

## **Pol 193 Politics and the Arts**

David Cook

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Office Hour: Thursday 10:10-11:00 / Birge Carnegie #24 or by appointment or Zoom.

Log in code found on Quercus.

Class Location ..., Monday 9:10-11:00

Office hours are an opportunity for you to ask questions, discuss interesting course concepts, or to ask for academic advice.

Accessibility Needs ([www.accessibility.utoronto.ca](http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca))

If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) as soon as possible.

It is not uncommon for university students to experience a range of health and mental health issues that may result in barriers to achieving their academic goals. The University of Toronto offers a wide range of services that may be of assistance. You are encouraged to seek out these resources early and often.

On Campus: Your college Registrar's Office, and / or Dean of Students' Office

Student Life - <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca>

Health and Wellness Centre -

<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>

Off-Campus: Good2Talk - a post-secondary (24/7) helpline (1-866-925-5454).

### **Course Modality**

This is an "in-person" class.

What to do if you're feeling unwell

1. Report your sickness to your course instructor.
2. Go home
3. If desired, Email U of T's Occupational Health Nurse ([ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca](mailto:ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca)) who will conduct assessment and contact tracing, and will provide further direction

## **Course Description**

The course will examine the relation between politics and the arts. Political ideas are often expressed in the theatre through movies, plays, through novels, through painting and sculpture. We will sample works that illustrate this relation.

The course will take the format of a weekly seminar discussion. Readings have been kept short being mainly essays or chapters from a work and will serve as an introduction to the theorists. Please come prepared to discuss the concepts raised in the texts. As this is a seminar, I will request two or three members of the class to lead discussion. A sign-up list will be distributed in our second class.

## **Course Objectives**

The study of political ideas is the academic goal of the course. The course is also intended to satisfy partially the following competencies: in Critical and Creative Thinking by reflective examination of ideas and judgments, Communication skills in presenting written and oral arguments, Information Literacy by effective use of the library and other sources of information and Social and Ethical Responsibility by engaging in a critical reflection on your views and the views of others.

## **Evaluation**

The evaluation will consist of:

- 1) A review of maximum two pages on Camus' *Just Assassins* or Sartre's *The Wall*. The review is due Sept. 25. As a guide for the critical review, I would ask that you pick out what is, in your opinion, the central idea of the work you are examining. Explain the idea and indicate its strength or weakness. That is, do a critical assessment of the idea being considered. You need not examine all the ideas in the play or short story, only what you view as the central or most interesting idea. The reviews should not be a summary. The critical review is to focus on the theoretical aspect of the work. Present the ideas. You may also be asked to present, briefly in 5 minutes, your review to the class. The presentation will not form part of the mark. The review amounts to 30% of the course mark.
- 2) A term research paper of approximately 1,500 words. The paper is due Monday, Nov. 13 amounting to 50% of your final mark. You will be asked to present your paper to the seminar on either Nov. 20, 27 or Dec. 4. It will form 10% of the mark. The presentation of your essay topic should be a maximum 10 minutes in length. The seminar presentations schedule will be set after the Reading break.
- 3) Class participation 10%.

Submission of work by e mail only, preferably in Word or PDF. Late penalties are 5% per school day.

Note: In the event of a disruption to the class or to any member of the class owing to a health or other disruption where we cannot meet the marking scheme will be adjusted to 40% for the first paper and 60% for the second. In this case as well, work is to be submitted by e mail.

### **Term Essay Topics**

1. Justice is a cry heard today by many. As it was by the Old Woman in *The Visit*. In your view, was justice served? If not, what would be justice?
2. Did Plato get the relation of politics to the arts right? If not, what would be your view of the relationship?

3. Analyze Michel Serres' natural contract. Is it an improvement on the social contracts of the past?
4. Freedom is not a political category but rather an existential one. Comment.
5. "I rebel, therefore, we exist". Did Camus get it right?
6. Baudelaire sets out what we all have experienced when we see individuals who are on the street and who ask for money. But if we respond, do we really make a gift, or is it for a return to ourselves? Comment.
7. What can art teach us about the political?
8. Compare Belmore and Monkman on colonialism.
9. Or a topic of your choosing. Please discuss it first with me.

### Readings

The number of writers concerned with politics and the arts is large. The readings highlighted here may be replaced or supplemented by others by agreement with the class. The selections may also be found on the internet though I have not checked for copyright.

La Fontaine, 'The Wolf and the Lamb' a fable.  
(lafontaine.mmic.northwestern.edu)

Charles Baudelaire's, "Counterfeit Money" can be found at the end of Jacques Derrida's, *Given Time*, U of Chicago Press, 1992. (monoskop.org) or "Counterfeit Money" by Charles Baudelaire. (biblioklept.org).

Friedrich Dürrenmatt, *The Visit*, Grove Press. Also found in *Plays and Essays*, Continuum N.Y, 1982 which also contains *The Visit*, and other writings. (advdpdrama.weebly.com >uploads> the visit)

Jean Paul Sartre, "The Wall" in *The Wall*, New Directions: N.Y., 1948, p. 1-17

[https://almabooks.com > uploads](https://almabooks.com/uploads)

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* can be found on Wikiart or Wikipedia.

Plato, “Book 10”, *The Republic*. There are many translations. I use the G.M.A. Grube, Plato’s *Republic*, Hackett: Indianapolis, 1974 (or the 1992 revised edition), p. 239-263. The Bloom translation is also fine.

<https://d.umn.edu>. One can find book 10 in the Jowett translation which is a standard classical translation.

Serres, Michel, *The Natural Contract*, translated by Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson, University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, 1995, p. 1-50.

[https://monoskop.org/images/S/Serres\\_Michel\\_The\\_Natural\\_Contract.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/S/Serres_Michel_The_Natural_Contract.pdf). Pdf

The Goya painting can be found at the beginning of *The Natural Contract* or on Wikiart.

Belmore, Rebecca, *Fringe*, 2008, National Gallery of Canada. Can also be found on the AGO website.

Momkman, Kent, Study for “mistikosiwak (Wooden Boat People): Resurgence of the People, 2(Final Variation) 2019. McMichael Gallery, mcmichael.com.

## **Schedule of the Seminars**

Sep. 11

Introduction

The first part of the class will focus on introducing ourselves and providing an overview of the course. Then a class discussion of ‘The Wolf and the Lamb’ the fable by La Fontaine. This will give you an idea of the approach the course will take.

Sep. 18

Plato

The Case against the Poets

The classic text in the Western tradition setting out the relation of politics to the arts can be found in Book 10 of Plato's *Republic*. A reprise of this argument can also be found in Alan Bloom's introduction to *Politics and the Arts*, Cornell: Ithaca, 1968.

Sep. 25

Albert Camus

The Politics of Rebellion

After Camus' early works, he takes up the question of political action notably in the lengthy essay *The Rebel*. We will explore some of the themes of historical and metaphysical rebellion from *The Rebel* in his play *The Just Assassins*. Camus' work is also interesting for what it says about terrorism and the important question about 'limits' to action. This is a play based on the uprising in Russia in 1905 some years prior to the Russian Revolution.

Oct. 2

J. P. Sartre and Pablo Picasso

The Wall and Existentialism

This short story, set in the Spanish Civil War, touches on one of the most important concepts in Sartre's politics and that is existentialism. Sartre's view was expressed in *Being and Nothingness* his long philosophical work. In *The Wall* we get a sense of his idea of death and freedom. In the second part, we will have a discussion of Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica* which can be found at [wikiart.org](http://wikiart.org) and depicts the violence of the Spanish War.

Oct. 5 Office Hour cancelled. Consultation by email.

Oct. 9 Thanksgiving (No class)

Oct. 16

Friedrich Dürrenmatt

The Visit

In classical Greece there was the 'polis', a political city, which embodied a community. What happens to this community in the late twentieth century? *The Visit of the Old Women* who returns to her 'native' city sets out a rather different 'politics'. Was there justice in the end?

Oct. 23

Michel Serres and Francisca Goya

The Natural Contract

Michel Serres believes that the social contract, as articulated historically, needs now to be modified becoming a 'natural contract'. We will examine this through the Francisca Goya painting '*Men Fighting with Sticks*' and Serres work *The Natural Contract*, p. 1-25.

Oct. 30

Charles Baudelaire and Jacques Derrida

The Economy, Ethics, Time, and Exchange

We will examine a reading of 'exchange', 'value', 'reason' 'time' found in the short story '*Counterfeit Money*' by Charles Baudelaire. A commentary on the reflection can be found in Derrida's *Given Time* for those interested.

Nov. 6 Reading Week

Nov. 13

Rebecca Belmore and Kent Monkman

Two Indigenous artists have treated the colonial experience. We will discuss their work in the context of the ongoing need for reconciliation.

Nov. 20 & Nov. 27

## Presentations of Essays

### Dec. 4 Presentation of Essays and Last Class

#### **Academic Misconduct** (<http://uoft.me/CodeofBehaviour>)

The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. **x**

Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions



about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me or other available campus resources like the College Writing Centers [www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/centres/arts-and-science](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/centres/arts-and-science) , the Academic Success Centre [www.asc.utoronto.ca](http://www.asc.utoronto.ca) , or the U of T Writing Website [www.writing.utoronto.ca](http://www.writing.utoronto.ca).

### Religious Accommodations

- Every reasonable effort will be made to avoid religious holy days or other compulsory activities. Please inform me if you will be absent from class or have a problem with a due date.

### Generative Artificial Intelligence

If you are wishing to use tools like ChatGPT or other AI assistants, please secure permission from me.