In modern political communities, all members are subject to some person or group that claims both the authority to make laws or issue commands as well as a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. This raises a number of important questions. Do such governments ever have the authority they claim for themselves? If so, under what conditions? When do states have the right to use force against their citizens? What, after all, is the point of living in organized political societies? In this class we will approach these questions from the standpoint of Social Contract theory, focusing in particular on the works of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.