

Professor Myers
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Office hours: Wed 2-5pm
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POLS 5035
OSH 234
Tu/Th: 2:00-3:20pm

Contemporary Political Thought

Political thought since the 20th century has been characterized largely by attempts to respond to what has been called the “break in tradition” – the apparent loss of an inherited foundation of shared beliefs, values, and ideas. What is the fate of politics under these conditions? If, as Nietzsche famously announced, “God is dead!” what does this mean for our understanding of collective life? How should our shared existence be organized if the “fact of pluralism” – the existence of multiple and irreconcilable goods, faiths, and ways of life – is acknowledged? This course pursues these questions by engaging with some significant works in contemporary political theory. Our investigation of these writings will serve as an opportunity to develop the practices of close reading, textual analysis, and critical thinking.

Class Structure

Our class meetings will consist largely of lecture, but each session will also incorporate student discussion. For this reason, you should come to class prepared not only to actively listen and take notes, but also to pose questions and offer interpretive insights into the texts and their arguments.

Note: this is a reading intensive course! It requires that you set aside adequate time and energy for careful reading and come to our meetings prepared to think about and discuss the materials critically and creatively. Please be certain you can make such a commitment before deciding to take this course.

Texts

All texts listed below are required and are available in the University Bookstore. **Please obtain these translations/editions.**

You must bring the reading to class with you, as we will refer often to specific textual passages.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (Random House)
Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Dover)
Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (Norton)
Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (Penguin)
Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press)
John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness* (Harvard University Press)
Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton University Press)
William Connolly, *Pluralism* (Duke University Press)

In addition to the texts above, there are several readings for the course which must be obtained through E-Reserve at the Marriott Library. These readings are listed below and are marked by an asterisk on the schedule. It is your responsibility to **print the materials on E-Reserve and bring them to class with you.**

Friedrich Nietzsche, "I. Nihilism" from *The Will to Power*

Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Prejudices of Philosophers" from *Beyond Good and Evil*

Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation"

Michel Foucault, "Panopticism"

Isaiah Berlin, "The Pursuit of the Ideal"

Leo Strauss, "Introduction" to *Natural Right and History*

Requirements

Attendance at all classes is expected, as is the timely completion of assigned readings. Unannounced in-class writing assignments will be used to assess your engagement with the course. No make-ups will be allowed for these in-class assignments, however, your lowest score will be dropped from the final grade calculation.

In addition to these requirements, you will complete one 6-8 page essay, an in-class midterm exam, and a take-home final exam (both essay format). A portion of your grade will also be determined by your participation in class discussions.

Class Participation	10%
In-class writing assignments	15%
Paper	20%
In-Class Midterm	25%
Take-Home Final	30%

Policies

Papers will be marked off 1/3 letter grade for each day they are late. No exceptions.

In-class writing assignments may be completed only on the date they are given and cannot be made up.

Exams may be made up only in cases of medical or family emergency and require appropriate documentation for consideration.

Laptops are not permitted in the classroom.

Cell phones must be turned off during class time.

You are responsible for getting notes from your fellow students for any missed classes.

You are also responsible for all announcements and communications posted for this class on WebCT.

Communication

I am available to talk during my open office hours, noted above, and by appointment. Please feel free to come see me. If you need to reach me outside of class time and office hours, email is the best medium. Please allow 24 hours for a response to your email.

Religious Accommodations

I will work with students who require schedule changes because of religious observances. The content of the course is non-negotiable. Some of the readings and lectures may express ideas that conflict with the core beliefs of some students. Please review the syllabus carefully to determine if the course is one that you can commit to taking.

Disabilities

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

Academic Honesty

This course operates in accordance with the University's policies on Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism. All work you submit for this course must be your own, produced independently, and created specifically for this class. All material taken from other sources must be clearly acknowledged. Academic dishonesty will result in an automatic F grade in the course and other disciplinary action, up to expulsion from the University.

Course Schedule

Note:

All readings must be completed *prior to* the course meeting for which they are assigned.

An asterisk * next to the title indicates that the reading is to be accessed through E-Reserve at the Marriott Library

T Aug 21 Introduction and Course Overview

The Threat of Nihilism

Th Aug 23 Nietzsche, The Parable of The Madman from *The Gay Science* (handout)
Nietzsche, Preface to *Genealogy of Morals* (pp. 15-23)

T Aug 28 Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, essay 1 (pp. 24-56)
Th Aug 30 NO CLASS

T Sept 4 Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, essay 2 (pp. 57-96)
Th Sept 6 Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, essay 3 (pp. 97-163)

T Sept 11 Nietzsche, "I. Nihilism" from *Will to Power* (pp. 7-39)*
Nietzsche, "On the Prejudices of Philosophers" from *Beyond Good and Evil* (pp. 199-222)*

Rationalism and Regulation

Th Sept 13 Weber, "Science as a Vocation"*

T Sept 18 Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, Author's Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 13-78)

Th Sept 20 Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, Chapters 3-5 (pp. 79-183)

T Sept 25 Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 10-52)

Th Sept 27 Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Chapters 4-8 (pp. 53-112)

T Oct 2 Foucault, "Panopticism"*

Th Oct 4 MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS

FALL BREAK: Week of Oct 8-12

The Break in Tradition: Living in the Gap

T	Oct 16	Arendt, "Preface: The Gap Between Past and Future" Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age" Arendt, "The Concept of History" All in <i>Between Past and Future</i> (pp. 3-90)
Th	Oct 18	Arendt, <i>The Human Condition</i> , Prologue and Chapters 1 (pp. 1-21)
T	Oct 23	Arendt, <i>The Human Condition</i> , Chapter 2 (pp. 22-78)
Th	Oct 25	Arendt, <i>The Human Condition</i> , Chapter 3 (pp. 79-135)
T	Oct 30	Arendt, <i>The Human Condition</i> , Chapter 4 and 5 (pp. 136-247)
Th	Nov 1	Arendt, <i>The Human Condition</i> , Chapters 5 and 6 (pp. 248-325)
T	Nov 6	Arendt, "What is Freedom?" in <i>Between Past and Future</i> (pp. 143-171) PAPER DUE IN CLASS

Negotiating Pluralism

Th	Nov 8	Berlin, "The Pursuit of the Ideal"* Strauss, "Introduction" to <i>Natural Right and History</i> *
Tu	Nov 13	Rawls, <i>Justice as Fairness</i> , Part I and II (pp. 1-79)
Th	Nov 15	Rawls, <i>Justice as Fairness</i> , Part III (pp. 80-134)
Tu	Nov 20	Rawls, <i>Justice as Fairness</i> , Part IV and V (pp. 135-202)
Th	Nov 22	THANKSGIVING
Tu	Nov 27	Young, <i>Justice and the Politics of Difference</i> , Chapters 1, 2, and 4 (pp. 15-65; 96-121)
Th	Nov 29	Young, <i>Justice and the Politics of Difference</i> , Chapters 6 and 8 (pp. 156-191; 226-256)
Tu	Dec 4	Connolly, <i>Pluralism</i> , Prelude and Chapter 1 and 2 (pp. 1-67)
Th	Dec 6	Connolly, <i>Pluralism</i> , Chapter 3, Interlude, Chapter 4, and Postlude (pp. 68-130; 161-169)

**Take Home Final Exam Distributed on the Last Day of Class
Due Monday, December 10th at 4pm.**