

The Discipline and Critical Social Theory (Honors Seminar)

POLS 4000-01, The Discipline and Critical Social Theory

Fall 2020

Political Science

Instructor: Dr. Chris Barker

Course time: Wednesday 5pm-7:30pm

Course location: ONLINE (Zoom)

Instructor email: chris.barker@aucegypt.edu

Office hours: After class or by appointment

Office location: ONLINE (virtual office)

Communication Procedures:

The instructor will respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends. Student are required to use their official AUC email for communication. Blackboard announcements will be used throughout this course; these announcements will be sent to your AUC email. You are able to send the instructor an email directly through Blackboard via the link titled "Send Email" that is located on the left hand navigation panel of the course site.

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.

Fall 2020 Course Overview:

This course studies the theoretical underpinnings of recent protest against America's racialized policing and corrections systems. What questions are protesters asking? What are the sources that they cite in their arguments? What are the sources of their sources? The course then asks students to consider how best to connect theory and practice as they begin to frame their own Senior research projects. This type of experience in analyzing a factual record, identifying a topic question, formulating an argumentative thesis, and providing supporting evidence will help students to organize their own research thesis within a rigorous political science framework, prior to taking POLS 4099 in the Spring semester.

Course Outcomes:

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

- Identify and explain the ideology of an important contemporary social movement, Black Lives Matter

- Apply and analyze ideology theory, identity politics theory, and theories of nationalism and revolution.
- Locate critical social theory's contribution to the understanding of political change, from reform to revolution.
- Articulate the place of critical social theory in the discipline of political science.

Course Objectives:

This course introduces students to key concepts and theoretical debates, and develops students' ability to think critically and to read analytically in the core texts of critical social theory, in the context of the discipline of political science.

Course Requirements:

Participation in classroom discussions: 20%, including at least one occasion serving as class discussion recorder, to be posted as Google Doc (5%)

Literature response paper: 5% (must be before midterm)

Seminar leadership (20-30 minute presentations/discussion leadership on assigned readings; two per student; one must fall prior to midterm): 25%

Peer-review, final paper: 5% (Oct. 21 and Nov. 25) [Students who wish (2 maximum) may lead the discussion of George Floyd protests that will take place on Nov. 25 in POLS 3202]

Final paper: 25% in Week 13 (December 2)

Peer review, prospectus: 5% (Dec. 3)

Submitted Honors prospectus: 5% (to be submitted before scheduled exam slot)

Prerequisites: Honors Status, POLS 3201-3202

Class Meeting Overview:

Class sessions will include a brief overview provided by the instructor, either before the student presentation or (as I prefer it) as a supplement to it. This section of the class will introduce the main topics and themes of the week's readings. Student presenters will then begin a discussion of the assigned readings, focusing on identifying the important points. After a ten-fifteen minute break mid-way through the class, the second portion of the class will be structured around an in-depth, class-wide discussion of the practical implications of the theoretical readings. This portion of the class will also be student-led and the presenter is encouraged to bring the class discussion in whatever direction/emphasis she prefers.

Class Discussion Recorder:

At least once per semester, each student will help facilitate our recollection of the Zoom discussion by serving as class recorder, making brief analytical notes of our discussion, and posting them to our online shared Google Doc. The student can add links to things discussed, where possible and where appropriate.

Literature Response Papers:

The aim of this papers is to practice the type of analytical writing students produce in their post-graduate careers. Students will write one short (1-2 page) analytical paper on the week's required theory reading. 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. In this analysis and comparison, students are welcome to introduce their own opinions and normative challenges, including or especially comparisons between readings, subject to the usual rules of persuasive writing. The paper is due prior to the beginning of the class to which it is submitted.

Presentations (Seminar Leadership):

Each student will act as classroom discussion leader for the week's readings – schedule permitting, this will occur two times during the semester. Students will take the opportunity to introduce their understanding of the theoretical topic and also to guide the class towards specific applications of theories to contemporary practice. Students are encouraged to use current events and other multimedia sources to bring the discussion towards topics that they consider to be important and interesting. One of the presentations must come before the midterm. Students serving as discussion leaders on the same class can collaborate and divide texts and emphases as they prefer. Hopefully, this experience will encourage students to get to know members of their cohort.

Final Paper:

The final paper for this class (2,000-3,000 words in length) will consist of a completed draft of a paper on an assigned topic pertaining to the seminar's special topic, revolutionary social protest movements. Students will be able to choose their preferred substantive focus.

Peer Review:

Students will upload their final paper draft and prospectus draft (see above for dates) via Google Docs. Students will offer advice on all drafts, and pair up with a partner to offer more specific advice and recommendations.

Students who wish (2 maximum) may lead the discussion of George Floyd protests that will take place on Nov. 25 in POLS 3202. This opportunity for a brief, public presentation of their final paper will help strengthen their final paper's argument.

Prospectus:

Students will peer-review (see above) and submit a prospectus outlining their Senior thesis research project (see above date). This document may be completed earlier in the

semester; its primary use is to help give structure to the writing process in the second semester, and provide a formal document to send to your specific thesis adviser.

Class Schedule:

Note: A detailed list of class-by-class readings and responsibilities will be posted to Blackboard before the first class meeting. Schedule subject to change as decided by the instructor.

Week 1 (Sept 9): Introduction to the syllabus; overview, racialized policing in the US, 2012-2020

Week 2 (Sept. 13 16): BLM, mostly in their own words; social movement theory

Week 3 (Sept. 23): Black American movements, in theory and practice; and theories of nationalism

Week 4 (Sept. 30): Black Muslims, community, and group identity theory

Week 5 (Oct. 7): France and Anti-Colonialism: Algerian independence

Week 6 (Oct. 14): Communist revolution in Latin America and Southeast Asia

Week 7 (Oct. 21): Russia: Communism, Statism, Nihilism, Revolution

Week 8 (Oct. 28): Marx

October 28 Drop Course Deadline

Week 9 (Nov. 4): Hegel and Hegelianism

Week 10 (Nov. 11): Enlightenment and universality

Week 11 (Nov. 18): British Imperialism and anti-colonialism

Week 12 (Nov. 25): Revolutionary theory, and example of practice (Paris '68)

Week 13 (Dec. 2): Eastern Europe and Anti-Communist Dissidents

Week 14 (Dec. 9): Occupy, Arab Spring, and social movements today; review and discussion (What *is* the ideology of BLM?)

Classes end Dec. 10

Texts

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.

Online Resources:

Students may choose to consult online sources, including the following:

Marxists.org

The Verso book series: https://www.versobooks.com/series_collections/119-revolutions

The interviews, short videos, etc., recommended by the instructor in the detailed lesson plan.

Newspapers, articles, new books, book reviews. (Students are encouraged to seek these out and bring them to the attention of the class.)

Participation:

The course participation grade recognizes contributions to classroom (online) discussion by students. Prepared students who actively contribute to classroom discussion and debate by asking and answering questions will receive higher participation grades. 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.

Attendance:

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>).

Netiquette Guidelines:

Communication is very important in this online course. In order to maintain a positive online environment for our class, all students are expected to:

1. Show respect for the instructors and for other students in the class.
2. Express differences of opinion in a polite and reasonable way.
3. Maintain an environment of constructive criticism when commenting on the work of other students.
4. Stay on topic when involved in group discussions or other collaborative activities.
5. Use sentence case in messages. Use of all uppercase in a message is the equivalent of shouting and is considered offensive.
6. Be careful when using acronyms. If you use an acronym it is best to spell out its meaning first, and then put the acronym in parentheses afterward, for example: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). After that you can use the acronym freely throughout your message.
7. Use good grammar and spelling, and avoid using text messaging shortcuts.

Online Course Components:

This course will meet synchronously each week via Zoom. Students who have difficulty with connectivity are asked to make arrangements with the instructor (preferably prior to the class meeting) regarding ways in which they can participate. As a rule, all students will be expected to attend and participate in all online classes.

Student Writing:

The Writing Center provides a place where all university students are welcome to receive

consultations on their writing from trained writing consultants. These services will occur online in Fall 2020. To reserve an appointment at the writing center, please click [here](#) (you will be prompted to enter AUC email address and password). For more information please [click here](#).

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

Student Technical Support and Assistance:

Blackboard hotline: 0122.900.5544 or blackboard@aucegypt.edu

Or submit a ticket on <http://itsupport.aucegypt.edu/>

Zoom: support@aucegypt.edu

Office of Disabilities Services:

AUC seeks to maintain a supportive academic environment for students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations, please contact the Office of Disabilities Services during the **first few days** of the semester. please contact Student Disability Services (SDS) at extension 3918 or sds@aucegypt.edu (located in the Office of Wellbeing/Dean of Students). More information can be found [here](#).

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.

Academic integrity Policy:

It is absolutely crucial that all thesis writers have mastered the demands of writing ethically and 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.

Student Honor Code:

By accepting this syllabus and enrolling in this course, students affirm for all assignments and alternative assessments that the work they submit is their own. Students will not consult unauthorized resources or materials nor collaborate with other individuals unless allowed.

Furthermore, the student agrees to follow *[AUC's Code of Academic Ethics](#)*.

Policies:

Students should familiarize themselves with the policies found here:

- <https://documents.aucegypt.edu/Docs/Policies/AUC%20Acceptable%20Use%20Policy.pdf>
- <https://documents.aucegypt.edu/Docs/Policies/Code%20of%20Ethics.pdf>
- https://documents.aucegypt.edu/Docs/about_Policies/Reformatted%20disability%20policy.pdf