

Classical Social and Political Thought

Course Description

This course provides students with a comprehensive overview of foundational texts and approaches in classical social and political theory. We will start the course with a discussion about social theory in general, talk about the historical Eurocentrism of social theory, and discuss what alternative non-Western perspectives might offer. We will then study theorists such as Mencius, Ibn Khaldun, Rousseau, Marx, Du Bois, Weber, Lenin, Fanon, and others; while covering a wide range of topics including ancient and early modern conceptions of society, critique of capitalism, race and racial domination, and imperialism and colonialism. Throughout the term, we will keep global power relations and the problem of Western-centric thought as our main theme.

We will regularly use introductory texts to offer accessible introductions to theoretical frameworks. There will also be original readings, which will allow us to directly engage with the theories.

The class format will be a mixture of lectures and discussions. The instructor will lead each session with a lecture, and the class will engage in discussions about the texts. Depending on the topics and our needs, the discussion can be whole class, debate groups, or a mixture of both. This will help students better process, understand, and apply the readings to the questions we explore and to their own broader intellectual interests.

Students will be provided with feedback on the written assignments within 2 weeks.

Student Attainment Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Discuss canonical texts and lineages of social and political theory.
- Interpret fundamental historical processes from a wide range of social scientific perspectives.
- Understand the common theoretical language of social scientific disciplines, as a basis for further study in the social sciences.
- Conceptualize and develop their own research questions and interests in relevant theoretical frameworks.

Assignments

Participation in class discussions (10%): Students are required to come to the class having done the reading material and ready to participate in discussions.

In-class quizzes (15%): There will be short quizzes in some of the classes which will ask questions about topics previously covered.

Movie Analysis (4-5 double-spaced pages, 25%): Students will watch a movie from a list distributed by the instructor and write a paper analyzing its themes using the theories covered in the class. The list will include movies such as *Office Space*, *Brazil*, *Kumare*, etc.

Final exam (50%): Students will take an in-class final exam approximately one week after the last class. The format and details will be discussed in class.

All assignments will be explained in further detail in the first class meeting. Participation and quizzes relate to the first and second student attainment objectives. Midterm paper relate to the first three objectives while final exam covers all objectives.

Course Schedule (Reading list is tentative; to be adjusted)

1. Introduction

Themes:

Introduction

Historical Contexts

Reading Assignments:

None

2. Social Thought in Antiquity

Themes:

Ancient Greek Thought

Ancient Chinese Thought

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: George Klasko. "Plato's Political Philosophy," in *The Routledge Companion of Social and Political Philosophy*, pp. 1-13.

Tongdong Bai. "The Political Philosophy of China," in *The Routledge Companion of Social and Political Philosophy*, pp. 181-191.

Original: Mencius. *Mencius*, selections.

3. Pre-Modern Frameworks

Themes:

What keeps a polity together

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: N. J. Dawood. "Introduction," in *The Muqaddimah*.

Vickie Sullivan. "Machiavelli," in *The Routledge Companion of Social and Political Philosophy*, pp. 47-58.

Original: Ibn Khaldun. "Bedouin Civilization, Savage Nations and Tribes and Their Conditions of Life" and "On Dynasties," in *The Muqaddimah*, pp. 91-132.

4. Social Contract Theorists

Themes:

What keeps a polity together

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Celeste Friend. "The Social Contract Theory," in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Original: Jean Jacques Rousseau. *The Social Contract*, selections.

5. Capitalist Society – Marx I

Themes:

Dialectics

Alienation

Human Emancipation

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 54-56, 89-96, 110-111.

Original: Karl Marx. "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 70-88.

6. Capitalist Society – Marx II

Theory of History

Dialectical Materialism

Class and Class Analysis

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 84-88, 106-107, 103-104 (read in this order).

Original: Karl Marx. "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 594-617.

7. Capitalist Society – Marx III

Themes:

Critique of Capitalism

Use and Exchange Values

Surplus Value

Commodity Fetishism

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 97-103, 113-115.

Original: Karl Marx. “Capital, Volume One,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 303-308, 329-336.

Karl Marx. “Wage Labour and Capital,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 203-217.

8. Rationalized Society - Weber I

Themes:

Power

Domination

Stratification

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 185-193.

Original: Max Weber. “The Types of Authority and Imperative Co-ordination,” in *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, pp. 324-333, 341-46, 358-373.

9. Rationalized Society - Weber II

Themes:

Rationalization

Bureaucracy

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 194-203.

Original: Max Weber. “Bureaucracy,” in *From Max Weber*, pp. 196-244.

10. Religion and Society – Durkheim

Themes:

Anomaly

Social Origins of the Sacred

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 150-160.

Original: Émile Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, pp. 1-9, 33-39, 208-25.

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11. Market Society

Themes:

Market Society

Marketization

Double Movement

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Fred Block, “Introduction,” in *The Great Transformation*, pp. xviii-xxxviii.

Original: Karl Polanyi. “Societies and Economic Systems,” and “The Self-Regulating Market and the Fictitious Commodities: Labor, Land and Money,” in *The Great Transformation*, pp. 45-58, 71-80.

12. Race – Du Bois

Themes:

Color Line

Double-Consciousness

Interaction of Race and Class

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Aldon Morris. “Preface” and “Introduction,” in *The Scholar Denied*, pp. ix-xxii, 1-5.

Original text: W. E. B. Du Bois. “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” in *The Souls of Black Folk*, pp. 7-14, 55-67, 99-113.

W. E. B. Du Bois. “Counter-Revolution of Property,” in *Black Reconstruction in America*, pp. 580-636.

13. Imperialism

Themes:

Imperialism

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 693-699.

Original text: V. I. Lenin. "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," in *Essential Works of Lenin*. pp. 236-270.

14. Colonialism

Themes:

Colonialism

Reading Assignments:

Original text: Frantz Fanon. "Introduction," "The So-Called Dependency Complex of Colonized Peoples" and "The Fact of Blackness," in *Black Skin, White Masks*.

Aimé Césaire. "Discourse on Colonialism."

15. Gender

Themes:

Colonialism

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 546-573.

Original: Simone de Beauvoir. "The Point of View of Historical Materialism" and "Conclusion" in *The Second Sex*.

Contemporary Social and Political Thought

Course Description

This course provides students with a comprehensive overview of prominent texts and approaches in contemporary social and political theory. The course will focus on the period beginning from the Second World War and examine such topics as capitalism and neoliberalism, race and racism, gender and sexuality, colonialism and anti-colonialism, imperialism and geopolitics, power and resistance, and politics and governance. Students will learn global theoretical perspectives while exploring their roots in classical traditions. One of our main aims will be to utilize theoretical frameworks covered in the course to understand our contemporary social and political problems.

We will regularly use introductory texts to offer accessible introductions to theoretical frameworks. There will also be original readings, which will allow us to directly engage with the theories.

The class format will be a mixture of lectures and discussions. The instructor will lead each session with a lecture, and the class will engage in discussions about the texts. Depending on the topics and our needs, the discussion can be whole class, debate groups, or a mixture of both. This will help students better process, understand, and apply the readings to the questions we explore and to their own broader intellectual interests.

Students will be provided with feedback on the written assignments within 2 weeks.

Student Attainment Objectives

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Discuss canonical texts and lineages of social and political theory.
- Grasp the connections between contemporary and classical theoretical traditions.
- Interpret contemporary social and political issues from a wide range of social scientific perspectives.
- Understand the common theoretical language of social scientific disciplines, as a basis for further study in the social sciences.
- Conceptualize and develop their own research questions and interests in relevant theoretical frameworks.

Assignments

Participation in class discussions (10%): Students are required to come to the class having done the reading material and ready to participate in discussions.

In-class quizzes (15%): There will be short quizzes in some of the classes which will ask questions about topics previously covered.

Midterm (4-5 double-spaced pages, 25%): Students will watch a movie from a list distributed by the instructor and write a paper analyzing its themes using the theories covered in the class. The list will include movies such as *I Am Not Your Negro*, *The Nightingale*, *Promising Young Woman*, etc.

Final exam (50%): Students will take an in-class final exam approximately one week after the last class. The format and details will be discussed in class. Important: In the case of BCP Level 3 or 4, final exam will be switched to a take-home essay assignment.

All assignments will be explained in further detail in the first class meeting. Participation and quizzes relate to the first three student attainment objectives. Midterm paper relate to the first four objectives while final exam covers all objectives.

Course Schedule (Reading list is tentative; to be adjusted)

1. Introduction

Themes:

Introduction

Historical Contexts

Reading Assignments:

None

2 Imperialism

Themes:

Imperialism

Anti-imperial/anti-colonial struggle

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Jock McCulloch. "Amílcar Cabral: A Theory of Imperialism." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1981): pp. 503-511

Original: Amílcar Cabral. "The Weapon of Theory."

<https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/cabral/1966/weapon-theory.htm>

3. Underdevelopment and Neo-Colonialism

Themes:

Underdevelopment

Colonial Exploitation

Reading Assignments:

Original: Walter Rodney. "Colonialism as a System for Underdeveloping Africa," in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, pp. 245-346.

4. Race and Class

Themes:

Race

Class

Reading Assignments:

Original: Stuart Hall. "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," in Baker Jr., Diawara, and Lindeborg (eds), *Black British Cultural Studies*. Available at <http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za/files/Race,%20articulation%20and%20societies%20structured%20in%20dominance.pdf>

5. Racial Formations

Themes:

Social Construction of Race

Critical Race Theory

Racial Formation

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 704-713.

Original: Michael Omi and Howard Winant. "The Theory of Racial Formation," in *Racial Formation in the United States*, pp. 105-32.

6. Intersectionality

Themes:

Gender

Intersectionality

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 573-590.

Original: Hartmann, Heidi. "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more a Progressive Union." *Capital & Class*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1979): pp. 1-33.

Patricia Hill Collins, "Knowledge, Consciousness, and Politics of Empowerment," in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and Politics of Empowerment*, pp. 221-238.

7. Gender and Imperial/Colonial System

Themes:

Western Feminism

International Feminism

Reading Assignments:

Original: Chandra Talpade Mohanty. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *boundary 2*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (1984): pp. 333-358.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty. "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles." *Signs*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (2003): pp. 499-535.

8. Dependency and World-Systems Analysis

Themes:

Imperialism

Dependency

World-Systems Analysis

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 389-396.

Original text: Immanuel Wallerstein. "Historical Origins of World-Systems Analysis" and "the Modern World-System as a Capitalist World-Economy," in *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, pp. 1-41.

9. Imperial World-System and Global North-South

Themes:

Imperialist Rent

Worldwide Value

Global North and South

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: John Bellamy Foster. "Samir Amin at 80: An Introduction and Tribute." *Monthly Review*. <https://monthlyreview.org/2011/10/01/samir-amin-at-80-an-introduction-and-tribute/>

Original: Samir Amin. "Accumulation on a Global Scale and Imperialist Rent," in *The Law of Worldwide Value*, pp. 83-111.

10. Critical Theory

Themes:

Critical Theory

Dialectics of Enlightenment

Mass Culture

Social Control

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 365-372.

Original: Theodor W. Adorno. "Culture Industry Reconsidered." *New German Critique*, No. 6 (1975), pp. 12-19.

Herbert Marcuse, "From Consensual Order to Instrumental Control," in *Culture and Society*, edited by J. Alexander and S. Seidman, pp. 283-289.

11. Postcolonial Thought

Themes:

Postcolonialism

Decoloniality

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Robert J. C. Young. "Colonialism and the Politics of Postcolonial Critique," in *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, pp. 1-11.

Original: Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, pp. 271-313.

12. Globalization and Neoliberalism

Themes:

Globalization

Neoliberalism

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 729-762.

Original: David Harvey. "Introduction" and "Freedom's Just Another Word..." in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, pp. 1-38.

13. Anthropocene and Degrowth

Themes:

Anthropocene

Endless Growth

Degrowth

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Liana Chua and Hannah Fair. “Anthropocene” in *The Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/anthropocene>

Original: Kohei Saito. “The Abundance of Wealth in Degrowth Communism” in *Marx in the Anthropocene*, pp. 216-244.

14. Power and Discipline

Themes:

Domination

Power and Discipline

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Ritzer and Stepnisky, pp. 772-783.

Original: Michel Foucault, “Docile Bodies,” “Panopticism,” and “The Repressive Hypothesis,” in *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 179-187, 206-213, 301-328.

15. Governance

Themes:

Biopolitics

Governmentality

Reading Assignments:

Introductory: Mitchell Dean. “Basic Concepts and Themes,” in *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, pp. 16-37.

Original: Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect*, pp. 87-104.