

The Discipline and Critical Social Theory (Honors Seminar)

POLS 4000-01, The Discipline and Critical Social Theory

Fall 2018

Political Science

Dr. Christopher Barker

Course time: Monday, 5:00pm-7:30pm

Course location: Waleed CP66

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Office hours: Monday 11:30-12:30pm and Thursday 3:30-5:30pm or by appointment

Office location: HUSS, Room 2015

Course Catalog Description

This course is the capstone seminar for the Department of Political Science's Honors Program. The course familiarizes students with the genealogy of the discipline of political science, and their place in it; introduces them to a range of authors, texts and ideas associated with critical social theory; and prepares them to write their major research project. The course is only open to students enrolled in the honors program.

The Honors Seminar – Overview

The Political Science Honors Seminar (POLS 4000) and Honors Thesis course (POLS 4099) serve as a capstone to students' intellectual development at AUC. POLS 4000 intends to make the theory/framing chapter of the Honors Thesis easier to write by putting social and critical social theory in contact with earlier core courses (POLS 3201/3202) and the student's own research interests. To strengthen the theoretical framing chapter of their thesis, students will be introduced to *critical* social theory, and students will be equipped with tools from critical social theory to think critically about traditional themes of political science (e.g., democracy, public opinion, globalization, conflict). The aim of this engagement between political science and critical social theory is to explore changes in the discipline of political science and to address questions pertaining to ethical inquiry, the responsible use of evidence, silencing, exclusion, and domination. Students will also practice writing literature reviews and annotating bibliographies, and they will generate a timeline and prospectus for their Senior thesis. Throughout the course and the writing process, they will share their work with other students and engage in peer review.

Course Outcomes

At the end of the course, the successful student will be able to

- Locate their subfield within a more coherent and comprehensive theoretical framework provided by political theory and critical social theory.
- Use critical theory as a tool to ensure that their thesis proposals are inclusive of a

diverse set of views.

- Practice the art of reviewing literature, and make a substantial contribution to an annotated bibliography and literature review for their Senior thesis.
- Choose an adviser and create an agreement and writing process timeline with that adviser and with help from the POLS 4000 participants and instructor.
- Engage in persuasive analytical writing, as assessed through a substantial, original senior Honors thesis prospectus, due near the end of the semester (see below).
- Share their knowledge with their peers and aid each other during the stages of the writing process through in-class presentations.

POLS 4000 is a Core Curriculum capstone class and develops research skills; oral and written communication skills; integrated reading and thinking skills; interpersonal exchange and reflective listening; and (in many cases) civic engagement.

Prerequisites: Honors Status, POLS 3201-3202

Grading

Participation in classroom discussions: 20%, including occasional inverted classroom assignments. (A rough participation grade will be posted to Blackboard prior to the midterm. The *final* participation grade may improve or decrease depending on student performance in the second half of the course.)

Literature review papers (5 papers): 15% (5 x 3%) (At least two must come before the midterm)

Student midterm prospectus presentations: 10% in Week Seven (**Oct. 15**)

Student midterm prospectus: 10% in Week Eight (**Oct. 22**)

Student end-of-semester theory chapter presentations: 10% in Week 14 (**Dec. 3**)

Student seminar leadership (10-15 minute presentations on assigned readings; one before and one after midterm): 10% (2 x 5%)

Final Honors Seminar research chapter (and annotated bibliography): 25% due in class on **Dec. 10**

Schedule of topics and readings

Class sessions will begin with an overview provided by the instructor. This section of the class will introduce the main topics and themes of the week's readings. After a ten-fifteen minute break mid-way through the class, the second portion of the class will be structured around an in-depth student presentation (10-15 minutes) on the readings, followed by class-wide discussion. We will then move on to a roundtable format where students share at least one entry in their ongoing annotated research bibliography with the other students. Finally, the class will conclude with group discussion of an assigned reading on the writing process.

Reader Response Papers

The aim of these papers is to prepare students for the type of analytical writing they will

do in 4099 and in potential future graduate studies. Students will write a short (1-2 page) analytical paper on the week's substantive readings (that is, all of the political theory readings, but not the readings on the Honors thesis writing process). Students will state in one sentence the topic of the reading, explain in one or two sentences the methodological approach of the author, and then summarize the main point(s) in one paragraph. This should be done for each reading, and then the two (or more) readings should be compared and contrasted in the remaining part of the paper. In addition to submitting their five reader responses, students will present two responses to the readings in class during the course of the semester.

Annotated research bibliography

Throughout the semester, students will keep an annotated research bibliography where they summarize independent readings *on their own research topic* that they have done for their Senior thesis. The aim of this bibliography is to summarize a book, chapter, or article in a short, clear paragraph which communicates the main point(s) of the reading to a generalist audience. Each week, students will share at least one entry from their annotated bibliography in a roundtable format. This annotated bibliography will be shown to the student's potential adviser and it must be submitted to the POLS 4000 instructor by Dec. 10.

Presentations and Peer Review

At the mid-term and in the penultimate class week, students will share their honors thesis prospectus and their completed proposal with their peers and with the course instructor. In Week Seven (Oct. 15), students will present the honors prospectus in class. In Week 14 (Dec. 3), they will present their final honors thesis theory chapter.

Midterm Prospectus

After reviewing and revising their work, students will submit the polished copy of the prospectus (1,200 words) in Week Eight (Oct. 22).

Final Proposal

The final paper for this class (15-20 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font) will consist of a formal proposal that students will develop into their Honor thesis in the second semester of their senior year at AUC. A properly written proposal is the subject of a long, sometimes collaborative process that involves framing the research topic with a clear and adequate statement of theoretical purpose. The aim of this paper is to establish the theoretical framework for their Honors thesis, which they will then modify in POLS 4099. The draft of the student's outline will be presented orally in class at the midterm, and subject to peer review at that time. A completed proposal will address a concrete, definable question that is not properly assessed in the student's field of study.

Course Resources

Course readings, including resources for senior thesis writers, will be posted to Blackboard.

The instructor reserves the privilege of modifying the readings and their assigned dates if necessary

Introduction:

Week 1 (Sept. 3): Introduction to the course requirements

Week 2 (Sept. 10): Introduction to critical theory: Stuart Sim and Borin van Loo, *Introducing Critical Theory*

Overview: Annotated bibliography and literature reviews

Discussion on inclusivity: Letter from Mr. Perestroika

<https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/a-guide-to-thesis-writing-that-is-a-guide-to-life>;

Week 3 (Sept. 17): Foundations? Kant, “An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’” *Political Writings*, 54-60; Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 21-54; Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” *Foucault Reader*, 32-50
Presentation

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Reading: skim/consult https://gov.harvard.edu/files/gov/files/final_201718govguide.pdf

Week 4 (Sept. 24): The discipline and evidence: Susan Haack, “Epistemology: Who Needs it?” 1-15; Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” *The Foucault Reader*, 51-75; James der Derian, “The Boundaries of Knowledge and Power in International Relations,” in *International/Intertextual Relations*, 10-27 (including prologue)

Presentation

Reading: skim/consult Umberto Eco, *How to Write a Thesis*, 26-44.

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Note: preliminary thesis statement due in this class (1-2 paragraphs)

Week 5 (Oct. 1): The discipline and expanding democratic theory: Tocqueville’s new political science and the three races (*Democracy in America*, excerpt); Ta-Nehisi Coates, “Talk to Me Like I’m Stupid: Tocqueville in the South” (recommended); Rogers Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America,” 549-66

Presentation

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Week 6 (Oct. 8): An alternative Kant: Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, 76-94; Lasse Thomassen, *Habermas: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 84-110; Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” 66-94

Presentation

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Week 7 (Oct. 15): Student presentation of their outline (draft “prospectus”) and peer review (no reading)

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Week 8 (Oct. 22): An alternative Kant: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (excerpt); Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (excerpt); Moon, “Rawls and Habermas on Public Reason: Human Rights and Global Justice,” 257-74.

Presentation

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Course drop deadline (undergraduate): Oct. 25

Week 9 (Oct. 29): Political Science and theorizing domination: Neo-Roman non-domination (Pettit, *On the People's Terms*, 75-92); Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression," *Oppression, Privilege, Resistance*, 3-22; Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 40-49, 52-69; Recommended: Thorkelson, "The Fifty-Year-Old One-Dimensional Man" (comic)

Prospectus (draft outline of Honors thesis, 1,200 words) due in class.

Presentation

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Week 10 (Nov. 5): The discipline and the Cambridge School: Browning, "Quentin Skinner, the Cambridge School, and Contextualism," *A History of Political Thought*, 67-88; Burns, "Interpreting and appropriating texts in the history of political thought: Quentin Skinner and poststructuralism," 313-31.

Presentation

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Week 11 (Nov. 12): Critical theory and changing conceptions of sovereignty: Foucault, "Right of Death and Power over Life" *Foucault Reader*, 258-73; Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 17-23; Darryl Li, "From Exception to Empire Sovereignty, Carceral Circulation, and the 'Global War on Terror,'" 456-75

Presentation

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Week 12 (Nov. 19): Criticizing criticism: Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," 224-48; Simone Chambers, "The Politics of Critical Theory," 219-47; Whitfield, "Refusing Marcuse: 50 Years After *One-Dimensional Man*," *Dissent* (recommended)

Presentation

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Week 13 (Nov. 26): Mapping the discipline. Gabriel Almond, *A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science*, 13-31; Browsers, 1-22; "The Reconciliation of Political Theory and Comparative Politics; Michele Lamont, *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment*, 202-238 (239-249 recommended)

Presentation

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Week 14 (Dec. 3): Student proposal presentations and peer review (no reading)

Roundtable: Annotated bibliography

Week 15 (Dec. 10): Review and discussion. Browning, *A History of Political Thought*, 372-98; Berlin, "Does Political Theory Still Exist?" 143-72.

Students submit their completed honors thesis chapter and annotated bibliography.

All required readings will be posted to blackboard unless otherwise indicated. Students are responsible for preparing the required readings in advance of each class session.

Assessment and Attendance policy

Electronic devices and Classroom Demeanor:

The use of electronic devices such as cellphones and laptop computers is prohibited. There is a reason for this. (See Mueller and Oppenheimer, “The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking,” *Psychological Science* 25 (2014): 1159–1168. In a nutshell, laptop note-takers “performed significantly worse on the conceptual questions” and wrote notes that had “more verbatim overlap with the lecture.” The use of cellphones or laptops in class, or distracting or egregiously discourteous behavior, including arriving late, may result in a mark of absent for that class.

A list of resources to develop proper writing techniques will be posted on Blackboard (e.g., <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/developing-thesis>).

Attendance may be taken each class. Attending class and participating in class discussions is especially important in POLS 4000, given that students rely on their peers for contributions to discussion and input on peers’ work. Two unexcused absences (missing two weekly sessions) will reduce a student’s final grade by one full “letter.” Students with three unexcused absences have not completed the course and will receive a failing grade. Students will be informed of this status by email after the third absence. Written work that is due in class, or tests that are taken in class, cannot be made up or taken at a later date in the case of unexcused absences. Please see the AUC attendance policy (<http://catalog.aucegypt.edu/content.php?catoid=27&navoid=1333>).

Services for Students with Disabilities

AUC seeks to maintain a supportive academic environment for students with disabilities. To ensure their equal access to all educational programs, activities and services, students with disabilities should notify the university, provide documentation, and request reasonable accommodations. If a student has a documented disability and wants to request special accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services (SDS) at extension 3918 or sds@aucegypt.edu (located in the Office of Wellbeing/Dean of Students). See: <http://in.aucegypt.edu/student-life/student-well-being/disability-services>

To be accepted, accommodation letters should be presented to the instructor in advance of any assignment or exam, preferably at the beginning of the semester. AUC complies with the American Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and offers numerous facilities available to help you with your educational endeavors.

Grading

94%-100%	A	"A" grades confirm exceptional, extraordinary effort and results
90%-93%	A-	
87%-89%	B+	"B" grades confirm effort exceeding average and high quality work.
84%-86%	B	
80%-83%	B-	
77%-79%	C+	"C" grades confirm average and satisfactory work.
74%-76%	C	
70%-73%	C-	
65%-69%	D+	"D" grades confirm less than satisfactory effort and less than adequate work.
55%-65%	D	
55% and below	F	"F" grades confirm far less than sufficient effort and results or may be given in response to a violation of academic integrity.

Policy on Academic integrity

It is absolutely crucial that all thesis writers have mastered the demands of writing transparently, with a complete scholarly apparatus, by the end of POLS 4000, and before they begin to work on their Senior thesis in POLS 4099.

Academic integrity includes a commitment neither to engage in nor tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Prohibited acts include cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting another person's work as one's own, using Internet or other sources without citation, fabricating field data or citations, stealing examinations, tampering with the academic work of another student, facilitating other students' acts of academic dishonesty, etc.

Plagiarism will result in a zero grade for the assignment in question. Cheating during an examination will result in a zero grade for this examination. Further action, according to university regulations, may also be implemented.

You should be aware that all written work might be submitted to "Turnitin.com," the detection prevention software.

The University's statement on academic integrity, from which the above statement is drawn, is available online at:

<http://www.aucegypt.edu/academics/integrity/Pages/default.aspx>