

**Topics in Political Thought (Comparative Political Theory)**  
**POL480H/2038H**  
**Fall 2019**

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Office hours: Wednesdays 2-4pm

**Class Meetings:** OI4426, Thursdays, 2-4pm

**Course Description:**

Comparative Political Theory (CPT) is a growing subfield that has developed not only as a “corrective” to the cultural specificity of the Western canon in political theory, but, increasingly, as an important contribution to learning in other fields, particularly in this globalized and interconnected world. CPT scholars study the political thought of non-Western cultural and religious traditions (and sometimes, marginalized or subaltern traditions within the Western canon and Western geographical spaces). They pay particular attention to the ontological and epistemological assumptions that undergird differently situated political perspectives. In some cases, this includes explicitly “comparative” studies, either of thinkers in those traditions or with Western thinkers or concepts, but in other cases, CPT studies might be better understood as “interpretive” political theory.

CPT is an enterprise that 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. CPT scholars adopt many different approaches, and one of the purposes of this course will be for students to evaluate the range of methodologies and position themselves within the field. An abiding concern in evaluating this subfield will be on questioning the limits of mutual intelligibility and the possibility and utility of an actual Gadamerian “fusion of horizons.” When conducting comparative projects one must be conscious of over-stating both similarity *and* difference, and an essential element of CPT is the tension and necessary self-reflection that characterizes attempts to translate and re-present ideas in different cultural and linguistic contexts. In a new and growing field like this there will always be differences of opinion regarding approaches to research, and we will try to highlight the instances where scholars critically engage with each other, as well as the ways in which they draw on research and insights from other fields, making CPT a truly interdisciplinary endeavor.

As it is impossible to cover several traditions of political thought in sufficient depth in a short time, this course will include attention to diverse methods and aims of CPT work as well as more focused primary source readings in Buddhist, Islamic and Indigenous political thought.

**Course Readings:**

All 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. You are responsible for completing all readings by the dates indicated on the syllabus. The additional readings are optional for undergraduates but required for graduate students taking the course.

**Course Requirements:**

Class Participation (20%): This portion of your grade is based on your overall participation in class discussions. I recognize that not everyone is comfortable speaking regularly in class. As such, I will take into consideration other forms of participation, including discussions with me during office hours and over email; we will also have occasional in-class writing periods and small group discussions. 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 (30%): Each student must sign up to be a discussant at **three** class sessions during the course of the semester, with at least one session prior to Week 7. 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 1,000-1,500 word critical response. This is **NOT** a summary of the reading, but should include your analysis of one or more of the readings, 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 on Quercus **no later than 12pm the day before class**. These papers do not have to be fully developed essays, 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, but you should be a particularly active participant on days when you've written a Class Discussant response. Note that discussants are discussion *leaders*; I still expect all of you to have read the assigned readings, other students' discussant papers and to be prepared to participate in our discussions every week. I also suggest that you try to plan some of your discussant weeks strategically, to align with the topics of your other assignments.

Methods Response Paper (20%, Due Oct 10): You will write a 2,000-3,000 word paper in which you critically assess one or more of the different methodological approaches to CPT and situate yourself within the field. (\*\*NB: Graduate students will be expected to write a 3,000-5,000 word paper.)

Annotated Bibliography (10%, Due Nov 7): You will create an annotated bibliography (minimum 10 sources) focused on either a particular tradition or a topic related to CPT. This could include a topic commonly addressed within the Western canon, but addressed from different perspectives. An annotated bibliography is a list of relevant sources (books, chapters, articles or other materials) along with a brief (original) summary of each. Because comparative political theory is an inherently interdisciplinary enterprise, these sources can come from multiple disciplines, including (but not limited to) anthropology, history, religious studies, and area studies. (\*\*NB: Graduate students must have a minimum of 15 sources.)

Exegetical Essay (20%, Due Nov 28): You will choose a short primary source text of political thought either written from a non-Western tradition or a marginalized perspective within the Western tradition and write a critical, interpretive essay of 2,000-3,000 words. This should be more than simply a summary of the author's arguments and should reflect your own understanding of its insights and relevance. I do not expect this to be an exhaustive analysis, but you will need to develop your own reading of the text through engaging with additional contextual and secondary interpretive sources. Ideally your annotated bibliography feeds into the exegetical essay. (\*\*NB: Graduate students will be expected to write a 3,000-5,000 word essay.)

### **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 a full 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 and your written statement to office hours and we will discuss the grade.

### **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 written assignments other than class discussion responses 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 (Sept 5): Introduction**

#### Required Readings

Hpo Hlaing, 1979 [1878]. *Rajadhammasangaha*. U Htin Fatt (ed.), L.E. Bagshawe (trans.). [\*\*Pages 5-8; 70-76; 87-114]

#### Additional Readings

Von Vacano, Diego. 2015. "The Scope of Comparative Political Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14.8.

## **Week 2 (Sept 12): Encounters with the Other**

### Required Readings

- Todorov, Tzvetan. 1984. *The conquest of America: the question of the other*. New York: Harper & Row. [\*\*Chapter 4]
- 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*]
- Motoori, N., 2007. *The Poetics of Motoori Norinaga: A Hermeneutical Journey*. [Transl. Michal F. Marra] Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. [\*\*\*"On *Mono no Aware*"]

### Additional Readings

- Rudolph, Susanne Hoeber. 2005. "The Imperialism of Categories: Situating Knowledge in a Globalizing World". *Perspectives on Politics*. 3 (1).
- March, Andrew. 2016. "Is there a Paradox of Learning from the Other?: Four Questions and a Proposal." *The Muslim World* 106(2): 234–254.

## **Week 3 (Sept 19): What is Comparative Political Theory?**

### Required Readings

- March, Andrew. 2009. "What Is Comparative Political Theory?" *Review of Politics* 71: 531-65.
- Godrej, Farah. 2009. "Response to 'What is Comparative Political Theory?'" *Review of Politics* 71: 567-582.
- Hassanzadeh, N., 2018. "Race, Internationalism, and Comparative Political Theory." *Polity*, 50(4): 519-546.

### Additional Readings

- Williams, Melissa S., and Mark E. Warren. 2014. "A Democratic Case for Comparative Political Theory." *Political Theory*. 42(1): 26–57.
- Freeden, M. 2015. *The political theory of political thinking: The anatomy of a practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [\*\*Chapter 1]

## **Week 4 (Sept 26): Methods and Comparison (Part I)**

### Required Readings

- F. Godrej. 2009. "Towards a Cosmopolitan Political Thought: The Hermeneutics of Interpreting the Other." *Polity*, 41(2): pp. 135–65
- Jenco, Leigh Kathryn. 2007. "'What Does Heaven Ever Say?' A Methods-centered Approach to Cross-cultural Engagement." *The American Political Science Review* 101(4): 741-755.
- Idris, Murad. 2016. "Political Theory and the Politics of Comparison." *Political Theory*.

### Additional Readings

- Ackerly, Brooke and Rochana Bajpai. 2017. "Comparative Political Thought." In *Research Methods in Analytic Political Theory*, ed. Adrian Blau, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 270-296.
- Freeden, M. 2015. *The political theory of political thinking*. [\*\*Chapter 2]

## **Week 5 (Oct 3): Methods and Comparison (Part II)**

### Required Readings

- Alcoff, L., 1991. "The problem of speaking for others." *Cultural critique*, (20), pp.5-32.
- Cho, V., 2014. "The Academic Life of Savages." *Journal of Burma Studies*, 18(1), pp.23-31.

Iseke, J., 2013. "Indigenous storytelling as research." *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 6(4), pp.559-577.

#### Additional Readings

Kovach, Margaret. 2009. *Indigenous methodologies: characteristics, conversations and contexts*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. [\*\*Chapter 6: Situating Self, Culture and Purpose in Indigenous Inquiry]

Sumner, Claude. 2001. "The Proverb and Oral Society." In *Explorations in African Political Thought*, ed. Teodros Kiros.

### **Week 6 (Oct 10): Religion, Morality & Legitimacy in Buddhist Political Thought**

#### Required Readings

*Agganna Sutta* (transl. Collins)

*Cakkavatti Sutta* (transl. Collins)

Phra Thēpwisutthimēthī and Donald K. Swearer. 1989. *Me and mine: selected essays of Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa*. Albany: State University of New York Press. [\*\*"The value of morality," "Democratic socialism," and "A dictatorial dhammic socialism"]

Aung San. 2015 [1998]. *The Writings of General Aung San*. Ed. Mya Han. Yangon: Yan Aung Books. [\*\*Annexure 8: Many Kinds of Politics]

#### Additional Readings

Jackson, Peter. 1993. "Re-interpreting the *Traiphuum Phra Ruang*: Political Functions of Buddhist Symbolism in Contemporary Thailand." In *Buddhist Trends in Southeast Asia*, Ed. Trevor Ling. Singapore: ISEAS Press.

Jory, P., 2002. "The Vessantara Jataka, Barami, and the Bodhisatta-kings: The origin and spread of a Thai concept of power." *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 16(2): 36-78.

### **Week 7 (Oct 17): Religion, Morality & Legitimacy in Islamic Political Thought**

#### Required Readings

Qutb, Sayyid. 2006. *Milestones (Ma'alim fi'l tareeq)*. Ed. A.B. al-Mehri. Birmingham: Maktabah. [\*\*Introduction, Chapters 1-4]

Soroush, Abdolkarim. 2000. *Reason, freedom & democracy in Islam*. Ed. Mahmoud & Ahmad Sadri. NY, NY: Oxford University Press. [\*\*Chapter 9: Tolerance and Governance: A Discourse on Religion and Democracy]

Barlas, Asma. 2002. "*Believing Women*" in *Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*. Austin: University of Texas Press. [\*\*Chapter 3: Intertextualities, Extratextual Contexts: The *Sunnah*, *Shari'ah*, and the State]

#### Additional Readings

Euben, Roxanne L. 2000. *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism: A Work of Comparative Political Theory*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. [\*\*Chapter 3: A View from Another Side: The Political Theory of Sayyid Qutb]

Fred Dallmayr. 2002. "Islam and Democracy: Reflections on Abdolkarim Soroush," in *Dialogue among Civilizations: Some Exemplary Voices*. Ed. Fred Dallmayr. New York: Palgrave/ Macmillan.

Rahemtulla, Shadaab. 2017. *Qur'an of the Oppressed: Liberation Theology and Gender Justice in Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [\*\*Chapter 5: Against Patriarchy: The Reading of Asma Barlas (pp.161-207)]

## **Week 8 (Oct 24): Language & Translation**

### Required Readings

- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 1993. "Thick Translation." *Callaloo* 16(4): 808-819.
- Loos, Tamara. 1998. "Issaraphap: The Limits of Individual Liberty in Thai Jurisprudence." *Crossroads*, 12(1): 35-75.
- Michaele Browsers. 2006. *Democracy and Civil Society in Arab Political Thought*. [\*\*Chapter 3: The Politics of Translating Civil Society into Arabic]

### Additional Readings

- Schaffer, Frederic C. 1998. *Democracy in Translation*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press. [\*\*Chapter 2]
- Gunnars, Kristjana. 1997. "Translating the Subaltern," *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 29(3): 75-81.

## **Week 9 (Oct 31): Recognition, Refusal & Resurgence in Indigenous Political Thought**

### Required Readings

- Coulthard, G.S., 2007. "Subjects of empire: Indigenous peoples and the 'politics of recognition' in Canada." *Contemporary political theory*, 6(4), pp.437-460.
- Simpson, A., 2007. "On ethnographic refusal: indigeneity, 'voice' and colonial citizenship." *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialogue*, (9).
- Corntassel, J., 2012. "Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination." *Decolonization: indigeneity, education & society*, 1(1).

### Additional Readings

- Grande, Sandy. 2015. *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought (Tenth Anniversary Edition)*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. [\*\*Chapter 2 and its responses]
- Hunt, Sarah. 2014. "Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept." *Cultural Geographies* 21(1): 27-32.
- Todd, Z. 2016. "An Indigenous Feminist's Take On The Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word For Colonialism." *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 29: 4-22.

**(\*\*No class on Nov 7 due to Reading Week)**

## **Week 10 (Nov 14): De-Parochializing Political Theory**

### Required Readings

- Chen, K.-H., 2010. *Asia as method: toward deimperialization*, Durham, [N.C.]; London: Duke University Press. [\*\*Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 5]
- 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 Readings

- Jenco, Leigh. 2015. "Why Learning from Others Is Political, Not (Only) Epistemological." In *Changing Referents: Learning Across Space and Time in China and the West*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kerner, I., 2018. "Beyond Eurocentrism: Trajectories towards a renewed political and social theory." *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 44(5), pp.550-570.

## **Week 11 (Nov 21): Creolizing Political Theory**

### Required Readings

- Fanon, Franz. 1967. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press. [\*\*Chapter 4: The So-Called Dependence Complex of Colonized Peoples]
- Gordon, J.A., 2014. *Creolizing political theory: reading Rousseau through Fanon*, New York: Fordham University Press. [\*\*Introduction, Chapter 2, Chapter 5, Conclusion]

### Additional Readings

- Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. [\*\*On National Culture, pp.206-248]
- Gordon, J.A., 2014. *Creolizing political theory*. [\*\*Remaining chapters]
- Haymes, Stephen Nathan, 2018. "Theorizing creolization with nature in mind: Some preliminary thoughts in conversation with Jane Anna Gordon's creolizing political theory." *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, & Cultural Studies*, 40(1), pp.43–57.

## **Week 12 (Nov 28): Non-Human Political Perspectives**

### Required Readings

- De la Cadena, M., 2010. "Indigenous cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual reflections beyond 'politics.'" *Cultural anthropology*, 25(2), pp.334-370.
- Tsing, Anna, 2010. "Arts of Inclusion, or How to Love a Mushroom." *Manoa*, 22(2), pp.191–203.
- 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 Readings

- Kymlicka, W. & Donaldson, S., 2016. "Locating Animals in Political Philosophy." *Philosophy Compass*, 11(11), pp.692–701.