Short Answers: Answer the following questions in a paragraph. (25 points total)

1. According to Hamilton and Madison what is republicanism and federalism? Briefly describe what they see as the primary advantage of each of these. (5 points)

Republicanism is representative government and Federalism is one central government containing independent, sovereign political entities underneath it, e.g., states. The advantage of republicanism is that the representatives are a “buffer” between the people and the government. The representatives are a buffer against momentary, rising passions, the ability of a charismatic demagogue from swaying them, etc. Federalism essentially allows the nation to have a relatively strong, capable central government while leaving the states sovereign.

2. According to Hamilton and Madison what are the three causes of faction within the state? In each case, tell me why they think it is not possible and/or legitimate to treat the cause? (5 points)

The three causes of faction within the state are: Liberty, diversity of opinions/beliefs, and disparities of wealth/property. With regard to liberty, H&M say treating the cause would be worse than the disease, i.e., to take away people’s liberty in order to avoid faction is the most extreme, worst kind of solution. They say it is nearly impossible to make everyone’s beliefs/opinions uniform and to keep them that way. And thirdly, someone in the state would be in charge of mitigating differences in wealth/property, but they would themselves invariably have to come from one class or another and would tend to favor that class.

3. In a paragraph, explain Machiavelli’s view of the cycle of governments, e.g., from principality to … to anarchy and back again – make sure to include a sentence on each transition. (5 points)

Machiavelli argues that a principality would ultimately become hereditary rule. The child of the prince, however would not nearly have the political skills of his father and would inevitably be seen as merely benefiting himself through his rule as well as making the state worse. The society would get tired of this and the nobility would rise up to overthrow the depraved “prince,” thus instituting an aristocracy, i.e., the most capable nobles running the show. However, as generations passed the aristocrats would become nothing more than oligarchs, i.e., ruling in the interest of their own wealth. The people would eventually get tired of their debauchery and rise up to institute a democracy. However, in such a democracy everything becomes relative – all systems of government are held in equal esteem and anything seems as good as another. This would lead to anarchy. Eventually, a charismatic figure would come along to take control of society again, thus instituting yet another principality – and it keeps cycling like this.

4. In a paragraph explain Locke’s account of our natural right to property – both the three things that we own and how one acquires private property from common property. (5 points)

Locke believes that the natural right to property is one of the most fundamental of our natural rights. He says that, in this order, we have natural right to: Ourselves, our labor,
and the products of our labor. That is, we own ourselves first, we own our labor second, and we own everything into which we put our labor. Going along with this, Lock argues that one makes common property one’s private property simply by adding one’s labor to it. That is, if I find an empty field and I till it and seed it, then it has become mine. Of course, only common property can become private property in this fashion. Just because I add my labor to someone else’s field it does thereby become mine.

5. Explain Hobbes and Locke’s views on when revolution against the commonwealth/state is justified. (5 points)

This is an easy one: Hobbes believes that it is categorically wrong in any circumstance to revolt against the commonwealth – this is due to the fact that the sovereign is not a party to the social contract and thus is all-powerful vis-à-vis that contract, can never really do anything wrong or “unjust,” etc. Locke believes that the primary function of the social contract is to preserve our natural rights and that that is moreover the primary function of the sovereign. Thus, if the government is either systematically violating its citizen’s natural rights or is incapable of protecting them then not only is revolution justified, but it is the duty of the citizenry.

Essay Section: Answer in an essay each of the following questions. (75 points total)

1. Describe in detail the different conceptions of the state of nature and human beings in it according to Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau (in the Discourses), compare and contrast each thinker’s view on this, and finally say how each of their views of human nature primarily differ from Aristotle’s account of human nature. (25 points)

Hobbes argues that human beings in the state of nature are driven only by self-interest, most especially the desire for self-preservation. Since Hobbes also believes that morality, justice, rights, etc. only exist subsequent to a system of government and laws, this means that in the state of nature people have a right to anything they need in order to preserve themselves. In essence, this means that they have a right to everything. This situation produces a “war of all against all” since each individual in the state of nature is “at war” with each other for the resources that they need in order to survive. Ultimately, the life of these people is brutish, nasty, and short – in a word, miserable.

Locke also believes that people in the state of nature are self-interested. However, Locke believes, significantly, that in the state of nature individuals have natural rights to life, liberty, and property and thus that there are “moral” natural laws which pertain in the state of nature. Thus, people do not have a right to everything for they can never take another’s life, liberty, or property unless it is to protect their own. This latter part is
significant, because Locke believes that in the state of nature people do not have the capacity, usually, to protect or enforce their rights.

Rousseau, unlike Hobbes and Locke, believes that people in the state of nature are not primarily self-interested. In fact, Rousseau argues that Hobbes and Locke’s notion of the state of nature is merely a myth and that what they have really done is to merely take people within society and strip society from them. Namely, people act in a self-interested fashion in society, but they are kept in check by the government and its laws. If you stripped the latter away, of course you would have a “war of all against all” or “not be able to protect your rights.” Rousseau argues that if we are to discuss the state of nature (which he probably believes is merely an imaginative state anyway) and went back to truly primitive man, then this person would not be self-interested and would not be able to think (to properties we acquire from society), but would simply be driven by “sentiment,” namely those of self-love and compassion for one’s fellow humans. He describes this much like an idyllic paradise without conflict.

It is interesting to compare these views with Aristotle’s. Aristotle believes that by nature people are potentially virtuous, i.e., if placed in the right conditions people will naturally become virtuous. In other words, people by nature “grow” into virtuous human beings if they live in the right society. In fact, Aristotle believes also that by nature people must live in society – someone who does not is either “a god or a beast.” Thus, on no account would Aristotle agree with Hobbes and Locke that people are by nature self-interested, since they have a natural predilection to live with and among their fellows and moreover can only achieve their proper virtue among those fellows. However, he would certainly not agree with Rousseau that human beings are best when outside of society. They must live in society in order to achieve virtue and in fact are not even human if they live outside of society.

2. Explain in detail how and why Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau (in the Discourses) believe that people get out of the state of nature, i.e., how is a commonwealth/society formed from out of the state of nature. Then explain each of their views on the essence and/or result of the social contract (for Rousseau use his account of the formation of society and government in his Of the Social Contract). Finally what effect does each think that this has on those subject to it – that is, what do human beings gain/lose from leaving the state of nature and entering a commonwealth/society. (25 points)
Hobbes argues that people get of the state of nature through the so-called “laws of nature,” viz., (1) seek peace, (2) One should give up one’s rights if another is willing to do so for the sake of peace, and (3) always keep one’s covenants. According to Hobbes, people in the state of nature find it so miserable that they will do almost anything to get out – i.e., they will seek peace. The only way to do this is to agree that if another is willing to give up his rights to everything, then I will do so also – thus we form a contract, the “social contract,” in which we give up our rights to a sovereign so that we can all live in peace. Furthermore, we will stick to the contract because we never want to be placed back into the state of nature. Importantly, though, the sovereign must remain outside of the contract in Hobbes’ view so that he can enforce the contract and do what is necessary to enforce the contract, e.g., kill someone who is threatening the contract. Once the contract is in place, the citizens of the commonwealth have given up their rights to the sovereign and have in turn assured themselves that they will remain outside of the state of nature. Also after the formation of the contract, right and wrong, just and unjust, and morality comes into the existence with the creation of laws.

Locke, one the other hand, argues that people have the natural right to life, liberty, and property in the state of nature and they have a moral obligation to abide by the natural laws. The problem is that in the state of nature people cannot enforce or administer their natural rights effectively. Thus, people get together and form a social contract in which they do not give up their rights, but rather in which they give up their right to administer their rights. Thus, the sovereign has the function of administering the rights of his citizenry, e.g., punishing those who violate other’s rights, etc. The sovereign is not a leviathan existing outside the contract but has a well circumscribed function and duty within the contract. The sovereign is only allowed to infringe on one’s rights in order to maximize everyone’s rights. Thus, after the contract, people have a mechanism that effectively administers their rights.

Rousseau believes that society comes into existence through the appearance of property in the state of nature, i.e., the dawning of “mine and thine.” In the Discourses Rousseau believes that this precipitates all the evils that he discovers in civil society, e.g., competition, etc. Thus, once there is mine as opposed to yours, then there is competition for things, etc. Ultimately, this leads to a bunch of people acting in their own self interest. In the Social Contract, however, Rousseau argues that the commonwealth/society actually bring into
existence a “body politic” which as its own “general will” which in turn always wills the common good. Thus, the social contract literally brings into existence a new person with its own will. The government, in turn, merely attempts to approximate this general will by always acting in the common good. Thus, I can enter into society without losing my individual liberty because I can submit to the general will insofar as what the general will wills I myself would will always, namely, the common good. In a sense, after the social contract I lose nothing but gain a government who can protect me, my property, etc.

3. Explain in detail how Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau would analyze - from a political-philosophical perspective - the government of Nazi Germany. (25 points)

Machiavelli would argue that the Nazis were master at taking power and maintaining power within the state. This he would have approved of. However, he would have thought that they made a big mistake when they tried to conquer the world and, essentially, attacked everyone, for this led to their demise. Thus, he would have analyzed their rule merely in terms of the ability to procure and maintain power.

Hobbes also would have thought that the Nazis represented a good example of the sovereign at one point. That is, they were able to keep their people out of the state of nature for a period of time and in fact had a whether well-ordered society. I think he would have thought, however, that there were a lot of things that they did that were unnecessary and counter-productive, viz., genocide, world-war, etc. Thus, in the end, like Machiavelli, he would have thought that they failed but only insofar as their people were forced back into the state of nature after the collapse of Germany.

Locke would have clearly thought that the Nazis were a poor form of government. They systematically violated their citizen’s natural rights and, so, from the get go it was a terrible government and worthy of being overthrown.

Rousseau also would have thought I believe that the Nazi government was a poor marker of the general will since it is doubtful that they were achieving the common good even for their own citizens. This became painfully clear as the war ended Germany and its people lay in utter ruins.