

POLSCI 3PB3: POLITICS FROM BELOW

Winter 2020

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Course Description

The idea of democracy perhaps best captures the late modern dream, aspiration, and normative benchmark for political life, its implicit egalitarianism, non-domination and promise of autonomy commonly invoked and celebrated by actors of virtually all ideological persuasions. In light of our broadly shared view of governments as conduits enabling us to live lives of our own choosing, democracy appears to be the only form that we really could consider viable at all.

And yet, the mass democracies that we've come to inhabit are beset by profound and seemingly intractable problems: from the tyranny of the majority, to public apathy, to unresponsive governments, to demagoguery, to civic alienation, to neoliberal corruption, large-scale democracies are accompanied by a wide range of social and political pathologies.

This course examines the turn to the local – to communities, grassroots movements, institutional innovations, radical insurgencies, smaller-scale forms of civic association – as responding to some of the challenges generated by mass democracies. We will consider both the nature of democratic pathologies and a broad spectrum of political thinkers, activists and movements reacting to them by turning to politics from below, variously understood. We will consider both theoretical approaches and more applied forms of political activism, within the state and beyond it.

As is fitting for a class on community power, the course will include a significant participatory dimension. Our weekly sessions will be divided between lecturing and class discussions. The nature of the subjects we'll be addressing lends itself to group discussions and debates, and you will be expected to contribute substantively to them.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should:

- become familiarized with a wide range of texts relating to the course's theme
- develop critical reading, writing, and analytical skills
- enhance their knowledge of political theory

Required Materials and Texts

- Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive! Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (Pluto Press, 2008)
- Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism?* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016)
- Robert Nichols, *Theft is Property! Dispossession and Critical Theory* (Duke University Press, 2020)
- Online Course Pack (OCP) – Material posted to the course's website, accessible via Avenue to Learn.

- Online resources (OL)

Wherever possible, I have tried to find online sources to keep costs at a minimum. This means that you will be responsible for acquiring articles for some classes (you will, of course, be provided with bibliographic information when that's the case). I will provide direct links to online sources when they're available.

Class Format

The course will meet once a week. Each session will involve both lecturing and group discussions.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Attendance and participation: 20%
2. Research paper proposal and annotated bibliography (due Feb. 26): 15%
3. Research paper (due Mar. 18): 25%
4. Final examination: 40%

Course Evaluation – Details

Attendance and participation (20%)

Your attendance and participation grade will be gauged by consistent attendance, and by active and informed participation. You will be expected to have completed the readings and be ready to discuss them. The discussion-based segment of the course aims to provide you with an opportunity to address the material in greater depth, clarify points of confusion, and explore ideas from the texts. All of these things require not only your attendance, but your active engagement; you will be expected to participate in group discussions.

Research paper proposal and annotated bibliography (15%), due Feb. 26

You are required to submit

- a) a one-page paper proposal, along with
- b) an annotated bibliography with a minimum of 8 sources

at the beginning of class on Feb. 26 (in hard copy). This aims to provide you with an opportunity to work out your topic, do some research, and get some constructive feedback ahead of writing the fuller paper.

Research Paper (25%), due Mar. 18

The research paper will be 3000 words, and will be on a topic of your choosing. It can be based on the themes/ideas/readings from the class, or on a different subject altogether (within the constraints of the course's subject). The paper is due in hard copy at the beginning of class on Mar. 18.

Final Examination (40%), April 2020

The final examination will cover all of the course's materials, and will be largely essay-based (although I might also include a few shorter-answer questions – this will all be discussed in class ahead of time).

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (Jan. 8)

Introduction

No reading.

Week 2 (Jan. 15)

Rousseau, Republicanism and Problems of Scale

Reading:

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, [*The Social Contract*](#), Book I, Introductory Note, chs. 1, 6-9; Book II, chs. 1, 3, 4, 6-12; Book III, chs. 1, 4, 15; Book IV, ch. 1.

Week 3 (Jan. 22)

Anarchism 1: Foundations

Reading:

- Peter Kropotkin, "[Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal](#)," trans. Harry Lyman Coopman (San Francisco, Free Society, 1898).
- Emma Goldman, "[Anarchism: What it Really Stands For](#)," in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York, Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1917).
- Michael Taylor, selections from *Community, Anarchy and Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 1-10, 25-38. **OCP**.

Week 4 (Jan. 29)

Anarchism 2: Contemporary Movements

Reading:

- Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive! Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (London, Pluto Press, 2008), Introduction p. 1-6, chs. 1, 2, 4.

Week 5 (Feb. 5)

Strikes

Reading:

- Rosa Luxemburg, [*The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions*](#).

- Alex Gourevitch, “The Right to Strike: A Radical View,” *American Political Science Review* 112 (2018): 905-917. **OL**.

Week 6 (Feb. 12)

Indigeneity and Politics 1: Zapatismo

Reading:

- [Global Social Theory primer](#)
- [Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona](#)
- Thomas Nail, “Constructivism and the Future Anterior of Radical Politics,” *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, 2010 (1): 73-94. **OL**
- Massimiliano Tomba, “1994: Zapatistas and the Dispossessed of History,” in *Insurgent Universality: An Alternative Legacy of Modernity* (OUP, 2019). **OCP**

Week 7 (Feb. 19) NO CLASS – READING WEEK

Week 8 (Feb. 26)

Indigeneity and Politics 2: Dispossession

Reading:

- Nichols, *Theft is Property*, pages TBD.

Week 9 (Mar. 4)

Deliberative Democracy 1: Theory

Reading:

- Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, “What Deliberative Democracy Means,” in *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004), ch. 1. **OCP**.
- Dennis F. Thompson, “Who should govern who governs? The role of citizens in reforming the electoral system”, in *Designing Deliberative Democracy: The British Columbia Citizens’ Assembly* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008). **OCP**.

Week 10 (Mar. 11)

Deliberative Democracy 2: Practice

No reading.

*Guest lecture: Laurie Drake, MASS LBP.

Week 11 (Mar. 18)

Civil Rights 1: King

Reading:

- Martin Luther King Jr., "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," in *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (Beacon Press, 2010), 77-221. **OCP**.
- Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in *Why We Can't Wait* (Beacon Press, 2011), 85-109. **OCP**.
- Martin Luther King Jr., "Black Power," in *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Beacon Press, 2010), 23-69. **OCP**.

Week 12 (Mar. 25)

Civil Rights 2: Black Lives Matter

Reading:

- "[Black Lives Matter: What We Believe](#)"
- Alicia Garza, "[A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement by Alicia Garza](#)", *The Feminist Wire*.
- "[#BlackLivesMatter: the birth of a new civil rights movement](#)", *The Guardian*.
- Derrick Bell, "[Racial Realism](#)", *Connecticut Law Review* 24 (2) 1992.
- Juliet Hooker, "Black Lives Matter and the Paradoxes of U.S. Black Politics: From Democratic Sacrifice to Democratic Repair", *Political Theory* 44 (4) 2016. **OL**.

Week 13 (Apr. 1)

Democratic Corruption 2: Populism

Reading:

- Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism?* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), Introduction, pp. 19-25, pp. 75-93, Conclusion.
- Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, John Coggin, "The Tea Party of the Remaking of Republican Conservatism," *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 9 (1), March 2011.
- William Connolly, "Trump, the Working Class and Fascist Rhetoric", and Michael Goodhart and Jeanne Morefield, "Reflection Now! Critique and Solidarity in the Trump Era", both available in *Theory & Event*, Vol. 20 (1) Supplement, Jan. 2017. **OL**.

PLEASE NOTE: THESE READINGS MAY CHANGE, AS THIS IS FAST-MOVING TERRAIN. MULLER WILL REMAIN BUT I MAY REPLACE THE OTHER READINGS, IN WHICH CASE I'LL PROVIDE YOU WITH AMPLE WARNING.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Unless otherwise noted, assignments will be submitted in hard copy.

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-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Extensions for the paper will **ONLY** be extended to students unable to submit in time due to extraordinary circumstances. This will require **official documentation** (for example, an official medical certificate) explaining your circumstances. Otherwise, late assignments will be penalized 3%/day, including weekends.

You are free to appeal the grade of your paper. However, I will only consider appeals based on substantive reasons. Appeals will consequently require you to provide a half-to-full-page explanation laying out the grounds for your case. If you provide adequate reasons for me to reconsider your grade, I will do so in light of your explanation.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Beyond the above, each student can make up the participation grade for **ONE** class by submitting a 2-3 page reflection paper on that week's assigned readings.

Avenue to Learn

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.

Turnitin.com

In this course we may be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students may be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

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 requiring a RISO accommodation 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

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior 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 behavior 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](#).

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 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

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.