

# POSC 250: Contemporary Political Thought

Spring 2012

2:35 – 3:45 p.m., PPHAC 338

**Professor K. H. Haddad, [haddad@moravian.edu](mailto:haddad@moravian.edu), (610) 861-1559, Comenius 112**

**Office hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays 4:00 – 4:45 p.m. and by appointment**

Contemporary political theory is an impossibly broad category; any course with this title by definition represents not only a limited selection but also a cursory introduction. This course provides an overview of important texts that have become canonical for the twentieth-century. These are texts that political theorists can refer to when proposing or challenging particular political arguments. They are part of the language of political theory and the toolkit of political theorists. Looking to the present and the future of political theory, we will study Joseph Schwartz's *The Future of Democratic Equality*, the winner of the 2011 American Political Science Association's David Easton Award. This award is selected annually by the Foundations of Political Theory section of APSA for the best book in political theory.

Books for sale at the Moravian College Bookstore:

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*

Stephen Eric Bronner, editor, *Twentieth Century Political Theory*

Nancy S. Love, editor, *Dogmas and Dreams: A Reader in Modern Political Ideologies*

Joseph Schwartz, *The Future of Democratic Equality*

Additional texts may be assigned during the course of the semester.

## Course Calendar

1) Tuesday, January 17

Introduction

2) Thursday, January 19

Allan Bloom, "The Democratization of the University," (Alison Laga) *Dogmas and Dreams*

Audre Lord, "The Master's Tools," *Twentieth Century Political Theory* (John Stefanovich)

Discussion questions:

3) Tuesday, January 24

Leo Strauss, "What is liberal education?," *Twentieth Century Political Theory* (Hannah Moyer)

Discussion questions:

4) Thursday, January 26

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, chapters 1 -3 (Michael Weinert)

Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," *Twentieth Century Political Theory* (Noel Witzke)

5) Tuesday, January 31  
*The Concept of the Political*, chapters 3 – 5 (Stacy Candelario)  
Discussion questions:

6) Thursday, February 2  
*The Concept of the Political*, chapters 6-8 (Kelly Fackenthal)  
Discussion questions:

7) Tuesday, February 7  
Michael Oakshott, “On Being Conservative,” *Dogmas and Dreams* (Michael Weiner)  
Discussion questions:

8) Thursday, February 9  
Phyllis Schlafly, “The Power of the Positive Woman,” *Dogmas and Dreams* (Katie Makoski)  
Discussion questions:

9) Tuesday, February 14  
Irving Kristol, “The Neoconservative Persuasion: What it was, and what it is,” *Dogmas and Dreams*  
(Katie Makoski)  
Discussion questions:

**10) Thursday, February 16**  
**In-class examination**

11) Tuesday, February 21  
Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” *Twentieth Century Political Theory*  
(Patrick Foose)  
Discussion questions:

12) Thursday, February 23

13) Tuesday, February 28  
Malcolm X, “The Ballet or the Bullet,” *Twentieth Century Political Theory* (Stacy Candelario)  
Discussion questions:

14) Thursday, March 1  
Malcolm X (film, 1992)

**SPRING RECESS**

15) Tuesday, March 13

Frantz Fanon, "Concerning Violence", *Twentieth Century Political Theory* (Hannah Moyer)

Discussion questions:

16) Thursday, March 15

Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Mask* (film, 1996)

17) Tuesday, March 20

Edward Said, "Introduction to Orientalism," *Twentieth Century Political Theory*, additional selections from Said (on reserve) (Noel Witzke)

Discussion questions:

18) Thursday, March 22

Edward Said – *On Orientalism* (film, 1998)

19) Tuesday, March 27

Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations," *Twentieth Century Political Theory* (John Stefanovich)

Discussion questions:

20) Thursday, March 29

Judith Butler: *Philosophical Encounters of the Third Kind* (film, 2007)

**21) Tuesday, April 3**

**In-class examination**

### **EASTER RECESS**

22) Tuesday, April 10

Joseph Schwartz, *The Future of Democratic Equality*, chapters 1 (Patrick Foose) and 2 (Sarah Carey)

Discussion questions:

23) Thursday, April 12

chapters 3 and 4 (Alison Laga)

Discussion questions:

24) Tuesday, April 17

chapters 5 and 6 (Kelly Fackenthal)

Discussion questions:

25) Thursday, April 19  
chapters 7 and 8 (Sarah Carey)  
Discussion questions:

26) Tuesday, April 24  
Fresh air political theory: bring your favorite passage!

27) Thursday, April 26  
Review for examination and course evaluations

**Friday, May 4**  
**FINAL EXAMINATION at 1:30 in PPHAC 338**

### **Assignments and evaluation**

| <b>Requirement</b>                    | <b>Calendar</b>           | <b>%</b>     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Engagement                            | Ongoing                   | 30           |
| Presentation and discussion questions | Two sets, to be scheduled | 10 + 10 = 20 |
| Examination 1                         | 2/16                      | 15           |
| Examination 2                         | 4/3                       | 15           |
| Final examination                     | 5/4                       | 20           |

## Course objectives

- Knowledge of contemporary political thought
- Familiarity with scholarly political analyses of twenty-first century issues
- Connections between canonical and contemporary political analyses
- Close readings, critical discussions, and scholarly writing

## Discussion question instructions

Please submit three questions and passages for your scheduled reading to me via e-mail the day before class no later than 3:30 p.m. You should prepare a formal handout with the questions and passages to be distributed to the rest of the group. We will determine the number of copies needed on the first day of class based on the actual enrollment. You should also prepare a short presentation on the author in question so that we know who is writing about what where and when. Each student will prepare discussion questions and give a presentation on an author twice in the course of the semester. Presentations will be scheduled the first week of class.

## What does an engagement grade represent?

- A Critical, innovative and careful reading of all assignments; substantial notes or written preparation for discussion; frequent text-based contributions; contribution of discussion-shaping questions; careful engagement of the arguments of others; support of positive discussion dynamics.
- B Complete and careful readings; consistent notes or written preparation for discussion; lively, substantial, and argumentative text-based contributions; contribution of independent questions; engagement of the arguments of others.
- C Incomplete or superficial readings; minimal notes or written preparation for discussion; regular (at least once per meeting) discussion participation.
- D Incomplete or missing readings; lack of notes or written preparation for discussion; mostly passive presence.
- F Persistent, vegetative state; low-level trance; slightly elevated body temperature

## General Course Information

- 1) I invite you to visit my office hours. Please be in touch with any questions and thoughts you may have about our work together. I am happy to help you with difficulties relating to your reading of our texts as well as challenges that may arise with regard to assignments. In general, please make use of my office hours. It is my pleasure to help you improve your enjoyment of and performance in this course.
- 2) Be diligent in your studies and attend class. Undocumented absences beyond the first will harm your engagement grade at the rate of 5% of your total course grade (per absence).
- 3) This is an academic setting in which the goal is thoughtful discourse. Neither food consumption, nor mobile phone noise, nor phone activity (texting or searching) of any kind is permitted. Students who disturb the contemplative and discursive atmosphere of learning will be asked to leave the room for the rest of class.
- 4) Expect to work six hours on average outside of class per week. The workload varies, and the texts can be challenging. Give yourself plenty of time to read, review, and take notes on texts. Our interest is in deep readings and in gaining a solid toolkit of political theory questions, concepts, and arguments.
- 5) In order to pass this course, you must submit all assignments.
- 6) We will discuss written assignments two weeks in advance. I will offer instructions on how to prepare for examinations in the class preceding the examination date.
- 7) I strongly discourage late assignments, except in appropriately documented emergency situations. For the sake of equity, please do not ask for special treatment. Late work is penalized at 50% of the assignment grade.
- 8) Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment in this class. Please see Moravian College Student Handbook for an account of academic honesty. See <http://www.moravian.edu/studentlife/handbook/academic2.htm>
- 9) Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a learning disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.
- 10) Please also note that this syllabus is subject to change.

*Please support a culture of intellectual discussion.*

