

Law

April 7, 1943

POLITICAL ECONOMY (Mr. Drucker)

Upper Classmen (11 - 1 section)

Program for Spring Term 1943

As decided at the close of the last term we shall concentrate during the coming months on the nature and structure of society and government. Such a study can be started in three ways: with the basic beliefs men have been holding regarding the nature of society and the function and aims of government; with the actual problems of social life which society and government have been asked to master; and with the institutions - ranging from the family to the international gold-standard or the proposed world-court - by means of which societies have been trying to organize reality and to solve actual problems according to their beliefs and aims.

We shall go the first way - if only because our time demands, above all, clear beliefs and true values. But we shall not be satisfied with the purely historical or purely philosophical study of principles and theories. We will also try to learn how to apply basic concepts, beliefs and values to concrete problems. At the same time the members of the group will be given an opportunity to do a larger piece of work on their own.

FIRST: we shall start with a general discussion in class on what in the opinion of its members are the most urgent domestic problems in war and post-war society. Each student will be asked to write during the first two weeks of the term a very short paper on what she considers the most important problem, what her reasons are and what in her opinion could or should be done. It is expected that a discussion of these papers and their ideas will lead to a discussion of basic principles and fundamental aims of society.

SECOND: while this discussion is in progress the students will prepare reports to be read in class, on the eight basic texts in political theory given below. Each report will be the responsibility of a group of two or three girls - according to the size of the class - to whom one book out of the eight will be assigned. In addition each group will act as co-reporter on the book discussed at the class-session following that in which they gave their own report. Each student will thus have to read a total of two books - the one on which her group reports, and the one on which she is a co-reporter; and each student will have to do collateral reading, research and thinking for these two books.

The eight texts are:

PLATO Republic, Book II, Chapter 11 to Book IX, Chapter 3; Book X
ST. AUGUSTINE The City of God, Book 19 (Book 15 in the Temple Classics
DALY De Monarchia, Books I and III condensation)
HOBBS Leviathan, Part II
LOCKE Second Treatise on Government
ROUSSEAU The Social Contract, and The Government of Poland
THE FEDERALIST, Letters 1, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, 28,
31-39, 48, 51, 64, 69, 72, 73, 75, 78, 79, 80, 85
BURKE Reflections on the French Revolution

Students will find it helpful to read the relevant chapter in SABINE, A History of Political Theory before they actually read the books - and after; they also should read carefully the editor's introductions to every book before they read the text.

The reporters will, of course, have to deal with the basic ideas of the books on which they report. They will have to do a good deal of work on the historical background of the books and on the historical evolution of the ideas it propounds. The report will have to focus basic ideas on a concrete problem. Thus - to give a purely hypothetical example - the reporters on Plato's Republic might choose Plato's concept of education as their special subject; they might discuss both our educational system and its philosophy, and the various proposals to use education as a tool of reconstruction in Plato's terms. To give another example - and one more within the reporters' compass - the group working on The Federalist might apply the principle of the separation of powers to a critique of the quasi-judicial administrative agencies of modern government, or they might discuss the extent to which the constitutional provision, requiring the consent of two-thirds of the Senate to all international treaties, has fulfilled the expectation of its authors.

The reporters may work together or separately. They may divide the work between themselves any way they want. They may even dissent in their reports. But they must agree on their subject - and within a fairly short period of time. And on the subject on which they are to be co-reporters they have to accept the decision of the reporters.

As soon as the reporters have read the book assigned to them they are to confer with me on their choice of a subject, on the way to handle it, on collateral reading, etc. Altogether they should work in the closest contact with me; and they will be given every opportunity for individual conferences.

The first report will be due around June 1st.

THIRD: All students are expected to acquire some basic knowledge of the history and development of American government and politics. In addition to the CONSTITUTION all students will therefore read:

THE FEDERALIST, Letters 1, 10, 32, 33, 39, 78, 80, 85

McLAUGHLIN A Constitutional History of the United States

The latter book is to be read in conjunction with the important constitutional documents and Supreme Court Decisions to which it refers. These documents are not only the basic sources without which the development of American government cannot be understood; they, especially the Supreme Court decisions, are also the best illustration how political principles are applied in political practice. Best source-books are:

COLLIER Documents of American History (especially for court decisions and state papers)

COKER Democracy, Liberty and Property (for the original writings of statesmen and political thinkers). I recommend particularly: Book I, Items 7, 8, 11, 12, 20, 21; Book II, Items 3, 9, 11, 13, 19; Book III, Items 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 12; Book IV, Item 2 (all very short)

In the DISSENTING OPINIONS OF MR. JUSTICE HOLMES the student will find American constitutional philosophy in its most highly developed and most articulate form - and it is very good reading too.

Finally each student should read:

DE TOCQUEVILLE, Democracy in America, and some chapters out of BRYCE: The American Commonwealth (which chapters depends on the individual interest of the student on the subject of her report).

Each student should read one good biography of an American political figure - not only because most of the biographies are better than the general histories available, but also because a good biography conveys the clearest picture of political actuality. Which biography each student will choose depends on her interest in a man or in a period; possible choices are: OLIVER, Hamilton; HENRY ADAMS, John Randolph; SCHURZ, Henry Clay; MARQUIS JAMES, Andrew Jackson (Second Volume); HOLST, Calhoun; DODD, Jefferson Davis; BEVINS, Cleveland; CROLY, Mark Hanna; BOLERS, Beveridge; LA FOLLETTE, Autobiography; FARLEY, Behind the Ballots.