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Polsci. 611

Tradition of Political Philosophy

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The American political theorist Mark Lilla (Columbia University) published recently a book-long essay on the state of political philosophy, *The Shipwrecked Mind* (2016), in which he claims that the only theorists who are intellectually still alive, though they have been physically dead for some time, and worthwhile reading today are neither revolutionary nor conservative or do belong to any of the post-modern varieties. He calls them strangely enough 'reactionary' without using the connotation that is conventionally connected with this term. The main characteristic that connects them is that they stayed above the ideological battle noise. Since one of them, Eric Voegelin, was my mentor in Munich and instrumental in bringing me to the U.S., I find Lilla's essay a wonderful point of departure for the series of discussions that I would like to conduct in this class.

We will discuss four notions of politics in the Western tradition. (1) Plato's *Republic* (380/370 BCE): It represents the classical understanding of politics, enabling insight into the dynamics of the historical *polis* culture as well as the attempt to counter democratic disintegration by envisioning an alternative paradigm. (2) N. Machiavelli's *Discourses* (1531) and *The Prince* (1532): They present us with a radically new way of seeing politics as being grounded in violence and at the same time longing for a stable constitutional order created and designed by human agency. (3) G. W. F. Hegel's: *Philosophy of Right* (1821): The lectures attempt to integrate the mapping of the capitalist economy, which the Scottish political economists had achieved in the middle of the 18th century, within a state centered structural framework. This Hegelian framework becomes radically challenged by Karl Marx from the 1840s to his death (1883), making him in the 20th century the godfather of global revolutionary politics. (4) Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* (1932): It challenges the basic tenets of liberal constitutional politics manifest in the constitutional order of the German Weimar

Republic (1919-1933) and also in Anglo-American constitutional liberalism. Though Schmitt became the legal scholar par excellence of the Third Reich, his decisionist concept of politics attracted Fascists, Marxists and post-Modernists.

Required Texts:

(Any edition of the following texts is acceptable.)

Mark Lilla, *The Shipwrecked Mind*. New York, NYRB, 2016.

Plato, *The Republic*. Penguin Classics.

N. Machiavelli, *The Prince* and *The Discourses*. Both in Penguin Classics.

G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*. Oxford University Press.

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*. Ed. By G. Schwab with comments by L. Strauss. University of Rutgers Press.