

**University of Toronto
Department of Political Science**

POL 485 H1S—Topics in Political Thought: Power and Interest in Political Theory

TENTATIVE syllabus for Winter 2020

[subject to change and revision, though the requirements will be as listed]

Date: 20 December 2019

Meets: Thursdays, 6-8 p.m., UC 148 (University College, 15 King's College Circle)

INSTRUCTOR:

Andrew Sabl (rhymes with “bauble”).

Department of Political Science

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Phone: (416) 978-2381 (office); But email is by far the best way to reach me.

Winter Term office hours: Fridays 10 am-noon, or by appointment.

THEMES:

Much political theory discusses the ideals to which the theorist believes politics should aspire, e.g. liberty, equality, rationality, justice, deliberation, recognition. This course addresses instead two concepts that are understudied even though—perhaps because!—they are universally agreed to drive most, perhaps all, actual politics: *power* and *interest*.

One reason power and interest may be understudied is that they are viewed by many theoretical traditions as tainted or illegitimate. Liberals are, at least by reputation, reluctant to discuss power at all (except in the Lockean sense whereby power is a “right” to make law or policy); Marxists and other radicals relentlessly trace the workings of power but aspire to a society that would put an end to those workings in favor of spontaneous cooperation. Interests, on the other hand, were once seen as central to Enlightenment—a benign substitute for destructive passions, allowing for mutual gain through commerce and intellectual progress—but are now often attacked as characterizing the “wrong” kind of liberalism, the economic or neoliberal kind whereby people pursue their selfish goals rather than asking whether those goals are justified or fair. Thus, the liberal tradition has abandoned interest, while radicals, now as ever, stress only those interests (“vested”, “special”, “class-“ or the like) that cannot be defended. Meanwhile, conservative doctrines of both power and interest are not even considered long enough to be rejected. While leaving room to consider these standard positions, the course will start from opposite premises: power and interest are permanent and unavoidable features of political and social life, and it is vain to dream of a society where neither is important. Neither power or interest is automatically good or bad; rather, some versions of each are more normatively admirable than others. Finally, power and interest are concepts that we all think we understand better than we do: they are at least as complex and potentially paradoxical as the other concepts (justice, equality, and so on) that occupy theorists’ permanent attention.

Without claiming to exhaust the enormous literature on either power or interest, this course will address some key themes in the study of both:

- the common (but debatable) premise that power is the particular province of “radical” thought” whereas liberals prefer to speak of interest (or interests).
- the relationship between power and interest, such that it can be quite difficult to discuss either concept without reference to the other;
- the possibility and limits of “balancing” views whereby certain kinds of political power are to be deployed to check others, or the interplay of social and economic interests produce outcomes that further the “public” or “general” interest;
- the ways in which defenses of (or critiques of) power and interest necessarily make reference to other normative concepts (as might seem obvious), and vice-versa (less obvious).

REQUIREMENTS:

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|----|---|--------------------|
| 1. | 1 short analytic paper (4-5 double-spaced pages) due via Quercus on 17 February at 10 p.m. | Weight: 20% |
| 2. | Research paper (about 15 double-spaced pages) due via Quercus on Sunday, April 5 (or later if U of T rules allow it). | Weight: 60% |
| 3. | Class Attendance and participation | Weight: 20% |

QUERCUS AND EMAIL: Course assignments and guidelines will be posted on Quercus. You **MUST** have a valid UTOR email and are expected to consult Quercus regularly as well as enabling prompt (same-day) Quercus announcements to allow communication of urgent matters.

The professor will respond to emails within 24 hours whenever possible. In the rare case that a substantive question is not answered within that time, you should feel free to send it again, and will never be marked down for doing so (politely). *Please consult the syllabus or Quercus before asking questions that are answered there.* Those asking complex questions may be encouraged to attend office hours in lieu of being given a very lengthy response.

WRITING ESSAYS:

This course assumes that you are prepared to work on improving your prose style and argumentative skill. Moreover, it regards clear, well-structured, and forceful writing as the hallmark of strong analytic and synthetic thought. That is: passive, indirect constructions let a writer get away with not stating and defending—in other words, possibly not having—a definite position. The Writing at U of T website (<http://writing.utoronto.ca/>) contains a variety of online resources, links to writing centers and other forms of support. Writing assistance is also available through every college. *You are strongly encouraged to*

take extensive advantage of all these resources. Not only the worst but also the best writers are constantly trying to improve.

Other resources for improving your writing will be posted on Quercus.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will be dealt with accordingly. Students must read “Tips for Avoiding Academic Misconduct”

<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students/avoid-misconduct/tips-for-avoiding-academic-misconduct> and the University’s “How not to Plagiarize” document,

<http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/> and are encouraged to discuss with the instructors if they are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty. Plagiarism applies not only to essays, but also to more informal forms of writing.

SUBMITTING PAPERS AND OTHER ASSIGNMENTS: TURNITIN.COM

Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments and essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their work 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.

Quercus contains resources for submitting papers via TurnItIn. **Please do not turn in hard copies at the Political Science desk: they will not be received.**

You should ensure that you have a hard copy and an electronic copy of all work submitted, and you are strongly advised to retain the rough work, notes, and draft material that went into the essay or assignment.

Students have the right to refuse to use Turnitin.com. In this case, students will be expected to submit an electronic copy of their essay to the professor by email, accompanied by their outline, thesis statement and annotated bibliography, as well all their notes and rough drafts, **by the time each paper would normally be due on TurnItIn.**

LATE WORK POLICY:

Late papers and other assignments will be penalized four points on the 100-point U of T grading scale per day late or part thereof. Exceptions may be granted to students who have faced serious medical or other emergencies, and who have substantial and convincing documentation fully accounting for the length of delay. If you are facing such a situation, inform the instructor as soon as possible—and, whenever possible, *before* the assignment is due.

CLASS ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:

Students are expected to read the readings listed for each class section *before* coming to class. Study questions will be distributed prior to the class (at least two days before, usually sooner). Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss those questions, since the class will consist of discussion centered on those questions. The professor will not lecture but will make points throughout the class (and sometimes present a “reverse lecture”, lasting a few minutes, at the end of class).

TEXTS:

All the readings marked on the syllabus are required, unless otherwise stated. Readings may be modified at the Instructor’s discretion – you must consult Quercus regularly for new, revised or updated assignments.

Assigned books (in alphabetical order; the numbers at the end are ISBN-13 numbers for easier used book shopping): all on order at the U of T bookstore, and available in the library:

Elizabeth Anderson, *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don't Talk about It)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. 978-0691192246.

Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (Harvest Books), 1970. 978-0156695008.

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995. 978-0679752554

Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph*, rev. ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. 978-0691160252.

Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*. 2nd ed. Houndmills, UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005 (also published under the imprint “Red Glob Press,” same publication year). 978-0333420928.

Hannah F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972. 978-0333420928

CLASS SCHEDULE

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are articles/book chapters available either through the library or as handouts via Quercus (under “Files”).

I. Introductory lecture 9 January

II. Interest

A. History: Interest in the Enlightenment (and beyond) 16 January

Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, all.

*Pierre Force, *Self-Interest before Adam Smith* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): Chapter 1 (“Self-Interest as a First Principle”).

B. Analysis: interest as rational care, informed preference, or capability.

*Peter Railton, "Moral Realism", *The Philosophical Review* 95, No. 2 (April 1986): 163-207. 23 January

*Stephen Darwall, "Self-Interest and Self-Concern", *Social Philosophy and Policy* 14, No. 1 (Winter 1997): 158-178.

Recommended: *Brian Barry, "The Public Interest", in *The Bias of Pluralism*, ed. William E. Connolly (New York: Atherton Press, 1969): chapter 7.

C. Interests and representation 30 January

Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*, Chapters 8 and 9 (and skim 10).

*Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, Chapter 4 ("Jeremy Bentham: Legislator of the World?").

D. Aggregation and articulation (and their discontents) 6 February

*Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics: System, Process, and Policy*, 2d ed. (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1978): Chapters 7 and 8 ("Interest Articulation", "Interest Aggregation").

*Lisa Disch, "Radical Democracy: The Silent Partner in Political Representation's Constructivist Turn", in Dario Castiglione and Johannes Pollak, eds, *Creating Political Presence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), chapter 7.

*Iris Marion Young, "Democracy and Justice", in *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002): Chapter 1.

E. Conservative interests: moderate hierarchy and social order 13 February

*Wilhelm Röpke, *The Social Crisis of Our Time*, trans. Annette Jacobsohn and Peter Schiffer Jacobsohn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942): selections to be announced. (The entire text is available online: [https://cdn.mises.org/The%20Social%20Crisis%20of%20Our%20Time%20\(1\).pdf](https://cdn.mises.org/The%20Social%20Crisis%20of%20Our%20Time%20(1).pdf) —or search for "Mises Röpke Social Crisis".) Please ignore the dogmatically libertarian introduction by the Mises institute, which is a very poor guide to the text.

February 17 (Monday), 10 p.m.: Short analytic paper due via Quercus.

February 20: Class will not meet (Reading Week).

February 27: Class will not meet (due to the instructor's presence at a major conference).

III. Power

A. Introductory concepts: power-to and power-over; power resources.

5 March

*Peter Morriss, "The Essentially Uncontestable Concepts of Power", from Michael Freeman and David Robertson, eds., *Frontiers of Political Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980): 198-232.

*William Connolly, "Power and Responsibility", in *The Terms of Political Discourse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), Chapter 3.

*Norman Uphoff, "Distinguishing Power, Authority & Legitimacy", *Polity* 22, No. 2 (Winter 1989): 295-322.

B. The Three Dimensions of Power (?) 12 March

Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, extensive selections (probably most of the book).

C. "Power With": action in concert. 19 March

*Mary Parker Follett, "Power" (1925), in idem, *Dynamic Administration*, ed. Henry C. Metcalf and L. Urwick. (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1940; reprint, Mansfield Centre, Ct: Martino Publishing, 2013): Chapter 4.

Arendt, *On Violence*, all. (It is a short book.)

D. Power as dispersed control and surveillance (?) 26 March

Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, extensive selections.

E. Case study: corporate power and the employment relationship 2 April

Elizabeth Anderson, *Private Government*, extensive selections (The book is a series of lectures: not hard going).

April 5 (Sunday), 10 p.m. (or later if U of T rules allow it): research paper due via Quercus.