

## **POL381H1F – Topics in Political Theory: Contemporary Political Theory**

**Tuesdays and Thursdays:** 12-2PM

**Room:** SS2105

**Instructor:** Simon Lambek

**Instructor email:** [simon.lambek@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:simon.lambek@mail.utoronto.ca)

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 2-3PM SS3007 or by appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course offers a general introduction to some of the major themes and perspectives in contemporary political theory. Students will be exposed to a range of authors, topics and styles of thought. Readings are drawn from normative, critical, analytic and continental theory traditions. We will discuss the relevance of political theory to the major social and political challenges of the day, as well as questions of method, subject, style and critique in contemporary theory. This course will prepare students to be conversant in multiple domains of contemporary political theory and to be aware of competing sides of current debates. Assignments will provide an opportunity for students to engage with more depth and nuance, exploring the perspectives that they find most compelling.

### **FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS**

Each class session will begin with a lecture, followed by class-discussions and questions; student participation is strongly encouraged. Students should be aware that they are responsible for the materials covered in the lectures as well as the course readings, so consistent attendance at lecture is imperative. Students will be evaluated based on four criteria.

1. **In-Class Test (30% of the final grade)** – A one-hour written exam will be administered partway through the semester. The exam will cover the material to that point.
2. **Reading Reports (15% of the final grade)** – Over the course of the semester, students will submit two 1-page single-spaced reports. For each report, students will select one reading to focus on. Reports should: 1) summarize the key arguments of the text, 2) analyze the strength and weaknesses of the account and 3) end with two discussion questions. Reports are due at the beginning of lecture. Students may not submit more than 1 report per week.
3. **Term Paper (45% of the final grade)** – Term papers will engage the literatures covered in at least two lectures, for example, “Liberal Political Theory” and “Comparative Political Theory” or “Hermeneutics, Interpretation and Understanding” and “Gender and Feminist Political Thought.” The paper should be no more than 12 pages double-spaced with 12-point font and one inch margins.

Students are encouraged to meet with the course instructor to discuss their term paper prior to submission. Note, the term paper is an opportunity for students to explore an issue of their choice in-depth. It is expected that students will engage with material beyond what is listed as required in the syllabus.

#### 4. Participation (10% of final grade)

### COURSE POLICIES

**Extensions:** Extensions are unlikely to be granted unless students have acceptable reasons that are adequately documented, such as a medical emergency supported by an official UofT medical certificate. Appropriate documentation must be submitted within one week of the missed course requirement.

**Make-ups:** Students who miss a term test for reasons entirely beyond their control may, within one week of the missed test, submit to the instructor a written request for special consideration explaining the reason for missing the test, and attaching appropriate documentation, such as a medical certificate.

**Late Penalties:** Essays are to be handed in at the beginning of class on the date that they are due. Late papers will be penalized 5 percentage points per calendar day of lateness, *weekends included*. All late work should be submitted to the main desk of the Political Science Department. Students must make sure late submissions are signed and dated by department staff.

**Course Grades:** If you have concerns regarding an assignment mark you should present a detailed written explanation (approximately 1 page single spaced) of why you feel the grade is unjustified within two weeks of receiving the grade in question. Once an appeal is submitted, the entire assignment will be re-examined. The appeal process can result in no change to the original grade, a higher grade, or a lower grade.

**Office Hours and Communication:** Office hours are Tuesdays 2-3 in room 3007 of Sidney Smith or by appointment. I will endeavor to respond to emails within 48 hours. Email is for short clarification questions only. If you have concerns or questions that cannot be answered in a short response please see me during office hours. Please use your University of Toronto email address for all communication.

**Plagiarism:** Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Students with principled objections to the use of Turnitin.com can make alternative arrangements with the professor. Such arrangements might include the requirement that all

rough work is handed in with the paper or that the student include an annotated bibliography with the paper. Alternative arrangements will be decided upon in consultation with the U of T Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation.

Issues of plagiarism are taken exceptionally seriously – both by the University and by myself. Please ensure that you are familiar with the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. It can be found at:

(<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

**Quercus and E-mail:** All students should ensure that they have access to the course quercus website, as reading materials & course announcements will be posted electronically. You must make sure to regularly check your utoronto email account to make sure that you receive important email notices sent through quercus.

**Accessibility Needs:** Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Resource Centre as soon as possible.

## COURSE READINGS

All of the required readings are available online, either on quercus or via the University of Toronto library.

## COURSE OUTLINE & READING ASSIGNMENTS

### May 8: Introduction

### May 10: Liberal Political theory

- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice, Revised Edition*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999) §§1-4 (pages 3-19), §§10-16 (pages 47-86), §§22-24 (pages 109-123), §§41-42 (pages 228-242).
- Simone Chambers, "The Politics of Equality: Rawls on the Barricades," *Perspectives on Politics*, 4, 1, 2006, (81-89).

### May 15: Hermeneutics, Interpretation and Understanding

- Paul Ricoeur, "The Task of Hermeneutics," *Hermeneutics and The Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), (15-57).

### May 17: Habermas and Deliberative Democracy

- Jürgen Habermas, “Three Normative Models of Democracy,” *Constellations*, 1994, 1(1).
- John Rawls “On the Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” in *Political Liberalism: Expanded Edition*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), §§1,4.
- Simone Chambers, “Discourse and Democratic Practices,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*, ed. Stephen K. White, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

#### May 22: Foucault and Discursive Power

- Michel Foucault, “The Body Condemned” and “Panopticism,” in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Vintage, 1995). Note: available as an ebook.

#### May 24: In-Class Test

#### May 29: Ideology, Marxism and Post-Marxism

- Ernesto Laclau, “The Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology,” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 1996 1(3): 201-220 .
- Wendy Brown, “Rights and Losses” in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).
- The RSA, “RSA ANIMATE: First as Tragedy, Then as Farce,” YouTube Video, 10:56, Posted July 28, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpAMbpQ8J7g> - note, this is a video of Slavoj Žižek lecturing on ideas explored in his book, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*.

#### May 31: Gender and Feminist Political Thought

- Judith Butler, “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire,” in *Feminism and Politics*, ed. Anne Phillips, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression,” in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

#### June 5: Political Theory, Race and Post-Colonial Thought

- Charles W. Mills, “Introduction” and “Overview” in *The Racial Contract*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997). Note: available as an ebook.
- Michael O. Hardimon, “The Ordinary Concept of Race,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, 2003, 100(9), 437–55.
- Franz Fanon, “On Violence” in *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox, (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

#### June 7: Judgment and Rhetoric

- Linda Zerilli, “Value Pluralism and the Problem of Judgment: Farewell to Public Reason,” *Political Theory*, 2012, 40(1), 6-31.
- Bryan Garsten, “Persuasion and Deliberation” in *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

#### June 12: Recognition – Term Paper Due

- Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25-73.
- Axel Honneth, "Recognition as Ideology" in *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, ed. Bert van Den Brink and David Owen, (Published Online: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- Glen Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada," *Contemporary Political Theory* 6:4, 2007

#### June 14: Comparative Political Theory

- Andrew March, "What Is Comparative Political Theory?," *Review of Politics*, 2009, 4(71), 531-65.
- Farah Godrej, "Response to 'What is Comparative Political Theory?,'" *Review of Politics*, 2009, 4(71), 567-582.
- Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Thick Translation," *Callaloo* 1993, 16(4), 808-819.