POLS-Y 382 Modern Political Thought

History of political thought is traditionally divided into three periods: classical, modern, and contemporary. The goal of this course is to explore the key tenets of modern political thought. Modern political thought spans, roughly, the period from the middle of the European Renaissance to the waning of the nineteenth century. For the purpose of this course, Machiavelli’s *Prince* (written in 1513) will mark the beginning of the modern era in the history of political philosophizing. The death of Nietzsche (1900) will mark its end. Throughout this course, we will journey across four centuries of debates, disputes, and disagreements over forms of political organizations that various thinkers deemed most suitable for our collective survival, progress, and happiness. We will take a closer look at concepts and principles that they advanced to validate their political visions. Questions to be covered will include: What does “politics” mean? What is the relationship between politics and morality? What is the source and what should be the extent of governmental authority? What are the proper aims of the government? How does political change come about? Why and when is it proper (and often necessary) to revolt against the existing political order? Reflecting on these queries has been an important part of our intellectual culture. It should also help us understand political controversies of the present.