17.03. Introduction to Political Thought

I. Liberty
   A. Replaces Machiavellian republican liberty with liberty as security
   B. Liberty is the absence of physical impediments
   C. Equal liberty of all men because men are by nature equal (against Aristotle, 107)

II. From natural right to natural law
   A. Right of nature: right of every man to everything necessary for self-preservation
      1. No security as long as right of nature is unrestricted
      2. Agreements in state of nature risky because no “coercive Power to compel men equally to perform their Covenants” (100-101)
      3. No justice or injustice without government
   B. Law of nature: a rule of Reason
      1. Natural laws are laws we impose upon ourselves; all obligations self-imposed
         a. We agree to give up some of our natural liberties
         b. Contracts entered into by fear are obligatory
         c. Injustice to violate your contracts
      2. First and second laws of nature
         a. First: To seek peace
         b. Second: To be willing to enter a contract limiting natural liberties

III. Origin and purpose of government
   A. Government originates when people cooperate for their own preservation
   B. Purpose of govt is security, not pursuit of virtue or common good as in Aristotle

IV. How does Hobbes justify political obligation?
   A. Consequentialist justification
      1. Government extinguishes prisoners’ dilemmas and thereby facilitates cooperation
      2. Government is superior to state of nature in maximizing utility
   B. Contractarian justification
      1. Signs of contract are either express or tacit
      2. Contracts entered into by fear are obligatory (97)
      3. Excludes “Children, Fools, and Mad-men that have no use of Reason”
   C. Authorization
      1. Every subject is “Author of all the Sovereign doth” (124)
      2. Therefore, it is absurd for subjects to disobey the sovereign’s law

V. Rights of the sovereign
   A. Right to make (legislative), execute (executive), and interpret (judicial) laws
   B. Right to levy taxes, conduct war and peace, regulate expressions of opinion
   C. No institutional guarantees against abuse of power

VI. Argument for absolute, indivisible sovereignty
   A. Subjects are actually the authors of all the sovereign’s actions and judgments
   B. Unity of sovereign necessary to prevent civil war