

COSMOPOLITANISM AND ITS CRITICS

Fall 2020

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Seminar: Wednesday, 11:30-2:20

Room: Virtual (Zoom)

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Course Description

Since its invention some 2500 years ago, cosmopolitanism has come and gone in Western thought, and can be discovered in other intellectual traditions as well. While its meaning has varied considerably, its central proposition, embedded in its etymology, is that one is, or can and should be, a citizen of the world. Cosmopolitanism thus expresses the fact, possibility, or imperative of a certain universality, an actual or potential oneness of humankind. At the same time, as the word's second half indicates, it has never ceased to be a political idea. It points out, recommends, or demands not merely that one is or should be part of the world or some larger whole (the *kosmos*) – a child of the universe or some such notion – but a *citizen (politēs)*, a *Weltbürger*. Here we encounter the idea's central difficulty, for, as Hannah Arendt points out, “[n]obody can be a citizen of the world as he is the citizen of his country.” The world is not, never has been, and shows no immediate prospect of coming to be organized such that one could be a citizen of it in any straightforward way. What, then, is the meaning of this insistence on the *political* nature of this relation to the world – an insistence that, despite its myriad difficulties, has persisted over two and a half millennia? And how should we understand it today?

While casting a glance back to the classics as well as to Immanuel Kant and the founding of a distinctly modern cosmopolitanism, in this course we will focus on contemporary debates, exploring the idea in its political, moral, and cultural aspects. In particular, we will consider how the imperative of thinking politics from a global, universal, ‘human,’ and even ‘cosmic’ perspective puts pressure on traditional political concepts and vocabularies. We accordingly begin by examining some dominant, often taken-for-granted understandings of ‘politics,’ consider the distinct ways in which leading figures in the history of western political theory have considered politics especially with regard to cosmopolitan and global themes, and conclude with contemporary challenges to traditional notions of ‘the political.’

Course Objectives

Students will develop their ability to:

- carefully and critically read complex theoretical texts in political theory and related disciplines;
- understand, articulate, and contest different approaches within political (as well as social, historical, and moral) theory;
- articulate arguments, in oral and written form, on issues in advanced political theory;
- engage in independent scholarly research and writing;
- critically reflect on the variability and instability of historical and contemporary notions of ‘politics’;
- consider how a global view might impact one’s view of political issues and priorities and on the nature of politics itself.

Required Materials and Texts

All course materials will be made available via Avenue or in class.

Class Format

This course is a graduate seminar, conducted synchronously over Zoom. Regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Students are expected to prepare for discussion by carefully reading the assigned material and by participating in the online forum in advance of classroom discussion. While the going online will make this initially more awkward and present certain technical challenges, such as the sharing of comments and questions via chat in the course of conversation.

Asynchronous, online discussion is also essential. Students are expected to post to the Avenue forum consistently throughout the term, and to divide their posts between engaging directly with the readings and with their fellows' interpretations, comments, and questions. Seminar discussion will thus place on the basis not only of student presentations of the readings, but also the online discussions.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Attendance and participation – 20%
2. Online discussion – 20%
3. Presentation/Seminar moderation – 20%
4. Presentation/Seminar feedback – 5%
5. Paper proposal (due Nov. 15) – 5%
6. Term paper (due Dec. 16) – 30%

Course Evaluation – Details

Attendance and participation (20%)

This is an advanced seminar and so you are expected to attend all class sessions and participate in the discussions. You are expected to complete the required readings, think carefully about them before coming to class, and take an active part in the seminar. The quality of questions and comments is more important than their quantity.

Online discussion (20%)

You are required to post every week to the weekly online discussion forum, though you will be forgiven one week. At least four of your posts must respond to those of others. Initial posts are due by midnight the Sunday before class; responses will be accepted until 6pm on Wednesday. While you are welcome to post more often, only the best post or reply from any week will count toward your grade. You are responsible for posting at least nine times; late posts will not be counted. Start early!

Each post should deal with one or more texts from the week's reading, using particular points from the reading to raise questions that relate to larger themes in the course. A good post may begin with one point or concept from a reading or a comparison or connection across readings, but it will proceed from particular to general, from a specific point in the reading to a general issue worth discussing.

Presentation/Seminar Moderation (20%)

Over the course of the term you will be responsible for introducing and leading the seminar, by yourself or with a partner, TWICE. This involves three tasks:

- Prepare a 1-2 page handout for the class, summarizing in point form what you take to be the key or most interesting points of each reading, to be distributed the night before class.
- Introduce the conversation with a brief (10-minute) summary of these points, concluding with questions for discussion. Creative forms of presentation, including audio-visual elements and videos, are welcome as long as they do not exceed the time limit and are your own original work.
- Lead the discussion, ensuring that all the readings and important points are covered and all participants have the opportunity to contribute.

Presentation/ Moderation Feedback (5%)

The presentations and moderation will be assessed and receive feedback from your peers. Your feedback grade will reflect the consistency and helpfulness of the feedback you provide to others over the course of the term.

Research Paper Proposal, due Nov. 15 (5%)

To help prepare for researching and writing the research paper (see below), you will submit a proposal. It should include a title, a concise thesis sentence, a one-paragraph abstract, and an annotated bibliography of 5-10 books and/or articles (total 2-3 pages).

The last class, Dec. 9, will be devoted to a workshop on your papers-in-progress. You will circulate a revised proposal and/or an excerpt from your working draft before class for discussion and feedback from your peers in the discussion.

Research Paper, due Dec. 16 (30%)

The second paper will be a 3000-4000-word essay (12-16-page) on a topic of your choice related to or inspired by materials or themes covered in the course.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (Sept. 16) Introduction

Week 2 (Sept. 23) Politics and the Political

Readings:

Elizabeth Frazer, "Political Theory and the Boundaries of Politics," in *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*, ed. David Leopold (Oxford 2008), 171–95.

Oliver Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought* (Edinburgh 2007), ch. 2.

Étienne Balibar, "Three Concepts of Politics," *Politics and the Other Scene* (Verso 2002),

Week 3 (Sept. 30) The Ancients

Readings:

Francis Wolff, "polis, politeia," *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin (Princeton 2014), 801–4.

Jason Dockstader, "Cynic Cosmopolitanism," *European Journal of Political Theory* (2018).

Tony C. Brown, "Aristotle's Stateless One," *Critical Inquiry* 46 (2019): 118–39.

Anthony Pagden, "Stoicism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Legacy of European Imperialism," *Constellations* 7.1 (2000): 3–22.

Week 4 (Oct. 7) Kant and Liberal Internationalism

Readings:

Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" and "Perpetual Peace" in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge 1991).

James Tully, "The Kantian Idea of Europe: Critical and Cosmopolitan Perspectives," in *The Idea of Europe From Antiquity to the European Union*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge 2002), 331-58.

Robbie Shilliam, "Decolonising the Grounds of Ethical Inquiry: A Dialogue Between Kant, Foucault and Glissant," *Millennium* 39.3 (2011): 649–65.

Week 5 (Oct. 14) Mid-term Recess, NO CLASS

No Classes

Week 6 (Oct. 21) Marx and the Politics of Revolution

Readings:

Gilbert Achcar, "Marxism and Cosmopolitanism," in *Marxism, Orientalism, Cosmopolitanism* (Saqi 2013), ch. 4.

Shannon Brincat, "Emancipation and the Limits of Marx's Cosmopolitan Imaginary," *Communism in the 21st Century*, ed. Brincat (Praeger 2014), 130–60.

Susan Buck-Morss, "Sovereign Right and the Global Left," *Rethinking Marxism* 19.4 (2007): 432–51.

rec.: Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question" and "Manifesto of the Communist Party," pts. 1-2.

Week 7 (Oct. 28) Arendt and Worldly Politics

Readings:

Hannah Arendt, "Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World?" in *Men in Dark Times* (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955), 81–94.

Robert Fine, "Cosmopolitanism and the Modern Revolutionary Tradition: Reflections on Arendt's Politics," *Critical Horizons* 17.1 (2016): 8–23.

Tomas Wedin and Carl Wilén, "Ancient Equality Against Modern Democracy: Resources of Critique in Hannah Arendt and Ellen Meiksins Wood," *Distinktion* 21.1 (2020): 19–45.

Annabel Herzog, "Political Itineraries and Anarchic Cosmopolitanism in the Thought of Hannah Arendt," *Inquiry* 47.1 (2004): 20–41.

Week 8 (Nov. 4) Foucault and the Politics of Government

Readings:

Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *Power: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, Vol. III*, ed. James Faubion (New Press 2000), 201-224.

Sandro Mezzadra, "Beyond the State, Beyond the Desert," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110.4 (2011): 989–97.

Emily Zakin, "Crisscrossing Cosmopolitanism: State-Phobia, World Alienation, and the Global Soul," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 29.1 (2015): 58–72.

Stathis Gourgouris, "Preliminary Thoughts on Left Governmentality," *Critical Times* 1.1 (2018): 1–9.

Week 9 (Nov. 11) Postnational Revolution?

Readings:

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly* (Oxford 2017), pt. IV.

Giorgio Agamben, *From the State of Control to a Praxis of Destituent Power* (Anarchist Library 2013).

Valentina Moro, "Politics of Refusal: A Postcolonial Critique of the Notion of Exclusion" (ms 2018).

Kolja Möller, "From Constituent to Destituent Power Beyond the State," *Transnational Legal Theory* 9.1 (2018): 32-55.

Note: SUNDAY, Nov. 15 – PROPOSALS DUE

Week 10 (Nov. 18) Postcolonialism

Readings:

Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, ed. Vera Lawrence Wyatt and Rex Nettleford (Smithsonian 1995), 5–57.

Gary Wilder, "Reading Du Bois's Revelation: Radical Humanism and Black Atlantic Criticism," in *The Postcolonial Contemporary*, ed. Wilder and Jini Kim Watson (Fordham UP, 2018), 95-125.

Marisol de la Cadena, "Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections Beyond 'Politics'," *Cultural Anthropology* 25.2 (2010): 334–70.

Week 11 (Nov. 25) Climate Crisis

Readings:

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Planet: An Emergent Humanist Category," *Critical Inquiry* 46 (2019): 1–31.

Jason W. Moore, "The Capitalocene," Parts I & II, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 44.3-45.2 (2017-18): 594-630, 237-79.

Mario Blaser, "On the Properly Political (Disposition for the) Anthropocene," *Anthropological Theory* 19.1 (2019): 74-94.

Week 12 (Dec. 2) Posthumanism

Readings:

Isabelle Stengers, "Including Nonhumans in Political Theory: Opening Pandora's Box?" in *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life*, ed. Sarah Whatmore (Minnesota 2010), 3–33.

Elizabeth Povinelli, "The Ends of Humans: Anthropocene, Autonomism, Antagonism, and the Illusions of Our Epoch," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 116.2 (2017): 293–310.

Donna Haraway, "Making Kin: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene," in *Staying with the Trouble* (Duke 2016), chs. 3-4.

Week 13 (Dec. 9) Paper Workshop

DEC. 16 – PAPER DUE IN COURSE DROPBOX

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Written work is to be submitted as a single .doc, .docx, or .pdf file to the appropriate dropbox on the course Avenue site.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
69-0	F

Late Assignments

Late Avenue posts for the online discussion activity will not be considered. Late papers will be penalized at a rate of 3.3% off the paper grade per day.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Some absences, as in the case of illness may be unavoidable. Please contact me in advance (or as soon as possible) via email if you are going to be absent.

Courses with an On-Line Element

This course uses on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), web pages, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a

course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.