

Pol Sci 386
Contemporary Political Theory
Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:15
Bolton B40
Spring 2014

Instructor: Kennan Ferguson

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Office Hours: Mondays, 1:00–2:00, Thurs 1:00–2:00, and by apt.

Course Description

Many of the central presumptions of Western political theory – that logic would lead to a better world, that philosophy could show people how to behave kindly and properly, and that political behavior could be explained using scientific principles – were exploded by the rise of Nazi Germany and the death camps and World War that followed. Germany had been a profoundly philosophical society, and many of the great lights of political theory had come from there, but the Holocaust emerged there nevertheless. Philosophers were thus faced with a conundrum: was political theory good for anything? Just as importantly, could it do anything? And yet it has continued. New arguments have been made; new politics have been enacted; new movements have emerged.

In this course we will investigate this continuation by looking at the theoretical underpinnings of a few political movements in the latter 20th century to the present. These are not meant to be a complete rendition of the political issues of the past 75 years, but representative of how political philosophies have emerged and affected the contemporary world. None of these issues is “solved” (in the way that we generally now say: “slavery is wrong and illegal,” or that “racism is bad”) so it is vital that we listen to, and respectfully argue with, other students’ views on the subjects.

Because discussion and involvement is central to this course (counting for 20% of your grade), your attendance and participation is essential. If you cannot attend a specific class, it is vital that you get someone to take notes for you. Notes and tapes of the course will not replace the experience of participating and their sale is consequently forbidden. You are encouraged to explore the interrelated nature of these inquiries, both in your discussions and your papers.

There will be three writing assignments through the course. Each of these is dependent on the course reading, the themes brought up in class, and in your other courses. The first two of these will be 4–5 pages, each worth 20% of your grade, and the final 7–8 page paper (in lieu of a final exam) will be worth the remaining 40%. This is a writing intensive course: your writing itself will be graded, so please avoid misspellings and grammatical errors. A brief word about citation and originality: you are encouraged to discuss the class readings with one another, and you are free to use outside sources, including articles, books or websites, regarding them. In your papers, it is considered polite to refer to help you have received from other people in discussions, but it is mandatory that you refer to any ideas which are not your own. You may use in-text citations, footnotes, or endnotes. Any word-for-word use must, of course, be in quotation marks and properly cited. Failure to meet these requirements constitutes academic dishonesty.

Required Readings

In order to give you a sense of where many (though not all) of these movements have originated, the books will be available at a different bookstore than you are used to using. They can be found at the University Bookstore. If you order your own copies (through Amazon.com, for example), please use the same ISBN number so you get the same translation and pagination. All other readings will be available online through D2L.

All books are required.

Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press)
ISBN-13: 978-0802141323

Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford)
ISBN-13: 978-0804714778

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books)
ISBN-13: 978-0465051007

Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (Harper Collins – or any published version) e.g., ISBN-13: 978-0061129766

Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (Updated) (Harper Perennial)
ISBN-13: 978-0061711305

Course Schedule

Many of the readings are available on D2L: those readings are marked with an asterisk (*), below. You must print these out and bring them to class for the discussion.

INTRODUCTION

January 22: Introduction

January 27: Introductory reading: Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* pp. 1–34, 201–218*

PART 1: POST-COLONIALISM

January 29: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1–96 (Chapters 1, 2)

February 3: Fanon, 145–239 (Chapters 4, 5, 6)

February 5: Homi Bhabha, “Dissemination: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation”*

February 10: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”*

PART 2: GENDER AND SEXUALITY

February 12: (film) Marlene Gorris, *A Question of Silence*

February 17: *A Question of Silence* (continued)

February 19: Paper 1 Due

February 19: *A Question of Silence* (discussion)

February 24: Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, 1–76 (Chapters 1, 2, 3)

February 26: Pateman, 116–153, 189–218 (Chapters 5, 7)

March 3: Catharine MacKinnon, “Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech”*

March 5: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (selections)*

March 10: Anne Fausto-Sterling, “The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female are Not Enough, Part I and II”*

PART 3: ABSOLUTE LIBERTY

March 12: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 1–25, 88–119

March 24: Nozick, 232–274, 297–334.

March 26: Susan Moller Okin, “Libertarianism: Matriarchy, Slavery, and Dystopia”*

PART 4: ENVIRONMENT

March 31: Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* 1–164 (Prologue – Chapter 11)

April 7: Abbey, 165–299 (Chapters 12 – 24)

April 9: Abbey, 300–421 (Chapter 25 – Epilogue)

April 14: Rob Nixon, “Environmentalism and Postcolonialism”*

April 21: Paper 2 Due

April 21: (Film) Todd Haynes, [Safe]

April 23: [Safe], cont.

April 28: [Safe], discussion.

PART 5: ANIMAL RIGHTS

April 30: Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 1–23, 95–157

May 5: Singer, 185–248

May 7: Conclusion

May 12: Final Paper Due, 5:00 p.m.