

Summer Courses, Summer 2018
BURKE & ANGLO-AMERICAN CONSERVATISM
Instructor: Yoram Hazony
Washington, DC

During this week, students will explore the Anglo-American conservative political tradition through the writings of Edmund Burke (1729–1797). Like classical liberalism, this tradition favors individual liberty and economic freedom. But unlike classical liberalism, it is empiricist and regards successful political arrangements as developing through an unceasing process of trial and error. As such, it is deeply skeptical of claims about universal political truths.

Students will consider the historical and philosophical differences between these two major political traditions, conservative and liberal. They will explore the emergence of Anglo-American conservatism and its conflict with liberalism, as a basis for drawing some political distinctions that will be highly relevant for our own political context.

Books:

- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), J.G.A. Pocock, ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987)
- Course Reader

Monday, July 2, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon Introduction

Readings:

- Ofir Haiyry and Yoram Hazony, “What Is Conservatism?” *American Affairs* (Summer 2017)
- Russell Kirk, “Edmund Burke and the Chartered Rights of Englishmen,” in *Rights and Duties: Reflections on Our Conservative Constitution* (Dallas: Spence, 1997), pp. 110–25
- John Fortescue, *In Praise of the Laws of England* (1470) in Shelley Lockwood, ed., *On the Laws and Governance of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 3–80

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the Anglo-American conservative tradition? When did this tradition begin? What are its main principles?
2. How did Anglo-American conservatism come into conflict with classical (or Lockean) liberalism?
3. According to the Anglo-American tradition, how do political communities come to be? What holds them together?
4. Why, according to Fortescue, is the English constitution the best model of political government?

5. What is the basis of the rights and liberties of Englishmen? Of Americans?
6. How liberal is the American regime? How conservative?

Tuesday, July 3, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon Session 2

Readings:

- John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), Peter Laslett, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 267–78
- Richard Price, “A Discourse on the Love of Our Country,” (1789), concluding paragraphs, pp. 195–96
- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), J.G.A. Pocock, ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 3–76

Discussion Questions:

1. Why does Locke discuss Adam?
2. What is political power according to Locke?
3. Describe the state of nature. What does it teach about human nature? About government?
4. Compare *Reflections* to Burke’s *Second Treatise*. How does Burke’s form, method, and argument compare?
5. Burke wrote *Reflections* in part as a response to Richard Price’s “Discourse” written in support of the French Revolution. What is it about Price’s views that so outrages Burke?
6. How does Burke respond to the purported “three rights” that the English acquired during the Glorious Revolution? Is this a veiled critique of Locke?
7. What is wrong with the philosophy of the revolutionaries and what bad consequences, according to Burke, will flow from their errors?
8. What does he mean when he says that the British system follows “nature” (p. 30)?
9. Why does Burke argue against a government founded on “natural rights” (pp. 51–52)? He claims to support “real” rights and liberty. What does he mean? What are the foundations of British rights and liberties?

Wednesday, July 4, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon Session 3

Readings:

- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 76–174

Discussion Questions:

1. What distinction does Burke make between a “true moral equality” and a “leveling” type of equality (pp. 32, 134)?

2. Burke prefers prudence to reason. What is the difference between the two? Why does Burke prefer prudence?
3. Can prejudice be good? Under what circumstances?
4. What is the meaning of the statement that citizens of any commonwealth are really only “temporary possessors and life-renters” of their commonwealth (p. 83)?
5. According to Burke, governmental power is not enough to stabilize society. How do property, religion, and prejudice help governmental power to stabilize society?
6. Is politics an art (a matter of practical know-how) or a science (a matter of theoretical knowledge)?
7. Is Burke opposed to all social and political change? Under what circumstances, if any, is revolution justified?

Thursday, July 5, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon Session 4

Readings:

- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 174–218
- Edmund Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791), in Daniel Ritchie, ed., *Further Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1992), pp. 73–119

Discussion Questions:

See previous day’s questions.

Friday, July 6, 2018

9:00 a.m. to Noon Session 5

Readings:

- Edmund Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, pp. 119–201

Discussion Questions:

See previous day’s questions.