

**Topics in Political Theory (Global Politics and Global Political Thought)**  
**POL381H**  
**Winter 2020**

**Professor:** Matthew J Walton  
Sidney Smith Hall Rm. 3107  
Tel. 416-978-0345  
Email: matthew.walton@utoronto.ca  
Office hours: Wednesdays 12-2pm

**Class Meetings:** SS2110, Mondays, 2-4pm

**Course Description:**

As we seek to understand political dynamics across the globe, theory from the Western canon is not the only relevant or useful resource. This course will examine three pressing contemporary topics (race and identity politics; environmental justice and the natural world; and international and cosmopolitan visions) through the theoretical and analytical lenses provided by the political thought of other cultural traditions and from particular identity perspectives. In doing so, we will consider the productive outputs and potential limitations of theoretical communication across cultures, discussing whether the emergence of a global political thought is possible or desirable.

Most of the readings in the course will be primary source texts of political thought, although virtually none of them come from the Western canon. Some readings also address *practices*, and the political norms or insights they generate. Students will be expected to engage with unfamiliar contexts and concepts, reflecting on the tension between situating particular ideas in specific cultural spaces and adapting them in more universalizing ways. To do this, we will adopt some of the methods from Comparative Political Theory (CPT), a growing subfield that has developed not only as a “corrective” to the cultural specificity of the Western canon, but, increasingly, as an important interdisciplinary contribution to learning, particularly in this globalized and interconnected world.

We will pay particular attention to the ontological and epistemological assumptions that undergird differently situated political perspectives, taking an “interpretive” approach to engagement with these ideas—including when these frames are problematized or rejected. This undertaking contains the possibility of transformative encounters, but also the necessity of risk, either through the potential to destabilize one’s own views or to misrepresent perspectives from another tradition. An abiding concern will be on questioning the limits of mutual intelligibility; we must be conscious of over-stating both similarity *and* difference, and the course is designed to encourage self-reflection and awareness of positionality and its effects as a regular part of political theoretical practice.

**Course Readings:**

All required course readings are available online, either as copyright-compliant postings on the course Quercus site or as links to the University of Toronto Libraries electronic collection. Hard copies, where relevant, will also be available at Robarts Library. You are responsible for completing all readings by the dates indicated on the syllabus. The additional readings are optional but strongly encouraged. I also strongly encourage you to look at several of the class discussion responses each week as they are posted by your fellow students.

## Course Requirements:

**Class Participation (10%):** This portion of your grade is based on your overall participation in class discussions as well as the completion of occasional in-class writing responses. I recognize that not everyone is comfortable speaking regularly in class, although we will regularly use small group discussions and other activities to facilitate broader class conversations. As such, I will take into consideration other forms of participation, including discussions with me during office hours and over email. However, it is very important that you attend class regularly and maintain contact with me in order to ensure that you are meeting my expectations regarding course participation.

**Class Discussant (15%):** Each student must sign up to be a discussant at **three** class sessions during the course of the term. (Sign-up will be online and must be completed by the second class.) For each discussant session you are expected to read all assigned readings closely (I recommend that you also read the additional readings) and write a 500-800 word critical response. This is **NOT** a summary of the readings, but should include personal reflection on what the readings make you think about and could include questions about the readings that you wish to pose to the class, as well as your provisional responses to those questions. Each of these response papers must be posted to the course page **no later than 12am (midnight) the day before class**. These papers do not have to be fully developed essays, nor do they need to address all of the readings, but they should demonstrate to me that you've prepared for the discussion and considered some of the implications of the reading(s). You do not have to prepare a formal presentation for class. Note that discussants are discussion *leaders*; I still expect all of you to have read the assigned readings and a selection of other students' discussant responses and to be prepared to participate in our discussions. Discussant responses will be graded on a scale of "check-plus" (87), "check" (75) and "check-minus" (65). Summaries of the readings, without personal reflection or interpretive engagement, will be scored no higher than "check."

**Small Group Reflections (10%):** For each of the major topical sections of the class, students will be randomly sorted into small groups of 4-6 members. Each class session will include some time in these small groups to discuss the readings and specific questions provided by the professor. Each student will write **three** short reflections on the dynamics and process of the small group discussions, one for each topic, in response to a prompt provided by the professor. Each of these reflections must be posted to the course page **no later than 12am (midnight) on the last class day for the topic (Week 6, Week 9, Week 12)**. I encourage you to think about submitting these earlier than the deadline, as you are allowed to reflect on small group work from any or all of the weeks in a particular topic. These will be informal, personal reflections designed to get you to think about how knowledge is generated and how different discussion formats can facilitate learning and understanding. Reflections will also be graded on a scale of "check-plus" (87), "check" (75) and "check-minus" (65).

**Essay Questions (20% first essay, 25% second essay):** Each student will submit essays of 1,500-2,000 words responding to given prompts **two** times throughout the term. All students will respond to the first essay option (**due on Quercus no later than 12am (midnight) on Week 4**) and can then choose another essay option (**due on Quercus no later than 12am (midnight) on Weeks 6, 9 or 12**). (Sign-up will be online and must be completed by the second class.) For these papers, I expect a higher level of organization and clarity of argument, *different* than the more personal or speculative reflection that characterizes the Class Discussant responses. It will usually be appropriate to cite something from the relevant readings (and you are welcome to use additional sources); you may use any standard citation style but you must be consistent.

**Final Exam (20%):** The final exam will be a mixture of short answer definition and explanation questions and longer comparative and exploratory essays. It will draw on all the required readings from the course. The exam will take place during the April exam period and I will provide a review guide.

## **Course Policies:**

### Late Work/Make-up Exams

If you are unable to complete an assignment by its scheduled date for a valid reason, you must inform me before the due date and we will make alternate arrangements. All unexcused late work will be penalized at a rate of **2% per day of lateness**. Assignments submitted more than 1 full week late will not be accepted, unless excused in advance through accommodation, illness or other documented reason. Please contact me in advance if you expect you will be late submitting an assignment.

### Accessibility Policy

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. I know that this formal process can be slow, so I want to encourage you to come to me in advance to talk about any accommodations you might need or challenges you might be facing; I'm always willing to work with students to help facilitate your participation and success in this course.

### Attendance Policy

You are responsible for all of the information that is presented and discussed in class. If you have to miss class for any reason, please notify me in advance. I also recommend that you ask someone in class to share their notes for that day with you, since I will not be able to provide you with an update on what we covered in class.

### Grading Policy

I will be happy to discuss any grades that I give on assignments. I will do my best to communicate the criteria I'll be grading on in advance but please ask questions if you are confused. If you feel that I have made an error, you can take it up with me through the following procedure (Please note that I will only discuss issues with grading during the 7 days after the assignment has been handed back):

1. Wait a minimum of 24 hours after receiving your grade to contact me.
2. Put in writing the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the grade.
3. Bring the assignment/exam and your written statement to my office hours to discuss.

For essay assignments graded by the TA, the same policy applies, and your first submission to discuss a grade should be to the TA. If you are still dissatisfied with the resolution, you may contact me, providing the previous communication with the TA and a further explanation of why you think the assigned grade was not appropriate.

## **Academic Integrity:**

Cheating and plagiarism are offenses against academic integrity and are subject to disciplinary action by the university. Plagiarism is copying someone else's work and presenting it as your own (by not attributing it to its true source). If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me. I take this matter very seriously and will **NOT** tolerate plagiarism. Let me stress again: if you are unsure about how to properly cite an idea, please ask me. I expect university students to know proper citation methods, styles and norms. Your Essays will all be submitted using turnitin.com; if you would like to request an alternate method of submission, please let me know and we can arrange this.

## Course Readings:

### Week 1 (Jan 6): Introduction

#### Required Readings

Mbembe, Achille Joseph, 2016. "Decolonizing the University: New Directions." *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 15(1), pp.29-45.

#### Additional Reading

Tully, J., 2016. Deparochializing political theory and beyond: A dialogue approach to comparative political thought. *Journal of World Philosophies*, 1(1).

### Week 2 (Jan 13): Methods & Promise of Comparative Political Theory

#### Required Readings

Godrej, F. 2009. "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought: The Hermeneutics of Interpreting the Other." *Polity*, 41 (2): pp. 135–65

Williams, Melissa S., and Mark E. Warren. 2014. "A Democratic Case for Comparative Political Theory." *Political Theory*. Volume 42, Issue 1, pp. 26 – 57.

#### Additional Reading

Haraway, D., 1988. Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist studies*, 14(3), pp.575-599.

### Week 3 (Jan 20): Risks of Comparative Political Theory

#### Required Readings

Idris, Murad. 2016. "Political Theory and the Politics of Comparison." *Political Theory*.

Watts, Vanessa. 2013. "Indigenous Place—Thought and Agency amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go on a European Tour!)." *DIES: Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education and Society* 2(1): 20–34.

#### Additional Reading

Povinelli, E.A., 2001. Radical worlds: The anthropology of incommensurability and inconceivability. *Annual review of anthropology*, 30(1), pp.319-334.

### Week 4 (Jan 27): Race, Identity and Political Thought I (The Racial Contract)

#### Required Readings

Mills, Charles W. 1997. *The racial contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. [\*\*Introduction and Chapter 1: Overview]

hooks, bell. 1989. *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston: South End Press. [\*\*Chapter 16: overcoming white supremacy: a comment]

#### Additional Reading

Moreton-Robinson, A., 2004. "Whiteness, epistemology and Indigenous representation." In Aileen Moreton-Robinson (ed.), *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*. Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press.

(\*\*First Essay Question due date)

## **Week 5 (Feb 3): Race, Identity and Political Thought II (Blackness and Whiteness)**

### Required Readings

Sharpe, C., 2016. *In the wake: On blackness and being*. Duke University Press. [\*\*Chapter 1: The Wake]  
DiAngelo, Robin. 2011. "White Fragility". *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*. 3(3): 54-70.

### Additional Reading

Perea, Juan F. 2013. "The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race." in *Critical race theory: the cutting edge*. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (ed.), Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 3rd edition.

## **Week 6 (Feb 10): Race, Identity and Political Thought III (Mestizaje in Latin America)**

### Required Readings

Vasconcelos, José, and Didier Tisdell Jaén. 1997. *The cosmic race: a bilingual edition*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press.  
Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1999. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books. [Chapter 7: *La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness*]

### Additional Reading

Moreno Figueroa, Mónica G. and Emiko Saldívar Tanaka. 2016. "'We are Not Racists, we are Mexicans': Privilege, Nationalism and Post-Race Ideology in Mexico." *Critical Sociology* 42 (4-5): 515-533.

**(\*\*Second Essay Question due date)**

**\*\*Please Note: No class on Feb 17 for Reading Week\*\***

## **Week 7 (Feb 24): Environment, Justice and the Natural World I (Indigenous Views)**

### Required Readings

Ladner, K.L., 2003. "Governing within an ecological context: creating an alternative understanding of blackfoot governance." *Studies in Political Economy*, 70(1), 125-152.  
McGregor, Deborah. 2018. "Reconciliation and environmental justice." *Journal of Global Ethics*, 14:2, 222-231

### Additional Reading

De la Cadena, M., 2010. "Indigenous cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual reflections beyond 'politics.'" *Cultural anthropology*, 25(2), pp.334-370.

## **Week 8 (Mar 2): Environment, Justice and the Natural World II (Gandhian Approaches)**

### Required Readings

Gandhi, M.K., 1921. *Hind Swaraj or Indian home rule*. GA Natesan and Company, Madras. [\*\*Chapters I-VII; XIII, XIV]  
Shiva, V., 2006. *Earth democracy: Justice, sustainability and peace*. Zed Books. [\*\*Introduction: Principles of Earth Democracy; Chapter Four: Earth Democracy in Action]

### Additional Reading

Godrej, F., 2016. "Culture and Difference: Non-western approaches to defining environmental issues." *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory*, (Ed. T. Gabrielson, C. Hall, JM Meyer, & D. Schlosberg), pp.39-56.

## **Week 9 (Mar 9): Environment, Justice and the Natural World III (Buddhist Tree Ordination)**

### Required Readings

Tannenbaum, N., 2000. Protest, tree ordination, and the changing context of political ritual. *Ethnology*, 39(2).

Darlington, S.M., 2007. The good Buddha and the fierce spirits: protecting the northern Thai forest. *Contemporary Buddhism*, 8(2), pp.169-185.

### Additional Reading

Swearer, D., 2014. Environmental Ethics: Thai Buddhist Perspectives. *Journal of Oriental Studies*, 24, pp.49-55.

**(\*\*Third Essay Question due date)**

## **Week 10 (Mar 16): International and Cosmopolitan Visions I (Afropolitanism)**

### Required Readings

Selasi, Taiye. 2005. [“Bye Bye Babar.”](#) *The Lip*, March 3.

Mbembe, Achille. 2007. “Afropolitanism.” In *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent*. (Ed. Njami Simon and Lucy Durán) Johannesburg: Johannesburg Art Gallery, 26–30.

Eze, Chielozona. 2014. “Rethinking African culture and identity: the Afropolitan Model.” *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 26:2, 234-247.

### Additional Reading

Gehrmann, S., 2016. Cosmopolitanism with African roots. Afropolitanism's ambivalent mobilities. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 28(1), pp.61-72.

## **Week 11 (Mar 23): International and Cosmopolitan Visions II (Kang Youwei’s “One-World”)**

### Required Reading

Kang, Youwei. 2007 [1913/1935]. *Ta t'ung Shu: The One-World Philosophy of K'ang Yu-wei*. (Transl. Laurence G Thompson) London: Allen & Unwin. [\*\*Parts I, II (to p.104), VIII, IX, X]

### Additional Reading

Wang, Ban. 2017. “The Moral Vision in Kang Youwei’s *Book of the Great Community*.” *Chinese Visions of World Order: Tianxia, Culture, and World Politics*. (Ed. Ban Wang) Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

## **Week 12 (Mar 30): International and Cosmopolitan Visions III (Bandung and its Legacy)**

### Required Readings

“President Sukarno’s Opening Speech, Afro-Asian Conference, Bandung, 18-24 April 1955”

“Final Communique of the Asian-African Conference, Bandung, 24 April 1955”

Chakrabarty, D., 2005. Legacies of Bandung: Decolonisation and the politics of culture. *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp.4812-4818.

### Additional Reading

Pasha, M.K., 2013. “The “Bandung Impulse” and international relations.” *Postcolonial theory and international relations: A critical introduction* (Ed. Sanjay Seth), New York: Routledge.

**(\*\*Fourth Essay Question due date)**