

PSCI 295W-1 THE GOOD SOCIETY  
Dr. Mary Schwab Seligman and Joel Seligman  
Fall 2020: Thursday 2:00 - 4:40 pm  
This course will be taught remotely

What is the Good Society, one that is fair and just and best satisfies the aspiration of its people?

By Good Society we do not mean a utopia or perfect society. We use the term society to describe the governance, faith and relations among people. We will study the six Good Societies within the context of the specific culture where the Good Society was originated.

There should be no delusions that a Good Society has ever been fully achieved or ever will be fully achieved. But we believe that by comparing earlier attempts to envision a Good Society we can progress closer to envisioning the best articulation of a Good Society today.

We will place each set of required readings on Reserve or in an easily available Office.

Each student will be graded 25 percent on the basis of class participation and 75 percent on the basis of the written and oral presentation of a final paper. The final papers should have text no longer than 25 double spaced pages with font of 12 or larger. End notes can be included in addition. A first draft of the final paper is due no later than the beginning of Class on November 18. The final draft is due no later than 9 am on Tuesday, December 1. We encourage creativity. Papers can be speculative and use devices such as the Foundation Myths in the assigned readings. The papers alternatively can be factual and in any event draw on sources in addition to those assigned in the course.

should be.

## SYLLABUS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

August 27: Building Blocks and Human Nature: Read First Class Memorandum, Nicholas Christakis, *Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society* (Little, Brown Spark 2019), pages 1-18, 240-261, 269-280 and 365-385 and Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*.

September 3: P Allan Bloom, *The Republic* (Basic Books 2016) and *The Second Class Memorandum*, which delineates the specific text in *The Republic* you should read for September 3 and 10.

September 17: Exodus: Read any translation of Exodus, *Third Class Memorandum* which specifies reading assignment for September 17 and 24, and Joel Baden, *The Book of Exodus* (Princeton Univ. Press 2019), pages specified in *Third Class Memorandum*.

September 24: Exodus

October First Letter to the Corinthians. Read *Fourth Class Memorandum* and any version of *The New Testament*.

Second Letter to the Corinthians

October 15: The Koran: Read *Fifth Class Memorandum* and any version of the assignments from the Koran.

October 22: Marx and Communism: Read *Sixth Class Memorandum* and any version of *The Communist Manifesto*.

October 29: Marx and Communism.

November 5: Constitutional Democracy: Read *Seventh Class Memorandum* and assigned readings.

November 12: Constitutional Democracy

November 19: Oral Presentations

November 26: Thanksgiving

December 3: Feedback to each student on Final Paper

FIRST CLASS DISCUSSION MEMORANDUM  
AUGUST 27, 2020

BUILDING BLOCKS AND HUMAN NATURE

READING ASSIGNMENT: Nicholas Christakis, *Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society* (Little Brown Spark 2019) Chapter 1 The Society within Us pages 1-18, Chapter 8 Friends and Networks pages 240-261 and 269-280 and Chapter 11 Genes and Culture pages 365-385 and Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*.

anthropological research and the impact of genetics on how societies are

The population of a Good Society has profound implications. A small society has advantages in achieving support for a common ideology, faith or religion, but it also has disadvantages in surviving if it has predatory neighbors or in developing a sustainable economic base.

