ENGLISH / MAFLL 741
Approaching the Modern II: Modernity and Sovereignty

Spring Semester                   Professor Peter Y. Paik
M 5:30-8:10                       Office: 786 Curtin Hall
Curtin 284                        Office Hours: Wednesday 2-3 PM
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Description
The concept of sovereignty refers to the supreme law-making power of a people, a government, a nation, or even an individual. In recent years, with the advent of a seemingly open-ended war on religious extremism and the practice of indefinite detention of enemy combatants, the idea of sovereignty has received renewed and vigorous attention from political theorists. This course will examine the key ideas of the thinkers whose works have been formative in the emergence of modern states and in developing the modern idea of sovereignty, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, Jean Bodin, and Baruch Spinoza. We will explore such topics as the idea of the social contract, the powers of the popular will, the defense of the authoritarian state, the division between private and public spheres, the persistence of theological concepts in modern accounts of sovereignty, the problem of the decision, and states of emergency in which the laws are suspended or dissolved.

Requirements
There will be one short paper (4-6 pages) and a final paper (12-15 pages), in addition to occasional responses to the readings and discussion.

We will begin each class with a brief overview of the reading given by one or more members of the class. This introduction should be no longer than 5-7 minutes, and its aim should be to develop questions for the class to discuss. In addition to formulating questions, you may also select passages from the readings to examine more closely.

D2L
I will e-mail you any changes to the syllabus and schedule of screenings over d2l. Assignments and other relevant materials will also be posted on the site, which you may print out at home or at the library.

Required Texts (available at Woodland Pattern Book Center, 720 East Locust, b/w Fratney and Pierce streets, tel. 263-5001):

- Other readings will be available on d2l and/or e-reserve.
Schedule:

Jan. 26  Introduction, plus readings on d2l:
         Judith Shklar, “Putting Cruelty First”
         Michael Gillespie, “Death and Desire: War and Bourgeoisification in the Thought of Hegel”
         Peter Thiel, “The Straussian Moment”

Feb. 2   Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections), d2l

Feb. 9   Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*
         Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (selections), d2l


         Reinhart Koselleck, from *Critique and Crisis*, d2l
         Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (selections), d2l

Mar. 2   Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*

Mar. 9   Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, Preface and Chapters 1-8

Mar. 16  Spring Break

Mar. 23  Baruch Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, Chapters 9-20

Mar. 30  Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Multitude* (selections), d2l
         Leo Strauss, *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion* (selections), d2l
         Etienne Balibar, “Jus-Pactum-Lex: On the Constitution of the Subject in the Theologico-Political Treatise,” d2l

Apr. 6   Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” d2l
         Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority,’” d2l
         Judith Butler, “Critique, Coercion, and Sacred Life,” d2l

Apr. 13  Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*
         Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, d2l

Apr. 20  Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, pp. 1-158

Apr. 27  Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, pp. 158-end

May 4    Georges Bataille, from *The Accursed Share*, d2l
         Alberto Moreiras, “A God Without Sovereignty,” d2l
         Slavoj Zizek, from *The Parallax View*, d2l