

Camil Parvu, University of Bucharest - Istanbul AFP Presentation

PRESENTATION for the Cross-Regional Discipline Meeting of AFP Fellows

Political Science and International Relations

24-25 March, 2007 – Istanbul

Political Philosophy- 3rd year course, English/Romanian section*

Short description:

This course is organized around the examination of a number of key political concepts such as political justification, freedom, equality, justice, rights, and citizenship, and intends to facilitate through an analysis of selected major works in contemporary political theory an in-depth understanding of basic problems and interrogations concerning the nature of politics.

Students will be introduced to the conceptions of contemporary political philosophers such as Juergen Habermas, John Rawls, Michael Walzer, Will Kymlicka or Charles Taylor. Major contemporary political theories (liberalism, republicanism, multiculturalism etc.) are analyzed and compared.

The seminar readings survey some important controversies and debates among such authors, and students are required to contribute with their analyses of the conceptual issues involved.

Challenges:

1. Availability of readings: the need to offer the relevant materials in English as hard-copies, some are available in electronic format;
2. The issue of translation in Romanian: there are few available translations in Romanian of the materials; if/when the course will be transferred to 2nd year Romanian section, this will represent a real challenge;
3. The consistency of teaching process across sections: cooperation with colleagues on this coherency objective; a faculty priority;
4. The literature is mostly Anglo-Saxon, but there is an obvious need to include writings also from other continental traditions – and this also for consistency with other sections reasons: the Romanian and French sections tend also to emphasize the respective

literatures; in addition, in contemporary political philosophy there is a significant separation between analytical and continental styles in political philosophy;

5. Continuity with other courses: some this course was not introductory in previous years, so it had prerequisite courses – while this may not be the case anymore; the most related course is that of History of Political Thought, and this connection needs to be strengthened; the relationship with other course also needs attention;
6. Perspectives for further study in faculty: what other courses are anticipated/from undergraduate formation to MA program. Ex: Multiculturalism, Citizenship, European Green Movements;
7. Is it a “too theoretical” approach? – the students need to have an interest in theoretical issues and also acquire the capacity to abstract from daily political discussions some key analytical dimensions;
8. Romanian issues: are Romanian or east-European contexts taken into account? Should they be taken into account?
9. Political philosophy, practical political philosophy, history of ideas, moral philosophy – what is the disciplinary status of political theory within political science, and what it is not.
10. Content issues: the main western political philosophies are treated (liberalism, republicanism, Marxism, Conservatism, Green political philosophies, Feminism, multiculturalism), - yet lack of post communist normative approaches; some discussions on dimensions of justice – transitional, distributive, corrective, restitutive justice;
11. * The problem of transferring the course from 4th to the 3rd and now to the 2nd year (1st semester): a quite significant transition that necessitates serious adaptation and correlation with the other sections for faculty consistency;
12. The problem of delivering the course to the Romanian section: all the above dilemmas are even more stringent, from availability of texts in Romanian and the potential inequalities among students from different sections to the relevance of Romanian and east-European experiences for the content of the course;
13. The problem of examination, written/oral and the new university regulations: the main examination methods, beyond term papers and active seminar participation monitoring, are the final oral/written examinations. The number of students (different from one section to another and from one year to another) affects this choice; but the new university regulations make very expensive the oral examination – so the importance of the written examination is much greater.