

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY

Political Science (POLS) 327

Fall 2011, 4 Units

Instructor: **Dr. Andrew Dilts**

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Class Meetings:

MWF, 2:00p–2:50p

St. Robert's Hall 367

Course Website:

<https://mylmuconnect.lmu.edu/>

COURSE INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION: This is a survey course of late 20th and early 21st century political theory. We will cover a range of theoretical approaches in contemporary political theory, including: (1) social welfare liberalism, (2) libertarianism, (3) civic and humanist republicanism, (4) discourse ethics and deliberative democracy, (5) identitarian critiques, and (6) post-structuralism. Throughout the semester, we will pay special attention to two constellations of questions centered on the ideas of “freedom” and “critique.” What do we mean by freedom? Who is the “free agent” or “free subject” of political life? What is the relation between political freedom and freedom in social, economic, and moral spheres? Secondly, what is critique? What is the object of critique? What grounds critique? What role does critical analysis play in political theory? What does it mean to be a critical political thinker in our daily lives and in our multiplicity? What, in the end, is the relationship between freedom and critique?

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION: Loyola Marymount University’s mission is to encourage student learning, to educate the whole person, and to serve faith and promote justice. The Department of Political Science pursues this mission by encouraging and challenging students to be perceptive observers of political life in all its variety and richness; to seek a systematic understanding of the causes and consequences of political institutions, policies, and behavior; to develop a moral and ethical perspective that allows them to critically evaluate actions, institutions, and policies; and to prepare themselves for a life of active citizenship and involvement in creating a more just and humane world. “Contemporary Political Theory” serves these university and departmental missions by introducing students to the discipline of political theory, which draws a variety of moral values and political realities into a relationship of dialogue, challenge, compromise, and conflict. The course will serve to equip students with sharper analytical tools, and hopefully also greater moral sensitivity in perceiving and confronting the political dimensions of the world around them.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

1. Students will learn about key movements and thinkers in contemporary political theory.
2. Students will dramatically expand their understanding of *freedom* as a normative and descriptive idea in political theory.
3. Students will reflect on the method of political theory, and in particular, on the role that *critique* plays in contemporary political theory.
4. Students will improve their critical, argumentative, and interpretive writing skills.
5. Most importantly, students will develop their critical thinking skills and apply them to their political and social lives, allowing them to grow as persons and as reflective citizens.

PREREQUISITES/RECOMMENDED BACKGROUND: Students should have completed POLS 220 and be familiar with the history of political thought. Preference will be given to students who have taken some combination of POLS 323, 324, 325, and 326.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is a 4-unit, upper-division course, and this is reflected in the course requirements. In particular, has **intensive reading requirements** and you will be held accountable for that reading with weekly writing assignments; it will require **multi-draft writing** throughout the semester; it will substantively focus attention on **methodological training** in political theory (through its emphasis on *critique* as a practice); it includes **a significant individual mentoring component**. To reflect end, the course has the following requirements:

- (1) You will submit **write a substantial paper** during the semester. This paper must be formatted and submitted properly to receive full credit, as documented in the course paper requirements on the course website.
- (2) You will submit **multiple drafts** of this paper throughout the semester, both to the instructor and the your peers. You will take part in a formal **peer-review** session, editing and commenting on two of your colleagues' paper drafts.
- (3) You must schedule an **individual mentoring meeting** with the instructor **no later than 6th week** to discuss your planed term paper.
- (4) You will be held accountable to each other for the substantial course reading by **submitting a weekly written reading question** on the course website by the beginning of Wednesday's class session. Your reading question must demonstrate a) completion of the reading assignment and b) significant thought and reflection as the reading assignment. The grading criteria for these questions are discussed in detail below.
- (5) You must **respond in written form** to at least one of your colleagues reading questions by 5:00pm of Friday of each week.
- (6) You must **attend class** and be an **active participant** in discussion. Because this is a text-driven course, you must always bring a hard-copy of the day's reading to class and you must be prepared to publicly present your weekly reading question in class.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Term paper:	40%
Peer Review:	20%
Paper Abstract/Drafts	10%
Reading Questions:	10%
Reading Question Responses:	10%
Attendance:	5%
Participation:	5%

GRADING SCALE:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	0-59

****Any student who receives a failing grade for attendance and participation will receive a failing grade for the class. Any student who has not turned in all paper drafts will receive a failing grade for the class.****

READING QUESTIONS: A good reading question is one that directly and explicitly engages with the text. Your question should cite a specific passage, term, or concept that you are puzzled about, and it should offer your interpretation of the passage at hand. It should be focused on something that genuinely puzzles you in the reading, and which you can probably assume that others find puzzling or confusing as well.

You will submit one question per week (except during Thanksgiving Break) for a total of 14 reading questions. Questions must be submitted by the beginning of class on Wednesday of each week. Late questions will not be accepted.

READING QUESTION RESPONSES: Because your reading questions are sincere questions, you will also be required to offer a response to at least one of your classmates' questions each week. Your response should not be a criticism of the question itself, but an honest and good-faith response to your fellow students questions about the reading. You must post a response by the 5:00pm on Friday of each week.

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE: Timely, prepared, and engaged attendance is required. Absences will only be excused in the case of illness or emergency. If there is a conflict between course participation and religious observance, please contact me in advance. It is not necessary to obtain prior approval from the instructor when missing a meeting is unavoidable, but note that students bear the *entire responsibility* for the decision to miss class and for whatever effect that may have on their course grade and their learning experience. Repeated absences and lateness will directly affect the discussion and attendance portion of a student's grade, as detailed in the course requirements section.

LATE PENALTIES: Assignments must be turned in at the designated time and place. Failure to turn in an assignment on time is unacceptable except with the prior agreement of the instructor (which will be given only in exceptional circumstances). Except in documented cases of illness or emergency, a penalty of up to a full letter grade may be assessed for each day the assignment is late. However, each student may, at his or her discretion, take a 24-hour extension for *one* of the papers, no questions asked (if you are using your extension please indicate this on the first page of your paper).

PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC HONESTY: Academic dishonesty will be treated as an extremely serious matter. Proven plagiarism of any kind may result in automatic failure of the course, and will be referred to the University for further disciplinary action. I reserve the right to submit your electronic document to plagiarism detection websites if necessary. It is **never** permissible to turn in any work that has been copied from another student or copied from a source (including Internet) without properly acknowledging the source. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth in the "LMU Honor Code and Process" which appears in the LMU Bulletin 2011-2012. You should also refer to my own writing requirements posted on the course website.

GENDER NEUTRAL & GENDER SPECIFIC LANGUAGE, NAMES & ACCENTS: Academics no longer use the pronoun "he" to apply universally to all persons, nor do we use the term "man," when we are referring to humanity or people in general. In our writing, when we are making

generalizations we should use gender neutral pronouns, that is, sie and hir, s/he, him or her, they/their, etc. When referring to a specific person or group of people, we should use the language and pronouns *that they prefer* if we know them. Further, we should be attentive to the spelling and accents of author's names. Finally, all authors must be referred to by their entire names, or only their last names, *not by their first names*, orally and in writing.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION: At times I will communicate with the entire class using campus email systems, so it is essential that you regularly check your lion.lmu.edu email address or forward your lion account email to your preferred email address.

TECHNOLOGY USE DURING CLASS: You are welcome to bring a computer to class provided that it enables you to engage more in the class discussion. You may also use a computer to help you take notes. Email, Twitter, Facebook, or anything at all that is not directly related to the *conversation* we are having will not be tolerated. Using a computer in this way during a seminar is quite simply RUDE and deeply disrespectful to your classmates. If you want to use a computer in class, you will be expected to post copies of your class notes on the class website immediately following the class session to share with others. If you are not willing to do this, do not bring a computer with you.

There is simply no reason whatsoever for you to be using your phone/PDA/Kindle/iPad/whatever during class time.

Your phone should be turned off, or at least on silent mode. If your phone rings during class, it will be your responsibility to arrange for coffee service for every member of the class

OFFICE HOURS: I look forward to meeting with you all during regularly scheduled office hours, or by appointment when meeting during office hours is not possible. Students who would like to discuss issues raised in the course further than class discussions will permit, or students who encounter difficulties with the course or the assigned material, are especially encouraged to attend office hours.

ACCOMMODATION: Students with special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act who need reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (physical, learning, or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Disability Services Office (Daum Hall Room 224, 310-338-4535) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit <http://www.lmu.edu/dss> for additional information.

TENTATIVE NATURE OF THE SYLLABUS: If necessary, this syllabus and its contents are subject to revision; students are responsible for any changes or modifications distributed in class or posted on MYLMU Connect.

REQUIRED TEXTS

These texts will all be available for purchase from the bookstore. You are welcome to purchase them wherever you please or borrow them from the library, but *please use these editions of the texts* so that we are all literally on the same page during class. You will be expected to come to class with the text in hand. Some readings will be made available via electronic reserve in PDF format. You must **print**

hard copies of these readings, i.e. do not bring your computer or e-reader in order to refer to the texts.

- John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Belknap, 2001), ISBN: 978-0674005112.
- Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Basic Books, 1977), ISBN: 978-0465097203.
- Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago, 1998), ISBN: 978-0226025988.
- Iris Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 1990), ISBN: 978-0691023151.
- Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (Vintage, 1990), ISBN: 978-0679724698.
- Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford, 1998), ISBN: 978-0804732185.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: What is Contemporary Political Theory?

- M Aug. 29: Course Introduction
W Aug. 31: Giorgio Agamben, What is the Contemporary? (E-reserve)
F Sep. 2: NO CLASS

Weeks 2 & 3: Welfare Liberalism - Rawls

- M Sep. 5: LABOR DAY, NO CLASS
W Sep. 7: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Part 1, pp. 1-38.
F Sep. 9: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Part 2, pp. 39-79.

M Sep. 12: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Part 3, pp. 80-134.
W Sep. 14: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Part 4, pp. 135-179.
F Sep. 16: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, Part 5, pp. 180-198.

Weeks 4 & 5: Libertarianism - Nozick

- M Sep. 19: Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, pp. 1-20 (top), 22 (bottom)-53.
W Sep. 21: Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, pp. 54-62 (middle), 65-91 (top), 93 (top)-119.
F Sep. 23: Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, pp. 149-164, 167-182, 189-209 (top), 228-231.

M Sep. 26: Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, pp. 232 – 246, 268 – 274, 280 – 294 (skim).
W Sep. 28: Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, pp. 297 – 299 (middle), 307-334.
F Sep. 30: Writing Workshop.

Weeks 6&7: Neo- “Republicanism” - Hannah Arendt

- M Oct. 3: Hannah Arendt, “What is Freedom?” (E-Reserve).
W Oct. 5: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 1-78.
F Oct. 7: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 79-174.

M Oct. 10: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 175-247.
W Oct. 12: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp. 248-325.
F Oct. 14: NO CLASS, AUTUMN DAY

Weeks 8 & 9: Discourse Ethics and Deliberative Democracy: Jurgen Habermas

- M Oct. 17: Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other*, selections (E-Reserve).
W Oct. 19: NO CLASS
F Oct. 21: NO CLASS

- M Oct. 24: Habermas, "Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence" (E-Reserve).
 W Oct. 26: Habermas, *Human Nature*, Introduction (E-Reserve).
 F Oct. 28: Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, selections (E-Reserve).

Week 10: Identitarian Critiques 1: Iris Marion Young

- M Oct. 31: Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference*, pp. TBA.
 W Nov. 2: Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference*, pp. TBA.
 F Nov. 4: Young, *Justice and Politics of Difference*, pp. TBA.

Week 11: Identitarian Critiques 2: Charles Mills, Racial Contract, Domination Contract

- M Nov. 7: Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Introduction and Overview (E-Reserve).
 W Nov. 9: Mills, "The Domination Contract" (E-Reserve)
 F Nov. 11: Robert Gooding-Williams, "Race, Multiculturalism, and Democracy" (E-Reserve)

Weeks 12 & 13: Post-Structuralism 1: Michel Foucault

- M Nov. 14: Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-50.
 W Nov. 16: Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, pp. 51-132.
 F Nov. 18: Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, pp. 133-159.

- M Nov. 21: Foucault, Lecture 4 of *Security, Territory, Population* (E-Reserve).
 W Nov. 23: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break
 F Nov. 25: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: Post-Structuralism 2: Gorgio Agamben & Jacques Derrida

- M Nov. 28: Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. TBA
 W Nov. 30: Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. TBA
 F Dec. 2: Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Selections (E-Reserve).

Week 15: Post-Structuralism 3: Judith Butler

- M Dec. 5: Butler, *Frames of War*, Selections (E-Reserve).
 W Dec. 7: Butler, *Precarious Lives*, "Violence, Mourning, Politics" (E-Reserve).
 F Dec. 9: Butler, *Precarious Lives*, "Indefinite Detention" (E-Reserve).