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Office hours: T/Th 10:00-11:00, W 2:00-3:00

POLS 4810  
Wed: 3:10-6:00  
A&S 226  
Final: Wed. Dec 8

**UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING**  
**SEMINAR: CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THOUGHT**  
**Fall 2010**

Course Description:

This course aims to provide students with an entry point into several strains of contemporary political theory. The course begins with the early-twentieth century work of Carl Schmitt and ends with a recent volume by Martha Nussbaum. The books chosen for this course are exemplars of political theory in that they pose radical questionings and responses to contemporary political problems. Among the topics covered in this course are: critiques of liberalism, the contemporary reconstruction of liberalism; pluralism, post-modernism, feminism, and animal rights. These topics, however, are deeply engaged in understanding core concepts such as “the political”, sovereignty, agency, diversity, norms, governance, and justice. As a seminar, the success of the course will depend significantly upon student preparation and participation. It is designed, principally, to advance students’ analytical, interpretive and writing skills. By the end of the semester, this inquiry should provide students with a stronger foundation for thinking through some of the challenges of contemporary political life.

Required Readings:

Carl Schmitt. 2007. *The Concept of the Political* (expanded edition). University of Chicago Press. **ISBN-10:** 0226738922 **ISBN-13:** 978-0226738925

Hannah Arendt. 1998. *The Human Condition*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). University of Chicago Press. **ISBN-10:** 0226025985 **ISBN-13:** 978-0226025988

John Rawls. 2001. *Justice as Fairness*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Belknap Press. **ISBN-10:** 0674005112 **ISBN-13:** 978-0674005112

Alasdair MacIntyre. 2007. *After Virtue*. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). University of Notre Dame Press. **ISBN-10:** 0268035040 **ISBN-13:** 978-0268035044

Michel Foucault. 2009. *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-1978*. Picador. **ISBN-10:** 0312203608 **ISBN-13:** 978-0312203603

Judith Butler. 2006. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge. **ISBN-10:** 0415389550 **ISBN-13:** 978-0415389556

Wendy Brown. 1995. *States of Injury*. Princeton University Press. **ISBN-10:** 069102989X **ISBN-13:** 978-0691029894

William Connolly. 2005. *Pluralism*. Duke University Press. **ISBN-10:** 0822335670 **ISBN-13:** 978-0822335672

Martha Nussbaum. 2007. *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. Belknap Press. **ISBN-10:** 0674024109 **ISBN-13:** 978-0674024106

If you are purchasing your books somewhere other than the UW Bookstore, please purchase the above editions.

Course Requirements:

**Participation: 10%**

In addition to introducing you to the substantive material, this course also seeks to improve your critical thinking skills and to develop your ability to communicate ideas and deliberate with others. This course is designed to be a discussion seminar-- each student will bear a significant burden in ensuring the success of the course. Course participation includes preparation, attendance, verbal participation, and engagement.

Attendance is required— students are allowed one absence. For each following unexcused absence the student's course grade will drop one third of a letter grade (i.e. from an A to an A-).

**Writing Assignments: 40%**

Analysis Papers: 30% of the course grade. Each week of substantive material students will be required to write a one-page, single-spaced analysis paper of the assigned reading. Of the eleven opportunities in the course, ten will count towards your analysis papers grade. In addition, each student will receive an optional opportunity to re-write an analysis paper. The paper should select a key concept or question from the reading, interpret it, and analyze its significance either to the work as a whole or to some specific problem of contemporary political thought or politics. While some description will be necessary, the paper should be analytical. Expectations for these papers will be very high: razor sharp, tight analysis, polished presentation. Papers are due at the beginning of each class, unless one is scheduled for “Mark-Up” (see below). No late papers will be accepted.

30 Minute Mark-Ups: 10% of the course grade. Each week we will dedicate some time strictly to the writing process. “30 Minute Mark-Ups” are a version of peer editing. Each week two or so students will post their one page papers to the course e-companion site one day in advance—by Tuesday, 3:00pm. All students will be expected to review and print the papers prior to attending class. We will then spend the first 30 minutes making recommendations to the authors regarding the writing (not the substance) of the papers. Students will be graded based upon their participation in the exercise (paper grades are separate). Failure to submit a paper for the mark-up session will result in a zero for this portion of the course grade. Student authors will then have the opportunity to re-write this paper (once) for a higher grade.

**Exams: 50%**

There will be two “take home” written examinations for this course. Students will be given roughly one week to complete each exam, which will ultimately look much like an extended essay. Detailed expectations and exam prompts will be distributed in the upcoming weeks.

**Grading:** All written assignments and exams will be graded using the following scale:

93-100	A	77-79	C+
90-92	A-	73-76	C
87-89	B+	70-72	C-
83-86	B	67-69	D+
80-82	B-	63-66	D
		60-62	D-
		< 60	F

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**Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty (including plagiarism and all other offenses listed under University Regulation 802 rev 2) will not be tolerated. Any violations of University policy will be handled through University procedures explained at

<http://www.uwyo.edu/a&s/AppealsDishonesty/GuidelinesDishonesty>

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Accommodations for persons with documented disabilities require student registration with University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in SEO, room 330 Knight Hall, 766-6189, TTY 766-3073. Please make every effort to register and inform me of your needs as soon as possible.

\*No electronic devices (excepting silenced cell phones) will be allowed in class unless first approved by the instructor.\*

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Tentative Course Schedule:

**Week One**

**Wed. Aug 25: Administration and Introductions**

Lecture: Introduction to Carl Schmitt

Mark-up: Dr. Gabrielson

**Week Two:**

**Wed. Sept 1: Defining “the political”**

Reading: Schmitt, “The Concept of the Political” entire (19-79); “The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations” entire (80-96)

Mark-up:

Lecture : Introduction to Hannah Arendt

**Week Three:**

**Wed. Sept 8: Defining “the political” take II**

Reading: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 1-174

Mark-up:

**Week Four:**

**Wed. Sept 15: Arendt, Cont.**

Reading: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 175-325

Mark-up:

Lecture: Introduction to John Rawls

**Week Five:**

**Wed. Sept 22: Liberalism and Justice**

Reading: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, entire.

Mark-up:

Lecture: Introduction to Alasdair MacIntyre

**Week Six:**

**Wed. Sept 29: Liberal Critic: Justice and Virtue**

Reading: Selections from MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, to be assigned.

Mark-up:

Lecture: Introduction to Martha Nussbaum

**Week Seven:**

**Wed. Oct 6: Rawls, Reconsidered**

Reading: Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, 1-216

Mark-up:

**Week Eight:**

**Wed. Oct 13: Nussbaum, Cont.**

Reading: Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, 217-416

Mark-up:

Lecture: Introduction to Foucault

**Distribute Midterm Examination**

**Week Nine:**

Wed. Oct 20 MIDTERM EXAMINATION DUE

**Week Ten:**

**Wed. Oct 28: Power: Governmentality and Conduct**

Reading: Foucault, Selections from *Security, Territory, Population, Lectures 1977-1978*, pp. 115-254, 311-362

Mark-up:

Lecture: Introduction to Judith Butler

**Week Eleven:**

**Wed. Nov 3: Power: Gender, Politics and Performativity**

Reading: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, entire

Mark-up:

Lecture: Introduction to Wendy Brown

**Week Twelve:**

**Wed. Nov 10: Power: Freedom, Injury, and the Welfare State**

Reading: Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, entire

Mark-up:

Lecture: Introduction to William Connolly

**Week Thirteen:**

**Wed. Nov 17: Pluralism and Contemporary Political Virtue**

Reading: William Connolly, *Pluralism*, entire

Mark-up:

**Week Fourteen:**

Wed. Nov 24: HAPPY THANKSGIVING!

**Week Fifteen:**

Wed. Dec 1: Conclusions and extensions  
Final Exams distributed

**Week Sixteen:**

FINAL EXAM: Due Wed. Dec 8

## **POLS 5810**

### **GRADUATE SEMINAR IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THOUGHT**

#### **ADDITIONAL GRADUATE STUDENT REQUIREMENTS/POLS 5810**

**In addition to those assignments and expectations outlined in the syllabus above, graduate students taking this course will have the following responsibilities:**

- 1. In class, graduate students will be expected to participate at a higher level and to work assiduously at fostering robust, and civil, discussion.**
- 2. Graduate students will have the opportunity to meet in separate discussion sections and to propose further research in contemporary political thought.**