

The Discipline and Critical Social Theory (Honors Seminar)

POLS 4000-01, The Discipline and Critical Social Theory
Fall 2019
Political Science
Dr. Christopher Barker
Course time: Wednesday, 5:00pm-7:30pm Course location: Waleed CP62
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Office hours: Sunday and Wednesday 3:30-4:45pm 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.
Course Outcomes At the end of the course, the successful student will be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Locate their subfield within a more coherent and comprehensive theoretical framework provided by political theory and critical social theory.- Use critical theory to ensure that their theses are inclusive of a diverse set of views.- 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 that engages with contemporary political scientists' research.- 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 and (importantly) Honors thesis brainstorming/outlining. (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.)

Weekly Writing Response Papers: 30% (10 x 3%) (13 weekly comparative writing responses, of which the top 10 will be counted toward your final grade) = due at Tuesday 11:59pm prior to each Wednesday class (uploaded to turnitin.com)

Weekly Presentations (5 minute maximum on reading of student's choice); 20% (13 weekly presentations, of which the top 10 will be counted toward your final grade)

Student midterm draft prospectus presentations: 5% in Week Seven (**Oct. 16**)

Student midterm prospectus: 5% in Week Eight (**Oct. 22**)

Student end-of-semester theory draft chapter: 20% in Week 14 (**Dec. 4**)

Weekly Writing Response Papers

Your 300-600 word response will be an example of analytical writing. It will briefly summarize and compare the week's ALL of the week's *required* readings. (Typically, there are two. You may bring in the recommended readings, but as supplements, not substitutes.) This exercise will prepare you for the type of writing requirements you'll meet in graduate school, and familiarize you with the process of summarizing and analyzing academic research. It will also help you to see what is being published in academic political science on a wide but related range of conceptual issues and themes in contemporary critical social theory. Responses will be uploaded to Turnitin.com every Tuesday by 11:59pm (beginning Sept. 10).

Weekly Presentations

Each week students will present on one article/chapter of their choice from the list of following journals/book publishers. The presentation (5 minute maximum), which take place at the beginning of class, will be expository as well as critical. The aim is to introduce the article/chapter to the other students in the class. (Hint: If we can't understand it after your presentation, not having read the paper, then you probably don't understand it.) More broadly, the aim is to familiarize students with what is being published in political science and related fields in the area of their research interest.

- At the beginning of the course, *YOU* should choose a topic/theme of relevance to your Senior Honors Thesis (e.g., migration, sovereignty, domination, recognition and gender, critical race theory), given the research interest you intend to develop in POLS 4099, and make a sustained attempt to construct a broad, genealogical overview of the subfield/question. (Example: our Steven Lukes reading on Nov. 6 does this for power.) At the end of the presentation, you will endorse or reject the article/chapter's publication, and we as a group will debate the merits of its publication as if we were a journal's editorial board.

- You can check for full-texts of the articles on JSTOR (e.g., *Perspectives on Politics*: <https://www.jstor.org/journal/perspoli>).

- You should make a short precis of each article that you can keep on a cue card (or staple to the journal hardcopy, etc.) or keep in an online file, AND take note of interesting

articles discussed by other students.

- These presentations, thematically organized, will form the subject of your final written work for this class, the end-of-the-semester theory chapter, and, hopefully, a helpful component of your Honors thesis. (Please keep in mind the two aims of lengthening the timescale of your thesis-writing so that it stretches over the two semesters of your Senior year, and making the writing process an iterative one that takes place in different formats (oral presentation, written summaries, opinion essays, etc.).

- You should choose articles from both field and subfield journals so that you gain a better sense of both.

Selected Field journals: High impact field journals

American Political Science Review

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review>

American Journal of Political Science

<https://ajps.org/>

Journal of Politics

<https://www.jstor.org/journal/jpolitics>

Perspectives on Politics

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics>

Selected Political Theory Journals

Political Theory

<https://journals.sagepub.com/home/ptx>

European Journal of Political Theory

<https://journals.sagepub.com/home/ept>

Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy

<https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fcri20>

Contemporary Political Theory

<https://www.palgrave.com/gp/journal/41296>

Constellations

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14678675>

Theory & Event

<https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/191>

Book Publishers: Niche and Top UP

1. Zed books (scroll down to see subject list)

<https://www.zedbooks.net/>

2. Stanford University Press

<https://www.sup.org/catalog/politicalscience/> (and check theory and methods:

<https://www.sup.org/books/subject/?subject=Politics%20--%20Theory%20and%20Methods>) and Philosophy-social theory

(<https://www.sup.org/books/subject/?subject=Philosophy%20--%20Social%20Theory>)

(<https://www.sup.org/books/subject/?subject=Philosophy%20--%20Social%20Theory>)

3. The MIT Press

<https://mitpress.mit.edu/topics/social-sciences/political-science/political-social-theory>

4. Cambridge, Harvard, Yale, Chicago, Oxford.

Other journals and university presses can be added after consultation with the instructor.

Presentations and Peer Review

In Week Seven (Oct. 16), students will present the honors prospectus in class. In Week 14 (Dec. 4), they will present their final honors thesis theory draft chapter.

Midterm Prospectus

After reviewing and revising their work following their presentation, students will submit the polished copy of the prospectus (approximately 1,200 words) in Week Eight (Oct. 23) for grading and instructor comments. By **this point at the latest**, the student should approach their subfield thesis adviser and formally ask them to serve as their thesis adviser.

Final Proposal Draft

The final paper for this class (15-20 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font) will consist of a formal reworking of the material from student presentations and writing responses, using whatever resources the students found useful in these articles/chapters in the development of their research concentration. (There will be some mis-hits, and these can be included in the summary for comprehensiveness, but if they don't fit, they shouldn't be forced.) The aim of this paper is to establish the theoretical framework (not methods, but theory) for their Honors thesis, which they will then modify in POLS 4099. The draft of the student's theory chapter will be presented orally in class, and subject to peer review at that time.

Format

Please note that everything submitted in this course should be in 12-point font, double-spaced, with standard (2.54 cm) margins. All work will be run through Turnitin.com or the equivalent software.

Course Resources

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

Stuart Sim and Borin van Loo, *Introducing Critical Theory* is a light-hearted presentation of critical social theory in overview

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

Part I: Introducing the Divided Discipline

Sept. 4: Introduction to the Syllabus

In-class discussion: What is the current canon?

Social Science: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2016/05/12/what-are-the->

[most-cited-publications-in-the-social-sciences-according-to-google-scholar/](#)

Political Theory: <https://publicreason.net/2011/03/29/most-cited-works-in-political-theory/>

Note: - You can check the impact factor of journals here (<https://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php>) and

September 11: A Discipline Divided

- Gabriel Almond, *A Discipline Divided: Schools and Sects in Political Science*, 13-31. -
- Robert D. Putnam, "APSA Presidential Address: The Public Role of Political Science," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, 2 (2003): 249-255.

- Jane Mansbridge, "What is Political Science for?" *Perspectives on Politics*, 12, 1 (2014): (required) 13-14 (recommended only) 8-17.

In-class activity: **Brainstorming** and discussion of possible thesis topics for POLS 4099.

- Examples of other presidential addresses (recommended acc. to your interests): the most recent is Kathleen Thelen, "The American Precariat: U.S. Capitalism in Comparative Perspective," *Perspectives on Politics* 17, 1 (2019), 5-27.

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

September 18: Political theory and Critique/Criticism

- Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," 188-243.

- Judith Butler, "What is Critique?" <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/butler/en.html>

In-class activity: Resources for becoming better scholars (using book reviews and the *Annual Review of Political Science*)

- Recommended: Simone Chambers, "The Politics of Critical Theory," 219-47.

- **Strongly recommended** for consultation ASAP:

https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/files/undergradgov/files/gov_thesis_guide_19-20.pdf

September 25 Some Replies

- Jon Elster, "Hard and Soft Obscurantism in the Humanities and Social Sciences," *Diogenes* 58, 4 (2011), 159-170

- Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," 224-48

- Recommended: <https://observer.com/2002/01/how-cult-internet-character-mr-perestroika-divided-nyus-political-science-department/>

In-class: oral presentation (5 minutes) of Honors thesis topic question and thesis

October 2 Political Theory

- John S. Dryzek, Bonnie Honig, and Anne Phillips, "Overview of Political Theory," *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin (2011).

- Andrew Rehfeld, "Offensive Political Theory," *Perspectives on Politics* 8, 2 (2010): 465-486.

- Recommended: Timothy V. Kaufman-Osborn, "Political Theory as Profession and as Subfield?" *Political Research Quarterly* 63, 3 (2010), 655-673

- Recommended: Discipline: Chapter Four ("Helpful Hints on Writing a Political Science Dissertation") in Stephen van Evera's *Guide to Methods for Students of Political*

Science.

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

Part II: x'ing the Discipline (changing the discipline in x ways, through encounters with critical race, gender, anthropology, historical analysis, and other PS subfields)

October 9 Political theory and Comparative Politics

- Andrew F. March, "What Is Comparative Political Theory?" *Review of Politics* 71, 4 (2009), 531-565.

- Farah Godrej, "Response to 'What Is Comparative Political Theory?'" *The Review of Politics* 71, 4 (2009): 567-582.

- Recommended: Michaelle Browers, "The Reconciliation of Political Theory and Comparative Politics," in *New Approaches to Comparative Politics: Insights from Political Theory*, ed. J. Holmes (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books 2003), 2-22.

- Recommended: Diego von Vacano, "The Scope of Comparative Political Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 18 (2015)1-18.

October 16 Political Theory, IR, and International Political Theory

- Chris Brown, Terry Nardin, Nicholas Rengger, "Introduction," in *International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from the Ancient Greeks to the First World War* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14-28.

- James der Derian, "The Boundaries of Knowledge and Power in International Relations," in *International/Intertextual Relations*, xiii-xxi, 3-10.

- Recommended: - João Marques de Almeida, "International Political Theory and the Issue of Legitimate Intervention," 102, 2 (2002): 155-70.

- Recommended: Best IR book, *Foreign Policy*

(<https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/04/09/my-top-ten-books-every-student-of-international-relations-should-read/>)

Presentations: Thesis outline

October 23: Political Theory and Historical Inquiry

- Ferenc Horcher, "Skinner and Rosanvallon: Reconciling the History of Political Thought with Political Philosophy," *Political Science, Politische Wissenschaft*, 177-189

- Tony Burns, "Interpreting and appropriating texts in the history of political thought: Quentin Skinner and poststructuralism," *Contemporary Political Theory* 10, 3 (2011): 313-31.

- Recommended: Browning, "Quentin Skinner, the Cambridge School, and Contextualism," in *A History of Modern Political Thought: A Question of Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 67-88.

October 30: Political Theory and Anthropology:

- Joan Vincent, "Introduction," *The Anthropology of Politics: A Reader in Ethnography, Theory, and Critique* (Malden; Oxford; Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 1-13.

- James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 1-8.

- Recommended (adding Urban Planning to cultural anthropology): David Sims, *Desert*

Dreams (Cairo: AUC Press, 2018), 442-470 and David Sims, *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City out of Control* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2012), 9-24 (+maps).

November 6: Power: Criticizing Basic Concepts

- Robert Dahl, *Who governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), short excerpt

- P. Bachrach, & M. Baratz, "Two faces of power," *American Political Science Review*, 56 (1962): 947-952.

- Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd ed. (Palgrave Macmillan), 1-13.

In-class activity: tracking the development of a concept in the literature from article to response to book review.

- Recommended: David Swartz, "Recasting power in its third dimension," *Theory and Society* 36, 1 (2007): 103-109 [Book review]

- Recommended: Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Power*, ed. James Faubon, transl. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: The New Press, 2000), 328-346

November 13: Criticizing Domination/Hegemony

- Philip Pettit, *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 75-92

- Patchen Markell, "The Insufficiency of Non-Domination," *Political Theory* 36, 1 (2008): 9-36

- Inés Valdez, "Nondomination or Practices of Freedom? French Muslim Women, Foucault, and The Full Veil Ban," *APSR* 110, 1 (2015), 18-30.

- Recommended: Gwilym David Blunt, "On the Source, Site, and Modes of Domination," *Journal of Political Power* 8, 1 (2015): 5-20.

November 20: Political Theory and Gender

- Susan Hekman, "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited," *Signs* 22, 2 (1997): 341-365

- Sue Tolleson-Rinehart and Susan J. Carroll, "'Far from Ideal': The Gender Politics of Political Science," *The American Political Science Review* 100, 4, Thematic Issue on the Evolution of Political Science, in Recognition of the Centennial of the Review (2006): 507-513.

- Recommended: Nancy Fraser: "What's Critical About Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender," *New German Critique* 35, Special Issue on Jurgen Habermas (1985): 97-131

November 27: Basic themes workshop: Race and X'ing the Social Contract

- Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 9-40.

- Tommie Shelby, "Racial Realities and Corrective Justice: A Reply to Charles Mills," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 1, 2 (2013): 145-162.

- Recommended: Rogers M. Smith, "The Puzzling Place of Race in American Political Science," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37, 1 (2004): 41-45.

- Recommended: Brandon Terry, "Critical Race Theory and the Tasks of Political Philosophy: On Rawls and 'The Racial Contract'"

<https://cuptw.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/columbia-ptw-2.pdf> [working paper]

December 4: Political Theory and Recognition: Basic Concepts

- Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, transl. Joel Anderson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), 1-10 (and recommended: Translator’s Introduction, x-xxi)
- Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, “Introduction” and Nancy Fraser, “Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation,” in *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, ed. Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser (London; New York: Verso, 2003), 1-5; 7-27.
- Recommended: Emmanuel Renault and Jean-Philippe Deranty, “Politicizing Honneth’s ethics of recognition,” *Thesis Eleven* 88, 1 (2007): 92-111
- Recommended for Honneth for his precursors Foucault and Adorno on power: Axel Honneth, “Foucault and Adorno: Two forms of the critique of modernity,” *Thesis Eleven*, 15 (1986): 48-58.

Presentation: Theory Component of thesis

December 11: Course Wrap-Up

Recommended: Browning, “Derrida: Deconstructing the Canon”

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>