

Junior Seminar I
Social Thought and Political Economy 391H
Tu/Th 11:15-12:30, Barlett Hall 35
Spring 2009

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Course Description and Objectives

This seminar is the beginning of the year long STEPC Junior Seminar sequence. Junior II focuses on major currents and applications of political, social, and economic theories and the historical circumstances that gave rise to these theories up to the 19th Century. Through the reading and discussion of key foundational Eurocentric texts and some postcolonial non-Western contemporaries from the 16th century on, we will be able to recognize the driving forces behind the production of modernity as a Western *episteme* (the way we organize and learn the world today). We will pay particular attention to the complex ways in which these political, social, and cultural practices and philosophies relate to the contradictions and pitfalls of modernity. We will explore questions of decolonization of social theory and liberation of the political imagination. We will study some of the politico-philosophical-experiential foundations of liberal, radical, and anti-colonial worldviews paying attention to the ways in which ideologies and consciousness are constructed in historical contexts, and then contested through social movements (i.e. colonization vs. French and Haitian Revolutions; the rise of modern-colonial-capitalist-patriarchal systems and various forms of pre-20th century resistance). As this is an interdisciplinary class, we will be bringing in analytic tools from various disciplines—i.e. economy, sociology, anthropology, political science, history, cultural studies, literature—but always paying attention to the historical construction and reception of ideas.

The objectives of this course are to prepare students:

1. To read primary texts while fostering a broad critical understanding of historical grounded texts and their persistence in contemporary case studies;
2. To know the main authors, intellectual and cultural lineages, and the relation of theory to historical contexts as both causal and consequential;
3. To relate learned abstract concepts to governmental policies, and their reformulations in resistant social actions;
4. To develop an awareness of key social theories and movements, and critically identify them in your personal experiences, memories, epistemologies, politics;
5. And to incorporate reflection and research on these topics to your independent learning

The European tradition of social thought and political economy can be traced to early modern times although it has influenced later modern formations from the emergence of nations to the development of human rights to the rethinking of the world in our days, and makes one question if we can have a different theoretical framework to conceive the world and future political constructions. Concepts such as the individual, natural rights, civil rights, democracy, the state, the nation, are all rooted indistinctly with the incipience and development of liberal economies, capitalism, and globalization ranging from slavery to

the development of the press as global trades. Therefore, our contemporary political structures are intimately related to our economic configurations and in our contemporary global economy, the imagining of a government outside of the scaffold of a liberal bourgeois democracy is a significant challenge.

The readings in this course will provide an important background to understand our societies today and will empower students with enough critical tools to break down thought as rooted in historical contexts and their implications in society, hoping to enable students to contest Eurocentric theories while learning (sub) alternative models.

Students' behavior and responsibilities

I expect a lot from you and you should expect a lot from yourselves. You will have to come to class having read and prepared questions for discussion directly related to the text. This course is an advance university course; it requires much reading, but mainly thinking and analysis. Talking about what you think will NOT pass you! The reading of the material is necessary for any real discussion. Critical discussions are necessary for any real significant learning. Each class students must prepare discussion questions and definitions of the major concepts from the reading. In addition, you should include reflections on historical, conceptual, and autobiographical ideas. This journal will serve as a terminology database, and it will help you understand how concepts change with time, and how previous arguments enable the formation of new ones, and it will enrich your reading of any text. If you do not come prepared to class, you will be counted as absent. Otherwise, you will not be able to contribute to class discussion, and our goal is to build a learning community where students work as learners and teachers, where theory is accessible, expandable, and practical for students' own aspirations for social change and praxis. For this reason, you will have learning partners to share your ideas and writings, and peer edit your final work.

All readings and a copy of this syllabus are updated in SPARK, or else they are to be bought in Food for Thoughts in downtown Amherst. **It is very important that you are able to use SPARK to access required course readings.** If you are unsure about how to use SPARK or are encountering problems, please visit the SPARK help section on the OIT webpage: (<http://www.oit.umass.edu/spark/students/index.html>). If you are still unable to use SPARK please contact me immediately.

Attendance will affect your participation. This is not an online course, and therefore your presence and punctuality are required. I will accept only THREE (3) unexcused absences. Every absence after that will lower your final grade by a third of a letter. Also, every THREE (3) tardies will count as ONE (1) unexcused absence. All excused absences MUST be accompanied by proper documentation (doctor's note, obituary, athletic department letters, etc).

You will be evaluated in the course based on the quality and care of your written work combined with your attendance and participation. Your grades will not be based on your beliefs or whether you agree with the perspectives presented in class. Below is a general guide of the assignments.

Co-facilitation of a class session: As part of our commitment to a participatory classroom each student is expected to co-facilitate part of one (1) class session. A sign-up sheet will be passed around the first week of the semester so that everyone can sign-up. This is not a formal lecture. The student should prepare to present for *five minutes* and lead the class in meaningful discussion on the session topic. The presentation should include *overarching discussion questions* and some points of synthesis from other readings or your own interests/research. For example, you might want to provide some quotes or note some themes that strike you and that you would like the group to discuss. The format of the presentation is open to the student. Creativity and interactive presentations are encouraged and additional resources can be used as necessary. On the day of your presentation please arrive early to write your questions/quotes on the board or come prepared with handouts etc.

Reading response papers: Write four (4) reading response papers. You are expected to turn the first one on Tuesday 02/17, the second one on 03/05, the third one on 03/24, and the fourth one on 04/16. *No late response papers accepted.* You are also expected to bring 7 paper copies to share in class. The reading response paper should be 3 pages long, critical pieces containing your reactions to issues raised from the readings. The purpose of the reading response papers is to help you understand the main argument of the text and develop your criticisms of it. In your paper, write about the main arguments presented and one or two themes that strike you as interesting or challenging. An exemplary outline might address any of the following:

- a) What are the major themes and issues discussed in the readings?
- b) Do you agree with the main arguments presented and why?
- c) What are the weaker points in the various arguments? What would make them stronger?
- d) Were you surprised by any of the issues raised by the readings?
- e) What was the single most interesting thing you read and why?
- f) What questions came up for you and why?

Analytical Papers: Write two (2) papers that analyze and compare at least three of the texts from the syllabus. The due date for paper #1 is 04/23, and for paper #2 it is 05/14. These papers should be 5-7 pages and show your ability to analyze texts, support your arguments textually, and make broader connections with other texts and themes of the course. You should demonstrate clear ideas and present your own thoughts and original analysis. You should choose a manageable theme that corresponds to your interests. You should cite multiple sources including at least three from the course. You are encouraged to use outside sources of your own as well.

Grading Criteria

Attendance and Participation 15%, Co-facilitating a class session 5%, reading response papers 20%, Analytical papers 30% each.

A 94-100 points, **A-** 93-90 points, **B+** 87-89 points, **B** 84-86 points, **B-** 80-83 points, **C+** 77-79 points, **C** 74-76 points, **C-** 68-73 points, **D+** 64-67 points, **D** 60-63 points, and **F** below 60 points. The minimal grade to approve the course is C+.

Remember that I care much more about your learning than about your publication potential!!! So, just do your best and find an engaging topic that is comparative in nature and relevant for issues today. For

research guidelines visit <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/EngPaper/> and please remember that plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Please visit the **UMASS Amherst Writing Program Student Plagiarism Policy** at www.writingprogram.hfa.umass.edu/student_resources/plagiarism_policy.asp and be aware that you will get an F for the class if plagiarism occurs.

Students with Disabilities and Special Needs

Every student learns in a different way. Non-mainstream ways of learning may be labeled as “disabilities”. If you require any accommodations that can be provided in partnership with Disability Services, and/or if you have a physical, psychological, emotional, or learning disability that makes it difficult for you to participate in class or carry out the work as outlined for this course, please contact me via email during the first two weeks of the course (no later than Tuesday, September 16th) so we can make appropriate arrangements.

I will not put rigid percentages on the assignments as people have different strengths and weaknesses, and I will measure your performance according to our goals and the learning that takes place in each student. I look forward to learning together and I hope you enjoy the class as much as I will!!!

Required Course Readings

The three books required for the course and are available at Food for Thought Books, 106 N. Pleasant Street, Amherst. You can also find them at the library or via interlibrary loan. They are as follows:

C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (Vintage Press, 2nd edition)

Francis Wheen, *Marx's Das Kapital: A Biography* (Atlantic Monthly Press)

Additional required course readings are available on SPARK. Please see above section on SPARK for more information. *Readings are subject to change and additional readings may be assigned.*

Reading Schedule

W 1

Tuesday 01/27: Introduction

Thursday 01/29: Unthinking Eurocentrism

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, “From Eurocentrism to Polycentrism” from *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (p.13-54)

W 2

Tuesday 02/03: Primitive Accumulation

Karl Marx, “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation” Ch. 26 from *Capital Vol. I*, (p. 873-876)

Thursday 02/05: The Sexual Division of Labor

Maria Mies, selections from *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor*, Ch. 2 (p. 44-73)

W 3

Tuesday 02/10: Women and the Accumulation of Labor

Silvia Federici, “The Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women” from *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (p. 61-132)

Thursday 02/12: The Sovereign State

Thomas Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan*

W 4

Tuesday 02/17: Constitutional Government

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*

Ottobah Cugoano, selections from *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* ***Reading Response #1 due***

Thursday 02/19: Enlightenment and Democracy

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, selections from *The Social Contract*

Declaration of Independence/Declaration of the Rights of Man & Citizen

W 5

Tuesday 02/24: Enlightenment and Slavery

Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (p. 58-64)

Laurent Dubois, "An enslaved Enlightenment: rethinking the intellectual history of the French Atlantic" (p. 1-14)

Thursday 02/26: The Racial Contract

Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Ch. 1 (p. 9-40)

David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, Introduction (p. 1-13) (*extra credit*)

Ruth Frankenberg, "The Mirage of an Unmarked Whiteness" from *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*. (p. 72-96)

W 6

Tuesday 03/03: Marx's Historical Materialism

Karl Marx, Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (p. 3-6, in ed. Tucker)

Thursday 03/05: Marx's Alienation

Karl Marx, "On Estranged Labor," from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (p. 70-81, in *Marx & Engels Reader*, ed. Tucker)

Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach* (p. 143-145, in Tucker)

Reading Response #2 due

W 7

Tuesday 03/10: Pop Marx

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (p. 3-77, this includes Hobsbawm's intro.)

Thursday 03/12: More on Marx and Labor

Karl Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital" (p. 203-217, in Tucker)

Karl Marx, "The Method of Political Economy," from *The Grundrisse* (p. 100-108)

****Saturday 03/14 – Spring Recess begins****

W 8

Tuesday 03/24: The Marxian Critique

Francis Wheen, *Marx's Das Kapital* (p. 1-121) ***Reading Response #3 due***

Thursday 03/26: The Coloniality of Power

Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America" (p. 533-580)

W 9

Tuesday 03/31: Heterosexualism and Modernity

Maria Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Modern/Colonial Gender Order" (p. 1-24)

Thursday 04/02: Discussion on Marx and Modernity

Wrap-up Marx. No reading.

W 10

Tuesday 04/07: The Haitian Revolution Part 1

C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*

Thursday 04/09: Part 2

C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*

W 11

Tuesday 04/14: Part 3

C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*

Thursday 04/16: Part 4

C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins*

Reading Response #4 due

W 12

****Tuesday 04/21 – NO CLASS – Monday Class scheduled will be followed**

Thursday 04/23: Nietzsche’s Critique of Modernity (and midterm review class discussion)

Friedrich Nietzsche, selections from, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Robert Holub, “Nietzsche’s Colonialist Imagination” (*extra credit*)

Analytical Paper #1 due

W 13

Tuesday 04/28: Nation, Modernity, Empire

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Introduction (p. 1-7)

Eric Hobsbawm, “Age of Empire” from *Age of Empire*

Thursday 04/30: Imperialism & Conquest

Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, Ch. 1 (p. 7-33)

W 14

Tuesday 05/05: Imperialism & Conquest

Ann McClintock, selections from *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality on the Colonial Contest*

Thursday 05/07: Imperialism & Empire

Agustin Lao-Montes, “Reconfigurations of Empire in a World-Hegemonic Transition: The 1898 Spanish-Cuban-American-Filipino War ” (p. 209-240)

W 15

Tuesday 05/12: Closing

Monday 05/18: *Analytical Paper #2 due at STPEC office by noon