

McMaster University
Department of Political Science

POLSCI 756
Politics and Its Others
Winter 2018, Term 2

Class: Thursday 11:30 a.m.- 2:20 p.m.

Classroom: KTH 732

Office hours: Thursday 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

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What is politics? What does it mean to say that a particular actor, concern, or part of life is or is not 'political'? What are the politics of doing so?

Controversy about the nature and scope of politics is as at least as old as political philosophy, but it reached a new pitch in the twentieth century. In this course we examine thinkers from diverse philosophical and ideological perspectives who are concerned with how we understand the political domain. Some believe that politics is under threat in the modern world, and must be defended or revived. Others argue that what is generally regarded as politics is an illusion, and that we must look elsewhere to understand the true nature of power, conflict, or commonality. Still others are convinced that what has been called politics is a nightmare from which we urgently need to wake up. In exploring these perspectives we will survey the deeper roots of some key positions in contemporary political theory (liberalism, republicanism, Marxism, anarchism, feminism, ecology, radical democracy) and beyond (postcolonialism, postsecularism, posthumanism).

Course Requirements and Grading

- Regular attendance and participation. (10%)
- TEN short response posts over the course of the semester. (total of 30%) Posts are due by 6pm on Wednesday. Each post should deal with a text from the week's reading and focus on questions that relate to larger themes in the course. You should focus on trying to understand the authors' arguments. You must post 10 responses over the 12 substantive sessions; you may (and can)not post late. You are welcome to post more often; your highest grades will count. Start early!
- THREE short presentations (ca. ten minutes each, 20%) The focus should be on communicating the essential content of the reading in as clear and concise a form as possible. The handouts are meant to serve as an aide-mémoire and study guide for yourself and your comrades, and should be designed accordingly.
- Final evaluation. (40%) *EITHER*:
 - a) A practice comprehensive exam, asking you to answer two of four questions using texts studied during the seminar. (15-20 pp.)

OR

- b) A final research paper on a topic submitted to the instructor no later than March 8 (proposal 1-2 pp.; paper 20-30 pp.)

Avenue to Learn (A2L)

This course relies heavily on McMaster's online learning platform – to distribute materials, for online discussion, for submitting and returning assignments, and for communicating grades. Please make sure you activate your account and that you check it regularly during the term. Tutorials, registration for training sessions, and other materials are available on the site.

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, 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 this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Academic Dishonesty

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.

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.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

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 Statement

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.

Course Readings

The following books are required and available for purchase at the bookstore:

- Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, exp. ed. (Chicago 2007)
- Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics* (Schocken 2007)
- James C. Scott, *Against the Grain* (Yale 2017)

Optional but recommended especially for those focusing on political theory:

- Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, exp. ed. (Princeton 2005)
- Hans Sluga, *Politics as the Search for the Common Good* (Cambridge 2014)

Course Schedule and Readings

NB: Readings subject to change.

1. Jan. 4 – Introduction

2. Jan. 11 – Politics and Political Theory

Leo Strauss, “What is Political Philosophy?,” *What is Political Philosophy? and other Studies* (Chicago 1988), 9–55.

Hans Sluga, *Politics and the Search for the Common Good*, ch 1.

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

rec.: Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, ch. 1.

3. Jan. 18 – The Concept of the Political

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (entire).

Carlo Galli, “Carl Schmitt and the Global Age,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 10, no. 2 (2010): 1–25.

rec.: Sluga, *Politics and the Search for the Common Good*, ch. 5.

4. Jan. 25 – Historical Conceptions

Francis Wolff, “polis, politeia,” *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin (Princeton 2014), 801–3.

Barry Hindess, “‘The Greeks Had a Word for It’: The Polis as Political Metaphor,” *Thesis Eleven* 40, no. 1 (1995): 119–32.

Claude Lefort, “The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?,” *Democracy and Political Theory*, ed. Macey (Polity 1988), 213–55.

Roberto Esposito, “The Metapolitical Structure of the West,” *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 22, no. 2 (2014): 147–61.

5. Feb. 1 – Liberalism

John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 14:3 (1985): 223–51; “The Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus,” *New York University Law Review* 64, no. 2 (1989): 233–55.

Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear,” *Political Thought and Political Thinkers*, ed. Hoffman (University of Chicago 1998), 3–20.

rec.: Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 529–51.

6. Feb. 8 – Marxism

Ellen Meiksins Wood, “The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism,” *New Left Review* I, 127 (1981): 66–95.

Mario Tronti, “Towards a Critique of Political Democracy,” *Cosmos and History: the Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (2009): 68–75.

Stathis Kouvelakis, "Marx's Critique of the Political: From the Revolutions of 1848 to the Paris Commune," *Situations 2* (2007): 81-85.

rec.: Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," "Theses on Feuerbach," "Manifesto of the Communist Party."
Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, ch. 12.

7. Feb. 15 – Arendt

Hannah Arendt, "Introduction *into* Politics," "The Tradition of Political Thought," and "The End of Tradition," *The Promise of Politics*.

Hanna Pitkin, "Justice: on Relating Private and Public," *Political Theory* 9, no. 3 (1981): 327–52.

Christian Volk, "Towards a critical theory of the political: Hannah Arendt on power and critique," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 42, no. 6 (2016): 549–75.

rec.: Sluga, *Politics and the Search for the Common Good*, ch. 6.

[MID-TERM BREAK – NO CLASS FEB. 22]

8. Mar. 1 – Foucault

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1.* (Vintage 1990), 81–102, 135–59; "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 1*, ed. Rabinow (New Press 1997), 281–301.

Louisa Cadman, "How (Not) to Be Governed: Foucault, Critique, and the Political," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28, no. 3 (2010): 539–56.

Sandro Mezzadra, "Beyond the State, Beyond the Desert," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no. 4 (2011): 989–97.

rec.: Sluga, *Politics and the Search for the Common Good*, ch. 7.

9. Mar. 8 – Politics as Politicization

Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political" ms (1969).

Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics," *theory & event* 5, no. 3 (2001).

Erik Swyngedouw, "Where is the political? Insurgent mobilisations and the incipient 'return of the political'," *Space and Polity* 18, no. 2 (2014): 122–36.

Engin Isin, "Citizenship in flux: The figure of the activist citizen," *Subjectivity* 29, suppl. 1 (2009): 367–88.

rec.: Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 595-606.

[OPTIONAL RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE IN CLASS MAR. 8]

10. Mar. 15 – Anarchism

James C. Scott, *Against the Grain*, Introduction, chs. 4–7.

Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology* (Zone 1989), 7–26, 189–218.

Giorgio Agamben, "What is a Destituent Power?," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32, no. 1 (2014): 65–74.

11. Mar. 22 – Postcolonialism

Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton 2000), ch. 1.

Prathama Banerjee, "Between the political and the non-political: The Vivekananda moment and a critique of the social in colonial Bengal, 1890s–1910s," *Social History* 39, no. 3 (2014): 323–39.

Lorenzo Veracini, "Isopolitics, Deep Colonizing, Settler Colonialism," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 2 (2011): 171–89.

11. Mar. 29 – Postsecularism

Talal Asad, "Free Speech, Blasphemy, and Secular Criticism," in *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*, ed. Asad, Brown, Butler, and Mahmood (University of California 2009), 20–63.

Gil Anidjar, "Secularism," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 1 (2006): 52–77.

Étienne Balibar, "Cosmopolitanism and Secularism," *Grey Room* 44 (2011): 6–25.

12. Apr. 5 – Posthumanism

Donna Haraway, "Ecce homo, ain't (ar'n't) I a woman, and inappropriate/d others: The human in a post-humanist landscape," *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Butler and Scott (Routledge 1992), 86–100.

Choane Mallory, "What is ecofeminist political philosophy? Gender, nature, and the political," *Environmental Ethics* 32 (2010): 305–22.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 197–222.

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2018 AT 6 P.M.