

HERTOG 2018 POLITICAL STUDIES PROGRAM

WHAT IS LIBERAL EDUCATION?

Peter Berkowitz, senior fellow, Hoover Institution, Stanford University

In this opening week, led by Hertog Political Studies Program Dean Peter Berkowitz, students will explore what liberal education is and why it is necessary for a free society. Among the questions students will discuss include: Why is a liberal education necessary? What are the benefits of liberal education? What is the relationship between the cultivation of moral virtue and liberal education? Why should the study of classical authors be emphasized in an age of scientific progress? Is increasing specialization helpful or harmful to the progress of civilization? What are the tensions inherent in liberal education, and how might they be resolved?

Resources

To learn more about the ideas and figures discussed in this course, we encourage you to explore a project supported by the Hertog Foundation: **The Great Thinkers** (<http://thegreatthinkers.org/>) and **Contemporary Thinkers** (<http://contemporarythinkers.org/>) websites. These sites are aimed at introducing important thinkers in Western thought, with a particular emphasis on politics and philosophy.

Monday, June 18, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon

The Crisis of Liberal Education

Readings:

- William F. Buckley, *God and Man at Yale*, Author's Preface
- Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, Author's Preface, Introduction
- Alan Charles Kors and Harvey Silverglate, *The Shadow University*, Introduction, Chs. 1 and 5

Questions:

1. What, according to Buckley, is the purpose of college education?
2. What, according to Bloom, is the aim of liberal education?
3. What, for Bloom, is the connection between "openness," moral relativism, and freedom?
4. How, according to Bloom, do they conspire to undermine liberal education?
5. What, according to Kors and Silverglate, is political correctness, and how does it subvert liberal education?

Tuesday, June 19, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon

The Foundations of Liberal Education, Part I

Readings:

- Plato, *The Apology*, in *Four Texts on Socrates*, trans. West and West

Questions:

1. What are “the first false charges” against Socrates? What are “the later charges”? How successful are Socrates’ refutations?
2. Socrates mentions the virtues of citizens and human beings (20b). In what ways are those virtues similar? How might they differ?
3. How is Socrates’ determination to investigate the oracle’s pronouncement that “no one was wiser” an act of piety? How is it an act of impiety?
4. Is Athens’ failure to protect Socrates’ freedom to philosophize a failure of democracy? An authentic expression of democracy? Both? Neither?
5. In what ways is Socratic wisdom humble? In what ways is it boastful? In what ways can it nourish the laws and politics? In what ways does it threaten the city?

Wednesday, June 20, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon

The Foundations of Liberal Education, Part II

Readings:

- J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 2, “Liberty of Thought and Discussion”

Questions:

1. What are the costs of silencing wrong opinions?
2. What lessons does Mill draw from the lives of Socrates, Jesus, and Marcus Aurelius?
3. How, according to Mill, can progress in knowledge impair understanding? How can Plato’s dialogues be helpful?
4. What contributions do “a party of order or stability, and “a party of progress or reform” make to a healthy politics and to liberty of thought and discussion?
5. What is “the real morality of public discussion” (last sentence of Chap. 2) and how might it be cultivated consistent with the principles of freedom?

Thursday, June 21, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon

Freedom of Speech & the Curriculum

Readings:

- J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 2, “Liberty of Thought and Discussion”

Questions:

See previous day’s questions.

Friday, June 22, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon

Liberal Education & the University

Readings:

- J. S. Mill, “Inaugural Address: Delivered to the University of St. Andrews, Feb. 1, 1867,”
University of St. Andrews

Questions:

1. How does liberal education differ from professional education?
2. What distinctive contributions, according to Mill, does study of the classics make to a liberal education?
3. Why is study of political economy, jurisprudence, and international law essential?
4. Where does study of morals, politics, and religion fit in? How is the goal attained?
5. How does the study of literature and art— that is, “the education of the feelings and the cultivation of the beautiful”—complete liberal education?