

**McMaster University
Department of Political Science**

**POLSCI 756
The Autonomy of Politics
Fall 2016, Term 1**

Class: Wednesdays, 11:30am-2:20pm
Classroom: KTH B108

Instructor: James Ingram
Email: ingramj@mcmaster.ca
Office: KTH 537
Office hours: Wednesday 9:30-11:20

Controversy about the nature and scope of politics is as at least as old as political philosophy itself, but it reached a new pitch in the twentieth century. In this course we examine thinkers from diverse philosophical and political perspectives who nevertheless agree that 'the political' is threatened under modern conditions, and that it must be recognized and defended. The larger questions we will pursue include the following: What is at stake in proclaiming 'the political' a distinct and autonomous domain of society, experience, or activity? How do various authors differentiate it from and relate it to other spheres? What are the explicit or implicit politics of doing so?

Course Requirements and Grading

- Regular attendance and participation. (10%)
- TEN short response posts over the course of the semester, five of which must respond to others' posts. (total of 30%) Initial posts are due by the end of the Monday before class; responses will be accepted until 6pm on Wednesday. Each post should deal with a text from the week's reading, focusing on questions that relate to larger themes in the course. You should focus on trying to understand the authors' arguments. You are responsible for posting 10 responses over the 12 substantive sessions; late posts will not be counted. No more than one post and one reply from any week will count toward your grade. You are welcome to post more often; your highest grades will count. Start early!
- THREE short presentations (max. 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 Nov. 16 (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. Email Forwarding in MUGSI: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>

*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link. (Approved at the Faculty of Social Sciences meeting on Tues. May 25, 2010)

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)

Optional but recommended especially for those focusing on political theory:

- Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, exp. ed. (Princeton 2005)

Course Schedule and Readings

NB: Readings subject to change.

1. Sept. 7 – Introduction

2. Sept. 14 – Visions of Politics

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

Sheldon Wolin, “Political Theory as a Vocation,” *American Political Science Review* 63, no. 4 (1969): 1062–82.

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

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

3. Sept. 21 – Anthropological Conceptions

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

Leo Strauss, “Notes on Carl Schmitt,” in *ibid.*

rec.: Kari Palonen, “Politics or the Political? An Historical Perspective on a Contemporary Non-Debate,” *European Political Science* 6, no. 1 (2007): 69–78.

4. Sept. 28 – Historical Conceptions

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

Maurizio Viroli, “The Revolution in the Concept of Politics,” *Political Theory* 20, no. 3 (1992): 473–95.

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

5. Oct. 5 – Rawls

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* 64:2 (1989): 233–55.

Chantal Mouffe, “Democracy, Power, and ‘the Political’,” *The Democratic Paradox* (Verso 2000).

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

[MID-TERM BREAK – NO CLASS OCT. 12]

6. Oct. 19 – 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.

7. Oct. 26 – Marx

Sheldon S. Wolin, “Reading Marx Politically,” *Nomos* 26 (1983): 79–112.

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

Alex Demirovic, "The Critique of Politics," *Viewpointmag.com* (2014).
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."

8. Nov. 2 – Foucault

Michel Foucault, "Omnes et Singulatim – Towards a Criticism of 'Political Reason'," *Tanner Lectures on Human Values, vol. II*, ed. Sterling McMurrin (University of Utah 1981), 225–254.

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.

9. Nov. 9 – Politics as Politicization

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

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

Emily Apter, "Occupy Derivatives!/Politics 'Smallest P'," *October* 142 (2012): 86–106.

Étienne Balibar, "Three Concepts of Politics," *Politics and the Other Scene* (Verso 2002), 1–21.

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

10. Nov. 16 – Postcolonialism

Uday Mehta, "Gandhi on Democracy, Politics and the Ethics of Everyday Life," *Modern Intellectual History* 7, no. 2 (2010): 355–71.

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

Mark Devenney, "Thinking the Postcolonial as Political," *Borderlands E-Journal* 6, no. 2 (2007).

[RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE IN CLASS NOV. 16]

11. Nov. 23 – Postsecularism

Talal Asad, "Free Speech, Blasphemy, and Secular Criticism," in *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*, Asad, Brown, Butler, 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. Nov. 30 – Eco-feminism

Theresa Man Ling Lee. "Rethinking the Personal and the Political: Feminist Activism and Civic Engagement," *Hypatia* 22, no. 4 (2007): 163–79.

Catriona Sandilands, "Opinionated Natures: Toward a Green Public Culture," *Democracy and the Claims of Nature: Critical Perspectives for a New Century*, Ben A. Minteer and Bob Pepperman Taylor (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 138–54.

Marisol de la Cadena, "Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections Beyond 'Politics'," *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 2 (2010): 334–70.

James Tully, "Citizenship for the Love of the World," ms (2013).

13. Dec. 7 – Posthumanism

Bruno Latour, "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Latour and Peter Weibel (MIT Press, 2005), 4–31.

Isabelle Stengers, "The Cosmopolitical Proposal," in *ibid*, 994–1003.

Andrew Poe, "Things-Beyond-Objects," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 19, no. 1 (2011): 153–64.

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14 AT 6PM