

POL 485H1S/2027H1S, Section L0201: Topics in Political Theory II

The Politics of Capitalism

Winter 2019

**Fridays, 10 am-12 pm
Trinity College, Room 24**

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-4:00 pm (or by appointment)

Description:

This course focuses on an important problem for all 21st-century global citizens: Is capitalism a system that promotes human freedom and emancipation? Or, is it a system that depends on and perpetuates inequality and exploitation?

In this advanced political theory seminar, we will think about these questions together via readings on one particular problem central to political economic discourse: the nature, value, and meaning of labour. While the problem of labour will focus our inquiry, it also opens up into broader normative and political questions about the character of capitalism. Together, we will discuss some questions that thinking about labour generates: Is a capacity for labour an integral part of what it means to be human? Does labour have to be self-directed to be meaningful? How much control should we have over the products of our labour? What does it mean to work for a wage? What does it mean to extract labour from others? Does labour colonize our time? How do labour relations shape our politics and culture? What would it mean to emancipate ourselves from labour? How might we do that?

This course has three related learning goals. First, one main purpose of the course is to familiarize you with the multi-century trajectory of humanistic work on capitalism, including laudatory, ambivalent, and critical treatments. This will include extensive engagement with classic works, such as Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and Marx's *Capital*, but we will read and discuss a broad range of texts that fall under the category of "political thinking about commerce and capitalism." A second purpose of the course is to think deeply about the particular problem of labour in the history of capitalism by analyzing how thinkers from a range of time periods and moral and political perspectives have confronted it. The third and last goal of this course is to use our growing sense of the history of our current capitalist dilemmas to help us think critically about our own participation in a culture of work and labour.

Requirements and Grading:

Book List:

The following books are available in the bookstore, or you can borrow them from the Robarts library, where they are on reserve. Sometimes I have spare copies, so please ask to borrow if you find yourself in need of a text!

- Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1991).
- *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978).
- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, vols. 1 & 2 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982).
- John Steinbeck, *In Dubious Battle* (New York: Penguin, 2006).
- Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity* (Durham: Duke UP, 2009).
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Penguin, 2002).
- Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke UP, 2011).

Please acquire and use *these* editions if possible, since class discussion will run much more smoothly if we are all using the same versions of the texts.

Course Requirements and Grade Distribution:

This class is a seminar, so we will spend nearly all of our time discussing the readings. Your questions and comments will structure our discussions, so please come prepared for each class with at least one question or comment that you would like for us to think about as a group. Sometimes I will ask us to work through a difficult problem or question in the readings, but for the most part your concerns will drive our work.

The other component of your work for this seminar is writing. I will ask you to hand in short reflections on readings over the course of the semester, and you will design your own seminar paper or other project to hand in at the end of the term. There will also be a take-home midterm paper.

The course has five assigned components, which will be slightly different for 485 students and 2027 students:

For POL 485 Students:

- Class attendance and participation
 - Bring texts to class
 - Be an engaged listener (This means no smartphones!)
 - Participate in discussion
- 5 short reflection papers on readings, one single-spaced page each
- Take-home midterm
- Final essay

The grading breakdown for POL 485 students is as follows:

- Seminar attendance and participation: 20%
- 5 response papers for readings: 3% each, for 15% total (Full credit or no credit)
- Take-home midterm: 25%
- Final Essay: 40%

For POL 2027 Students:

- Class attendance and participation
 - Bring texts to class
 - Be an engaged listener (This means no smartphones!)
 - Participate in discussion
- 5 short reflection papers on readings, one single-spaced page each
- Take-home midterm
- Choose a final project:
 - Write a critical review essay of a new book in the field
 - Seminar paper on a topic of your own design

The grading breakdown for POL 2027 students is as follows:

- Seminar attendance and participation: 20%
- 5 response papers for readings: 3% each, for 15% total (Full credit or no credit)
- Take-home midterm: 25%
- Final Project: 40%

Late work policy

I will deduct 3% from your grade for each 24 hours that your assignment is late. No work will be accepted after one week past the deadline.

I do not grant extensions except in cases of emergency, and then only to students who present official documentation that I can verify. Acceptable documentation includes a note from your doctor, a note from the registrar's office, or a note from your AccessAbility advisor. Without official documentation from you, I will not grant an extension request.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is unacceptable, and I report all suspected cases via the process outlined on the last page of this course outline. If you are not sure whether something counts as plagiarism, please don't hesitate to ask me. I will also post a guide to citations and bibliography on Blackboard with your writing assignments.

Laptop Policy

Unless you have a documented reason for using a laptop or tablet during our seminar, I ask that you power down all your electronic equipment.

Student Resources and Support

Your success in this course is important to me. Here are some resources I hope you will use if ever you need them:

Accessibility:

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 Dr. Nacol /or Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

The staff members of Accessibility Services (Located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange

appropriate accommodations. Please call 416-978-8060 or email accessibility.services@utoronto.ca.

The sooner you let me know what you need, the sooner I can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Notice of Collection:

The University of Toronto respects your privacy. The information on medication certificates is collected pursuant to section 2(14) of the University of Toronto Act, 1971. It is collected for the purpose of administering accommodations for academic purposes based on medical grounds. The department will maintain a record of all medical certificates received. At all times it will be protected in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

If you have questions, please refer to www.utoronto.ca/privacy or contact the University's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office at 416-946-5835. Address: Room 201, McMurrich Bldg., 12 Queen's Park Crescent, Toronto, ON M5S 1A1.

Assignments:

Schedule and Explanation of Writing Assignments for All Students

Short Response Papers: You must complete five 1-page response papers this term. On the first day, I will divide you into two groups (A & B) and you'll write response papers for the weeks designated for your group on the syllabus. These papers are due by 5:00 p.m. evening before our class meeting. **NB:** There will be no opportunity to make up these assignments if you miss a deadline.

These papers have no strict guidelines except one: Please do not summarize the readings. You can assume that your reader has read the texts and has a working understanding of their major points and arguments. Instead, use this assignment as an opportunity to raise an interesting question, puzzle, or criticism about the reading. I may refer to your response paper to guide our class discussion the next day, too, so think of this as an opportunity to help set our agenda.

Midterm Exam: The midterm will be a take-home, open book/note exam. I will email you an essay question on **Friday, 1 March by 5:00 p.m.** You will have one week to compose your answer, so it will be due back to me on **Friday, 8 March at 11:59 p.m.** You may draw from your notes and the readings to answer the question, with no outside sources expected or required. Your response should be between 2400-3000 words (8-10 double-spaced pages), and it should take the form of an argument with a thesis statement, supported by evidence from the texts.

For POL 485 Students

Final Paper: Your final essay should be about 3600-4500 words (12-15 pages). I will circulate a selection of prompts by 12 March. You may select one of them, or you may write on any question or problem you wish, provided that you clear the topic with me first. You may also bring in outside source materials, although this is not necessarily required. **The completed seminar paper is due on Friday, 5 April, by 11:59 p.m.**

For POL 2027 Students

Final Project: For your last assignment from the class, you may choose from among two types of projects: (1) writing a critical review essay comparing two recent books in the field; and (3) a seminar paper of your own design. **Regardless of which you choose, your project is due on Friday, 5 April, by 11:59 p.m. I would like us to schedule a meeting or chat over email about your choice no later than 18 March.**

If you choose option 1, here is a list of books I've assembled from which you can choose:

- Elizabeth Anderson, *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (And Why We Don't Talk About it)* (Princeton UP, 2017).
- Barbara Arneil, *Domestic Colonies: The Inward Turn to Colony* (Oxford UP, 2017).
- James Chamberlain, *Undoing Work, Rethinking Community: A Critique of the Social Function of Work* (ILR Press, 2018).
- Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Common Notions, 2012).
- Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling* (UC Press, 2012). Julie Rose, *Free Time* (Princeton UP, 2016).
- Tommie Shelby, *Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform* (Belknap, 2018).
- Lester Spence, *Knocking the Hustle: Against the Neoliberal Turn in Black Politics* (Punctum, 2016).

NB: If you have another book in mind, please come talk to me! The books listed above are on reserve for this course, and I've ordered a few copies for the bookstore, too.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

Please bring your texts and notes to **every class**, since we will work from them. Please read in advance of class.

All readings beyond the book list are marked with an * on the syllabus. These are available on our class Quercus site.

Friday, 11 January: Introduction to the course.

- (a) Syllabus review
- (b) Discussion of course themes and goals

Friday, 18 January: Labour, Value, and Citizenship (Group A)

- (a) John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, ch. 5 ("Of Property") in *Political Writings*, ed. D. Wootton (Hackett, 2003), pp. 272-286.*
- (b) John Locke, "Labour," in *Political Writings*, ed. D. Wootton, (Hackett, 2003), pp. 440-442.*
- (c) John Locke, "Draft of a Representation Containing a Scheme of Methods for the Employment of the Poor," in *Political Writings*, ed. D. Wootton (Hackett, 2003), pp. 446-461.*

- (d) Jonathan Swift, “A Modest Proposal...,” in *Major Works*, eds. A. Ross and D. Woolley (Oxford UP, 2008), pp. 492-499.*
- (e) Alexis de Tocqueville, *Memoir on Pauperism*, trans. S. Drescher (Civitas, 1997), pp. 24-38.*

Friday, 25 January: Labour, Vocation, and an Ethos of Work (Group B)

- (a) Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Friday, 1 February: Wage Labour (Group A)

- (a) Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, Book I.1-8, I.10, and V.1.f, pp. 13-104, 116-159, and 781-788.
- (b) Karl Marx, “Wage Labour and Capital,” in *The Marx Engels Reader*, pp. 203-217.
- (c) Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (Falling Wall Press, 1975).*
- (d) Nancy Fraser, “After the Family Wage: A Postindustrial Thought Experiment,” in *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (Verso, 2013) pp. 111-138.*

Friday, 8 February: Alienation and the Meaning of Work (Group B)

- (a) Karl Marx, “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” in *The Marx Engels Reader*, pp. 67-81.
- (b) Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, prologue and ch. 1-4
- (c) David Harvey, “Contradiction 17: The Revolt of Human Nature: Universal Alienation,” in *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Oxford UP, 2015), pp. 264-281.*

Friday, 15 February: The Future of the Labouring Classes?—Modes of Change (Group A)

- a) Karl Marx, “The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” in *The Marx Engels Reader*, pp. 81-101.
- b) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in *The Marx Engels Reader*, pp. 469-491.
- c) John Stuart Mill, “On the Probable Futurity of the Laboring Classes,” in *Principles of Political Economy*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Vol. 3 (Liberty Fund, 2006), pp. 758-796.*

Friday, 22 February: Reading week. No class.

Friday, 1 March: Resistance and the Right to Strike (Group B)

- (a) John Steinbeck, *In Dubious Battle*
- (b) Alex Gourevitch, “The Right to Strike: A Radical View” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 112, No. 4 (November 2018), pp. 905-917.

Friday, 8 March: Dr. Nacol out of town. No class.

Friday, 15 March: Labour and the Politics of Time (Group A)

- a) Marx, *Capital*, ch. 10 (The Working-Day), in *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 361-376.
 - a. Recommended as background for (a): pp. 302-361 in the *Marx-Engels Reader*.

- b) Marx, *Capital*, ch. 26, 27, 31, and 32, (VIII. The So-Called Primitive Accumulation) in *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 431-438.
- c) Nichole Shippen, "Criticizing after Dinner: Marx and the Fight for Time in Human Development," in *Decolonizing Time: Work, Leisure, and Freedom* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), pp. 39-71.*
- d) E.P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past & Present*, No. 38 (1967), pp. 56-97.

Friday, 22 March: Work, Leisure, and Free Time (Group B)

- a) Bertrand Russell, "In Praise of Idleness," *Harper's Magazine* (October 1932).*
- b) John Maynard Keynes, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren," in *Essays in Persuasion* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932), pp. 358-373.*
- c) Philippe van Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght, *Basic Income: A Radical Proposal for a Free Society and a Sane Economy* (Harvard UP, 2017), Prologue, ch. 1, & ch. 5. *

Friday, 29 March: Poverty, Work, and Punishment (Group A)

- a) Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor*, Prologue; Parts I, II, & 4, and Coda (Part III is recommended but not required reading for this session.).

Friday, 5 April: A Better Balance? (Group B)

- a) Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work*.

A WARNING ABOUT PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an academic offence with a severe penalty.

It is essential that you understand what plagiarism is and that you do not commit it. In essence, it is the theft of the thoughts or words of others, without giving proper credit. You must put others' words in quotation marks and cite your source(s). You must give citations when using others' ideas, even if those ideas are paraphrased in your own words. Plagiarism is unacceptable in a university. What the university calls "plagiarism", non-university institutions might call "fraud".

The University of Toronto provides a process that faculty members must initiate when they suspect a case of plagiarism. In the Department of Political Science, suspected evidence of plagiarism must be reported to the Chair; in most cases, the Chair passes the case on to the Dean.

A faculty member may not mark an assignment or assess a penalty if he or she finds evidence of plagiarism – the matter must be reported. Penalties are assigned by the Chair, by the Dean or by the University of Toronto Tribunal.

The following are some examples of plagiarism:

Submitting as your own an assignment written by someone else.

1. **Quoting an author without indicating the source of the words.**
2. **Using words, sentences, or paragraphs written by someone else and failing to place quotation marks around the material and reference the source and author.** Using either quotation marks or reference alone is not sufficient. Both must be used!
3. Adapting an author's ideas or theme and using it as your own without referencing the original source.
4. Seeking assistance from a friend or family member in respect to work you claim as your own.

Ignorance of the rules against plagiarism is not a defense; students are presumed to know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. Students are especially reminded that material taken from the web **must** be quoted and cited in the same manner as if it came from a book or printed article.

If you are not sure whether you have committed plagiarism, it is better to ask a faculty member or teaching assistant than risk discovery and be forced to accept an academic penalty.

Plagiarism is cheating. It is considered a **serious offence** against intellectual honesty and intellectual property. Penalties can be **severe**, ranging from a mark of "0" for the assignment or test in question, **up to and including expulsion from the university.**

Some website listed below on avoiding plagiarism:

'How to Use Sources and Avoid Plagiarism' - available at:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Other Advisory Material available at: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/home>