II, and III
9/16, Hobbes The Citizen: chapters IV, V, VI, and VII
9/30, Hobbes The Citizen: chapters XIV and XV
10/7, Locke Second Treatise of Government: chapters I to IX
10/14, Locke Second Treatise of Government: chapters X to XIX
10/21, Locke A Letter Concerning Tolerance
10/28, Rousseau Discourse on The Origin of Inequality

11/4, Rousseau Social Contract: Books I and II
11/11, Rousseau Social Contract: Books III and IV
11/18, Mill On Liberty
11/25, no class
12/2, Kant Grounding: pages 1-67
12/9, Kant Grounding: pages 1-67
12/16, Marx and Engels: pages 3 to 6, 146 to 163, 222-223, 473 to 491, and 525 to 532