

RADICAL POLITICAL THEORY
POLSCI 4RT3
Fall 2021, Term 1

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Course Description

This course introduces students to the tradition of radical political theory by covering a broad spectrum of theorists and perspectives from the 1800s to the present day. Radical political theory encompasses theoretical critiques of the existing order, philosophical and historical analyses, and revolutionary practices and programs. Concepts such as power, domination, authority, and emancipation play a key role across the diverse theories and perspectives that will be covered.

In this course, we will begin by investigating the Marxist and anarchist traditions before turning to a range of social and historical topics, including feminism, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, ecology, and the legacies of settler colonialism. The course is designed to provide students with an in-depth exploration of radical viewpoints within political theory; to enhance students' ability to read carefully and critically complex theoretical texts; to understand highly demanding texts while arriving at their own understanding of the nature and methods of social and political criticism; and to present as well as discuss complex ideas and arguments. The course's group discussion format pursues these aims by requiring students to engage with their peers to discuss a range of theoretical viewpoints while developing a distinct understanding of radical politics and applying that understanding to important theoretical treatments of topical social and political issues.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Identify what makes a theory or viewpoint *radical*, the different and competing ways this has been understood, and the implications of these approaches
- Understand, analyze, interpret, explain, and debate challenging theoretical texts
- Recognize and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of theoretical arguments
- Analyze contemporary events in light of different theoretical perspectives
- Present and discuss complex political and theoretical material
- Further develop advanced research and writing skills

Required Materials and Texts

All required readings will be available online via Avenue or the McMaster library website

Class Format

In view of the ongoing pandemic, this course has been designed to be held online, with seminars conducted synchronously over Zoom. The developing public health situation may at some point in the semester permit us to meet in person. This would occur subject to government and university policy, only if the university can provide safe and appropriate space, and with the explicit and unanimous consent of all participants. Such a transition would not change any other aspects of the class outlined here.

Since this is a seminar, regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Students are expected to prepare for group discussions by carefully reading the assigned material and by participating in the online forum in advance of classroom discussion. They are expected to post to the online forum consistently throughout the term, and to divide their posts between engaging directly with the readings and their fellows' interpretations, comments, and questions. Seminar discussion will thus take place on the basis not only of student interpretations of the readings, but also the online discussions.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Attendance and participation – 20%
2. Online discussion – 20%
3. Team presentation – 15%
4. Presentation feedback – 5%
5. Final debate – 10%
6. Paper proposal (due Nov. 14) – 5%
7. Final paper (due Dec. 12) – 25%

Course Evaluation – Details

Attendance and participation (20%)

Regular attendance and active participation are expected. Every unexcused absence will result in an automatic 2% penalty on your final overall grade, up to a maximum of 10%. Active, respectful, and constructive participation is expected through at least some of general, small group, and chat discussion via Zoom. You are expected to come to each seminar prepared to discuss the assigned readings and to contribute regularly to discussions through at least some of these different media.

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 noon the Wednesday before class; responses will be accepted until 6pm the day before class. While you are welcome to post more often, only the best post or reply from any week will count towards your grade. You are responsible for posting at least ten 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. A good initial post will pose a question; a good reply will attempt to answer it.

Group presentation and moderation (15%)

You will be organized into small groups, which will be responsible for presenting key concepts and leading group discussions for one of weeks 7 through 12. Groups will be assigned a topic, and on the corresponding week will be asked to make a short presentation (10-20 minutes) introducing the assigned texts, leading discussion, and devising activities for the class. Groups must submit a brief outline of their presentation, including list of topics and questions for discussion, to the instructor no later than 6pm on the Wednesday before their presentation for feedback and suggestions.

Groups will also be responsible for preparing a handout summarizing the main points of the readings, which must be posted to Avenue by 6pm the day before class. 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.

Presentation feedback (5%)

Half of your presentation and moderation grade will come from your peers, who will assess the presentation and offer constructive feedback via Avenue. Your feedback grade will reflect the consistency and helpfulness of your feedback to other presenters over the course of the term.

Final debate (10%), Week 13

For our final week, the class will choose a topic of current political interest; possibilities could include the pandemic, popular mobilization against police or state violence, neoliberalism and capitalist crisis, or something else. (The first to propose the topic we choose on Avenue will receive a 1% bonus on their final grade.) Groups will each prepare a brief paper (1-2 pp., possibly point form), posted to the Avenue discussion forum by the end of Wednesday, Dec. 1, explaining how the perspective they covered can illuminate and help respond to the issue. The last class will then be devoted to a debate between the various perspectives, with grades assessed on the paper and individual participation.

Final paper proposal (5%), due Nov. 14

A one-page proposal for your final paper, including a title, abstract, and list of 5-10 references is due to the Avenue Dropbox by the end of Sunday, Nov. 14.

Final paper (25%), due Dec. 12

The final paper will be a medium-length essay (10–15 pages) on a topic to be determined in consultation with the instructor. This paper will allow students to explore an area of radical theory which they find interesting and relevant to their other studies. The paper is due by the end of Sunday, Dec. 12.

Weekly Course Schedule and Readings (Provisional)

Week 1 (Sept. 10) Introduction – What is ‘radical’ politics?

Readings:

- “The Putney Debates.” In *Democracy: A Reader*. Columbia University Press, 2016. Pp. 77-82.
- Thomas Jefferson et al. (1776). “Declaration of Independence”
- Olympe de Gouges (1791). “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the (Female) Citizen”
- Sojourner Truth (1851). “Ar’nt I a Woman?”
- Adbusters (2011). “#OCCUPYWALLSTREET”
- Black Lives Matter (2015). “What We Believe”

Week 2 (Sept. 17) Marxism

Readings:

- Karl Marx (1854-1875). “Letter to Arnold Ruge”; “On Democracy”; “Theses on Feuerbach”; “The Communist Manifesto” (with Friedrich Engels); “Preface to *A Critique of Political Economy*”; “Critique of the Gotha Program.” In *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Week 3 (Sept. 24) NO CLASS

No readings.

Week 4 (Oct. 1) Anarchism I

Readings:

- Peter Kropotkin (1892). “Our Riches.” “Well-Being for All.” “Anarchist Communism.” “Objections.” “Consumption and Production.” In *The Conquest of Bread*. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 7-23, 74-82, 91-95.
- Emma Goldman (1910-1911). “Anarchism: What it really stands for.”

Week 5 (Oct. 8) Anarchism II

Readings:

- Robert Paul Wolff (1970). “The Conflict Between Authority and Autonomy.” In *Defense of Anarchism*. Harper and Row. Pp. 1-7.
- Francis Dupuis-Déri (2005). “Anarchy in Political Philosophy.” *Anarchist Studies* 13, no. 1: 8–22.
- David Graeber (2004). *Fragments of an anarchist anthropology*. Prickly Paradigm. (entire)

Note: Presentation groups assigned.

Week 6 (Oct. 15) MID-TERM RECESS – NO CLASS

Week 7 (Oct. 22) Gender

Readings:

- Mary Wollstonecraft (1792). "The Rights and Involved Duties of Mankind Considered." In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. New York: J. Todd. Pp. 11-18.
- Carol Hanisch (1970). "The Personal is Political." Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation. Pp.1-5.
- Shulamith Firestone (1970). "The Dialectic of Sex," "Dialectics of Cultural History," "Feminism and Ecology," *The Dialectic of Sex: the case for feminist revolution* Bantam Books Inc. Pp. 1-15, 170-203.
- Sylvia Federici (2017). "Notes on Gender in Marx's Capital," *Continental Thought and Theory* 1, no. 4: 19-37.

Note: Presentations begin.

Week 8 (Oct. 29) Colonialism and its legacies

Readings:

- Frantz Fanon (1961). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press. Pp. 35-94.
- Albert Memmi (1974). "Does the colonial exist?" In *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Souvenir Press. Pp. 45-63.
- Enrique Dussel (1995). "Eurocentrism." In *The Invention of the Americas*. Continuum. Part I.

Optional:

- Frantz Fanon (1967). "The Negro and Psychopathology." In *Black Skin, White Masks*. Grove Press. Pp. 141-210.

Week 9 (Nov. 5) Race (in the USA)

Readings:

- Frederick Douglass (1852). "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"
- W.E.B. Du Bois (1903). *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. Gorham, Maine: Myers Education Press. Pp. 7-16, 36-50.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963). "Letter from Birmingham Jail."
- Combahee River Collective (1977). "The Combahee River Collective Statement." Latham N.Y.: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press. Pp. 1-21.
- Angela Davis (1981). "The Meaning of Emancipation According to Black Women." In *Women, Race & Class*. Vintage Books.

Optional:

W.E.B. Du Bois (1920). "The Souls of White Folk." In *Darkwater*. Harcourt, Bruce and Howe. Ch. 2.

Week 10 (Nov. 12) Settler colonialism (in Canada)

Readings:

- Taiaiake Alfred, video posted on Avenue
- Patrick Wolfe (2006), "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4. Pp. 387-409.

- Glen Sean Coulthard (2007), "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the 'Politics of Recognition' in Canada." *Contemporary Political Theory* 6. Pp. 437-460.
- Audra Simpson (2017). "The Ruse of Consent and the Anatomy of Refusal: Cases from Indigenous North America and Australia." *Postcolonial Studies* 20:3: 18-33.

Note: Final paper proposal due November 14.

Week 11 (Nov. 19) Non-western perspectives

Readings:

- Mohandas K. Gandhi (1913). *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule*. Navajivan Publishing.
- Walter D. Mignolo (2011). "Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto." *Transmodernity* 1, no. 2: 44-66.

Week 12 (Nov. 26) Nature and ecology

Readings:

- Rockström: two videos posted on Avenue
- Arne Næss (1973). "The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement. A summary." *Inquiry* 16: 95-100.
- Murray Bookchin (2006). "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought," *Antipode* 17: 89-98.
- John Bellamy Foster, et al. (2010). "Introduction: A Rift in Earth and Time." In *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth*. NYU Press. Pp. 13-49.

Note: Presentations conclude.

Week 13 (Dec. 3) Final debate

Readings: TBD

Note: Group debate paper due on Avenue Wednesday, December 1.

FINAL PAPER DUE SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

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

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Courses with an On-Line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (eg. email, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, 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.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

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](#), 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.