

Studies in Comparative Political Theory
POL480H/2038H
Fall 2020

Professor: Matthew J Walton
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Virtual office hours: Wednesdays 2-4pm, or by appointment

Class Meetings: Blackboard Collaborate, Thursdays, 10am-12pm

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. Abiding concerns in evaluating this subfield will include questioning the possibilities and the limits of mutual intelligibility and interrogating our assumptions of what constitutes “political theory.” 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 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 many 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 Indigenous, Neo-Confucian and Buddhist political thought.

[Please note: while course assignments and delivery/participation methods may seem extensive, the number and type of assignments is designed to lower the stakes for any given assignment and to give you an opportunity to practice and develop a range of important skills. The many modes of delivery and participation are intended to allow you to engage with course materials on your own time as much as possible, and to provide multiple pathways for doing so, knowing that some students will face challenges in an online-only platform and that some students are not necessarily comfortable participating in large group settings.]

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. You are responsible for completing all readings by the dates indicated on the syllabus. The additional readings are optional for undergraduates but strongly encouraged, and are required for graduate students taking the course. I also strongly encourage you to look at several of the class discussant responses each week as they are posted by your fellow students. I have tried to make the assigned readings less onerous during the weeks when you have an assignment due, so please plan accordingly.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (20%): While I recognize the challenge of robust participation in a fully online setting, this remains an essential aspect of a seminar course. The following is the range of ways through which your participation will be measured: participation during synchronous full-class discussions (by audio, video or chat); by completing occasional “in-class” writing responses, usually assigned in a pre-recorded lecture, with responses submitted on Quercus; participation during occasional synchronous small group discussions; by participating in weekly open discussion threads on Quercus; or by talking with me about course ideas over email or during virtual office hours. I know that not everyone is comfortable speaking regularly in class, so I hope this range of possible methods provides an option that works for you. I still expect you to 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 6. (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 1,000-1,500 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 but you should be a particularly active participant on days when you’ve written a Class Discussant response. 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 and the questions and ideas they generate will form part of the framework for our synchronous discussions online during the assigned class period.

Methods Response Paper (20%, Due Oct 15): You will write a 2,000-3,000 word paper in which you critically assess one or more of the different methodological approaches to or problems within CPT and situate yourself within the field. I will provide a more detailed essay prompt by Week 2. (**NB: Graduate students will be expected to write a 3,000-5,000 word paper.)

Annotated Bibliography (10%, Due Nov 5): You will create an annotated bibliography (minimum 8 sources) focused on either a particular tradition or a topic related to CPT, that will help you develop your exegetical essay. This could include a topic commonly addressed within the Western canon, but addressed from marginalized perspectives or positions. An annotated bibliography is a list of relevant sources (books, chapters, or 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, literature, religious studies, and area studies. (**NB: Graduate students must have a minimum of 12 sources.)

Exegetical Essay (20%, Due Dec 3): You will choose either 1) a short primary source text of political thought either written from a non-Western tradition or a marginalized perspective within the Western tradition **or** 2) a practice, embodied position or some other non-textual expression of political thinking, and write a critical, interpretive essay of 2,000-3,000 words. This should be more than simply a summary of the author's/practitioner's argument or stance 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/practice/position 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.)

Delivery/Participation Methods:

- **Readings** (available through Quercus; to be done in advance of the scheduled class meeting)
- **Reading Questions** (optional; posted weekly on Quercus; designed to help guide your study and provide confidence that you are recognizing and understanding some of the main arguments from each reading)
- **Background Lecture** (occasional short, pre-recorded lecture; posted weekly on Quercus; providing context and background on each author or set of ideas in the readings; ideally watch/listen to this lecture *before* you do the readings)
- **Class Lecture** (slightly longer, pre-recorded lecture; posted weekly on Quercus; providing an overview of the readings and their arguments; designed to ensure everyone has a base understanding of the readings before our discussion ideally watch/listen to this lecture *after* you do the readings but *before* the scheduled class meeting)
- **Reflection Lecture** (from time to time, I might post a short video/audio recording to re-iterate an important point from previous discussions, to reflect on some connections between readings that we didn't have a chance to explore, or to offer additional thoughts about a reading or topic)
- **Class Discussant Posts** (assigned short response papers—described above—that are posted publicly on Quercus to share students' reactions to and analysis of the readings; I will read all of these in advance of the scheduled class meeting and use them to plan our group discussion)
- **Open Discussion Thread** (optional; for posting questions, ideas, concerns about the readings that you'd like to share with classmates and to incorporate into our group discussion)
- **All-Class Discussions** (synchronous; held on Bb Collaborate to discuss the readings, their arguments and implications)
- **Small Group Discussions** (on occasion, we will breakout into small groups during our synchronous class time, to do close readings of passages from the texts or to discuss questions I will provide)
- **Office Hours** (held virtually for 2 hours a week, on Bb Collaborate; also available by appointment via Skype or another platform)
- **Announcements** (reminders of assignments due, updates on course plans or changes)

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 late work that is not excused in advance 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

I do my best to welcome students with diverse learning styles and needs 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 am also open to hearing about ways in which the course environment or structure might unintentionally exclude or disadvantage certain people and will work to respond to any such concerns.

I'm always willing to work with **any** student to help facilitate your participation and success in this course, whether you have a formal accommodation granted or not. I recognize that a range of other circumstances might affect your ability to engage fully with course expectations. Please feel free to come to me to discuss any difficulties you are experiencing and we can work together to address them.

Attendance Policy

I expect you to be engaged with course matters as much as you are able, including doing the weekly readings, listening to pre-recorded lectures, and participating in discussions during the scheduled class time. I also recognize that your ability to access materials or participate in discussions might fluctuate, due to technological limitations, environmental stresses or other factors. If you're having trouble keeping up, please get in touch with me and we can work together to find a suitable way forward.

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 exam and your written statement to my 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. Otherwise, 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 10): 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 17): 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*.

Week 3 (Sept 24): What is CPT?

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), pp.519-546.

Additional Readings

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

Freeden, M. 2015. *The political theory of political thinking: The anatomy of a practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [**Chapter 1]

Week 4 (Oct 1): 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*. [**pp.1-6]

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 8): Methods and Comparison (Part II)

Required Readings

- Christian, B., 1987. "The race for theory." *Cultural Critique*, (6), pp.51-63.
Alcoff, L., 1991. "The problem of speaking for others." *Cultural Critique*, (20), pp.5-32.
Kovach, Margaret. 2009. *Indigenous methodologies: characteristics, conversations and contexts*.
Toronto: University of Toronto Press. [**Chapters 5& 6]

Additional Readings

- Cho, V., 2014. "The Academic Life of Savages." *Journal of Burma Studies*, 18(1), pp.23-31.
Sumner, Claude. 2001. "The Proverb and Oral Society." On *Explorations in African Political Thought*,
ed. Teodros Kiros.

Week 6 (Oct 15): Recognition and Refusal 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).
Maile, David Uahikeaikalei'ohu. 2019. "'A'ole Is Our Refusal." In *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to
Hawai'i*, edited by Hōkūlani K. Aikau and Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez, 193-199. Durham, NC:
Duke University Press.

Additional Readings

- Corntassel, J., 2012. "Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable
self-determination." *Decolonization: indigeneity, education & society*, 1(1).
Hunt, Sarah. 2014. "Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept." *Cultural
Geographies* 21(1): 27–32.

****Methods Response Paper Due****

Week 7 (Oct 22): De-Parochializing Political Theory

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

Additional Readings

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

Week 8 (Oct 29): Neo-Confucian Utopianism

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), III, VI, 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 9 (Nov 5): 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.

Additional Readings

Schaffer, Frederic C. 1998. *Democracy in Translation*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press. [**Chapters 2 & 3]

Michaele Browsers. 2006. *Democracy and Civil Society in Arab Political Thought*. [**Chapter 3: The Politics of Translating Civil Society into Arabic]

Annotated Bibliography Due*

(**No Class Nov 12 for Reading Week**)

Week 10 (Nov 19): Morality & Legitimacy in Theravāda Buddhist Political Thought I

Required Readings

Aggañña Sutta

Cakkavatti Sutta

Traiphum Phra Ruang (Three Worlds According to King Ruang): A Thai Buddhist Cosmology. 1982 [1345]. Frank E Reynolds and Mani B Reynolds (ed.), Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press. [**"The Great Cakkavatti King", pp.135-172]

Additional Readings

Walton, M.J., 2016. *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar*. Cambridge University Press. [**Chapter 2: Building Blocks of a Moral Universe]

Week 11 (Nov 26): Morality & Legitimacy in Theravāda Buddhist Political Thought II

Required Readings

Phra Thēpwisutthimēthī and Donald K. Swearer. 1989. *Me and mine: selected essays of Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa*. Albany: State University of New York Press. [**"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]

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.

Additional Readings

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 12 (Dec 3): Non-Human Political Perspectives

Required Readings

- 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

- De la Cadena, M., 2010. "Indigenous cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual reflections beyond 'politics.'" *Cultural anthropology*, 25(2), pp.334-370.
- Kymlicka, W. & Donaldson, S., 2016. "Locating Animals in Political Philosophy." *Philosophy Compass*, 11(11), pp.692–701.

****Exegetical Essay Due****