STPEC 197I : Intro to STPEC
Fall 2011
Tuesday 4:00 – 6:30

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STPEC 197I is a required course open to incoming STPEC students. It is intended to familiarize new students with the requirements of the major and its intellectual vision. Class content is organized around concepts students will encounter in their prerequisites, STPEC Seminars and upper level requirements. It will provide an introduction to social theory, political economy, race and whiteness, gender and patriarchy, global inequality and the post-colonial world. Assignments facilitate exploration of these and related topics. Students will have the opportunity to learn how to read and use theory versus how to read and use history; how to recognize, frame and make an argument; communicate for effective dialogue; and how to begin to identify what you believe about social justice and why.

Attendance Policy:
Every student is expected to attend every class session. If you need to be absent, please contact the instructor ahead of time. You are allowed 2 absences. Unexcused absences beyond this may affect your grade.

Students with disabilities:
STPEC is committed to providing successful learning opportunities for every student. If you have a documented physical, psychological or learning disability on file with one of the university disability service offices, you may be eligible for academic accommodations to help you succeed at UMass. Please talk to the instructor within the first 2 weeks of the semester so that I may make appropriate arrangements to support your learning and success.
Grading and Requirements:

- Participation: 20%
- Concept Reviews: 30%
- Précis: 20%
- Final project: 20%
- Term Review: 10%

Class participation: includes thoughtful comments and questions during class time to support discussion, contribution to small groups, AND your attendance.

Concept Review: You will turn in 5 1-2 page concept descriptions during the course of the semester. Specific direction will be given the week before each is due.

Précis: A précis (pray-see) is a condensed summary of an article/work requiring very close reading and skilled synthesis and communication of ideas. We will go over this in more detail. You will do 3 over the course of the semester.

Final project: This is a culminating project of your choice. It should be an expression of your own inquiry into one of the issues covered in the course. It can be a research paper or extended essay, an action or creative project, as long as it is a well developed and complete. You can work alone or in a group or alone, but you MUST get your idea approved before spring break, and no more than 3 in a group. You will present your project to the class on the last day of the course.

Term Review: a final take-home exam consisting of a list of concepts to describe.

Films:
Periodically during the semester, we will be screening films associated with class content. These are not required but highly recommended.

Course Calendar:

Sept 6: Introduction
Introduction to students, instructor and the course.
Why are we here? What do we want from the class?
Establish class culture, direction and ground rules.
Introduce the syllabus and assignments

Sept 13: What is Social Theory?
- guest speaker: Sara Lennox, Director of STPEC
- Why social theory?
- How do we know what we know? Why do we care?
- Frames and concepts
Readings:

Sept 20: History and its Uses
- history and the truth
- construction of knowledge

Readings:

Optional:

Sept 27: Capitalism and the Social Contract
- How to read a text
- contextual analysis, voice, argument,
- explanation of a précis


Conceptual Review #1 due

Oct 4: Race
- Student timeline of U.S. history of Racism
- What do we know? What don’t we know? Why?
- History, knowledge, whiteness and privilege, social construction

Readings:

**Précis #1 due**

**Oct 11: NO CLASS**

**Oct 18: Feminism and Patriarchy**
- feminism/patriarchy
- intro to feminist theories
- gender binary
- intersectionality

Readings:

**Conceptual Review #2 due**

**Oct 25: Critical Race Theory and Black Feminism**
- Critical race theory
- Finish up race and feminism discussion….

Readings:
Nov 1: Wealth inequality
Guest speaker

Readings:
- Noah, Timothy, “The United States of Inequality” look at sections 1-3, 6, 8, and 10.
- Zizek, Slavoj
  http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/oct/26/occupy-protesters-bill-clinton

Concept Review #3 due

Nov 8: Modern Empire and Coloniality
- Imperialism, post-colonialism,
- Eurocentrism, Diaspora

Readings:
- Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, “Gender Makes the World Go Round,” pp. 1-17

Nov 15: Globalization and Neoliberal economics
- Intro to Globalism and Globalization
- Neoclassical and neoliberal economics

Readings:
  
  AND

Choose 1 of the following:
  
  OR
Précis #2 due

Nov 22: Immigration and Imperialism
- Neoliberal Global economy and migration
- identity and citizenship

Readings:
- *Can a Human Be Illegal? and Why are so Many People Coming to the United States from Mexico?* Highlander Reports, Special Issue on Immigration. November 05 – 06. (website of Highlander Research and Education Center www.highlandercenter.org)

Concept Review #4 due

Nov 29: Prison Industrial Complex
- crime/criminal
- racialized criminal justice system
- racialized systems of maintaining poverty and capitalism

Readings:
- Christian Parenti, “The ‘New’ Criminal Justice System”

Précis #3 due

Dec 6: Presentation of Final Projects

All students will present their final projects to the class.
Concept Review

Big ideas often have complex meanings and uses in the world of social and political theory. In this case, simply defining a word can be limiting and cause for future confusion. For the purposes of this class, a concept review is an opportunity for students to describe this complexity of meaning as best they can as they are coming to understand a concept. It is a 2 page summary in the student’s own words of the meaning of a word/concept, and its use(s) as it has been presented in the course.

These short papers should NOT include quotes, generally, or significant references to scholarly work for the purpose of clarifying the idea. The student should do the clarifying themselves, and may include references only to place the idea in context, for example.

Concept reviews will be graded for clarity, organization, and completeness.

Précis (pray-see)

Many texts in social and political theory require a close, critical reading to ensure comprehension. As well, as students, you should be able to present the main argument of that text as concisely and clearly as possible in your own words. In order to build your own argument, you must be able to skillfully summarize another scholar’s ideas.

A precis is not your interpretation or your opinion. It is simply a rendering of the main purpose of an article or book in about 1/6 of the size of the work, in your own words. You must assimilate the text enough to be able to restate the premise of the argument and how the author arrives at his/her conclusions. And you must be very concise.

How to write a precis:
- read the article (or book, etc)
- read the article again, and then a third time, mapping out the author’s argument
- Using this map, rewrite the purpose and argument of the text in your own words
- go back through it, taking out unnecessary language or ideas.

You may clarify important terms and concepts, but try not to quote the text. Attempt to reproduce its intent, tone, style and mood in different words. Your goal should be to compress and clarify. Your precis should declare:
- what was discussed (include thesis)
- how it was argued (supporting research or logical progression)
- conclusions
- why it is important (what it achieves)
Final Project

The final project for this class should be an expression of your own inquiry into one of the issues covered in the course. It can be a short research paper or essay, an action or creative project, as long as it is well developed, sufficiently supported and complete.

You must have your topic approved by the instructor by mid-semester, and you must schedule a meeting with the instructor 2 weeks before the project is due to describe your progress and your plan. You may work in a group if you prefer, but please no more than 3 students per project.