Course Description and Objectives

This seminar is the beginning of the year long STEPC Junior Seminar sequence. Junior I 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 and further related recent theoretical trends and debates in contemporary contexts. Through the reading and discussion of key foundational Eurocentric texts and some postcolonial non-Western contemporaries from the 16th century onwards to more recent critical and postcolonial theory, 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 in modern thought. 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 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, culture and identity are all rooted indistinctly with the incipience and development of liberal economies, capitalism, and globalization. The readings in this course will provide an important background to understand our societies today and will empower students with critical tools to explore theories as rooted in historical contexts and their relation to society, hoping to enable students to contest Eurocentric theories while learning alternative models. Importantly, we will always try to understand the relevance of “theory” to praxis and the contested worlds that we all form a part.

Students' behavior and responsibilities

Readings and Syllabus

All readings and a copy of this syllabus are updated in SPARK. As the semester progresses, I may also put readings on E-RESERVE. We will follow the syllabus but may collectively decide to modify some readings as we progress during the semester. 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

Attendance will affect your participation both in lectures and discussion sections. 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) late presents will count as ONE (1) unexcused absence. All excused absences MUST be accompanied by proper documentation (doctor’s note, obituary, athletic department letters, etc).

Late Assignments

It is difficult for the instructor to coordinate grading, ensure fairness or return papers in a timely manner when assignments are not handed in on time. Each day an analytical paper is late; it will receive a 5% reduction in grade. Analytical assignments will not be expected more than one (1) week after the assignment was originally due unless there are extenuating circumstances (such as illness that can be documented), in which case the instructor and the student will come to an agreement. Please note that final papers will not be accepted at all after the due date to prevent confusion in giving final grades at the end of the semester.

Friday Discussion Sections

We will use Fridays to talk about ideas from the week's readings that we may not have had time for during lectures, to preview next week’s readings and to bring in additional learning material such as interesting films, books and media reports. I may call upon students to facilitate Fridays so that these sessions are a fluid, learning space for all of us and you should feel free to take charge of these sessions in creative and relevant ways. Please see attendance requirements for Fridays in the above section titled Attendance.
Communication with the instructor

You are encouraged to meet with the instructor during office hours to chart your individual learning and progress in this class. All emails will be answered within twenty-four hours other than weekends. You are required to have at least one individual meeting with the instructor during the semester especially as you progress with readings and assignments in class. Additionally, we will try to hold discussion sessions to talk about our learning collectively as a class.

Electronic Devices

All electronic devices should be in the off or silent positions and out of sight during class sessions. Laptops should be used only to take notes or to access material directly relevant to class discussions.

Academic Honesty

Please remember that plagiarism is a serious academic offense. You should review the University’s policies on academic honesty at http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/

Please 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, February 2) so we can make appropriate arrangements.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

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.

Discussion Questions, Concept Notes and Participation

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 at least 4 discussion questions and 3 fleshed-out definitions of the major concepts from the readings for each class. I will collect these from time to time and may call upon you to share your discussion questions and concept definitions in class. Additionally, you are expected to take charge of the class space and participate in class discussions regularly. Please note that participation counts for 10% of your total grade in the class.

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-ten minutes and lead the rest
of the class time in meaningful discussion on the session topic. I will distribute a hand-out with guidelines for facilitating class in the first week of the semester and also post this hand-out on SPARK. 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.

**Analytical papers**

Write four (4) analytical papers. You are also expected to bring 7 paper copies to share in class. The analytical paper should be 4-6 pages long, critical pieces containing your reactions to issues raised from a series of readings. These papers are due on 02/29, 03/04, 04/01 and 04/15. I may also give you a series of questions to choose from while writing these papers. The purpose of these short analytical papers is to help you understand the main argument of the texts and different authors in conversation. I will give out hand-outs with more details about expectations from analytical papers.

**Final Paper**

You will write a longer final paper that is 12-15 pages long that shows your ability to analyze texts, support your arguments textually, and make broader connections with other texts of the course centered on a theme of your choice that is relevant to the course and class readings. Before writing a final paper, you are required to hand in a paper synopsis and bibliography. You are encouraged to use sources from outside the class. More details about the final paper will be made available in a hand-out. The final paper is due on 05/10.

**Grading Criteria**

Attendance and Participation 10%, Co-facilitating a class session 10%, Analytical papers 10% each (total 40%), Final Paper 40%

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+ D 64-67 points, 60-63 points, and F below 60 points

**Reading Schedule**

Although we will try and follow this schedule, learning follows a curve and we may change some readings from time to time.

**Week 1**

*Tuesday 01/19: Introduction*  
*Thursday 01/21: Unthinking Eurocentrism*  
Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, “From Eurocentrism to Polycentrism” from *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (p.13-54)

**Week 2**

*Tuesday 01/26: Primitive Accumulation*  
Karl Marx, “The Secret of Primitive Accumulation” Ch. 26 from *Capital Vol. I*  
*Thursday 01/28: 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)
Week 3
Tuesday 02/02: 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 02/04: The Sovereign State
Thomas Hobbes, selections from Leviathan

Week 4
Tuesday 02/09: Constitutional Government
John Locke, Second Treatise of Government
Analytical essay#1 due

Thursday 02/11: Enlightenment and Democracy
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Selections from The Social Contract
Declaration of Independence/Declaration of the Rights of Man & Citizen

Week 5
Tuesday 02/16: No class, Monday class schedule is followed

Thursday 02/18: 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)

Week 6
Tuesday 02/23: The Racial Contract
Charles W. Mills, The Racial Contract, Ch. 1 (p. 9-40)
David Theo Goldberg, Racist Culture, Introduction (p. 1-13)

Thursday 02/25: 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)

Week 7
Tuesday 03/02: Pop Marx
Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto

Thursday 03/04: 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)
Analytical essay#2 due

Week 8
Tuesday 03/09 Marx and Critical Dialogue in Cultural Studies
Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees" (pp. 25-36)

Thursday 03/11: Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" (pp. 407-423)

Spring Break!!

Week 9: Conversations on Ideology and Hegemony
Tuesday 03/23: Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (pp. 121-173)

Thursday 03/25: Antonio Gramsci, "Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci" (pp. 277-298)

Week 10
Tuesday 03/30: Class and Culture
Pierre Bourdieu, "The Aristocracy of Culture." Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. (pp. 11-96)
Thursday 04/01: Forms of Resistance
James Scott, "Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance" (pp. 1-47).
Analytical essay #3 due

Week 11
Tuesday 04/06: Nietzsche’s Critique of Modernity
Friedrich Nietzsche, selections from, Beyond Good and Evil
Robert Holub, “Nietzsche’s “Colonialist Imagination”
Thursday 04/08: Nation, Modernity, Empire
Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, Introduction (p. 1-7)
Eric Hobsbawn, “Age of Empire” from Age of Empire

Week 12
Tuesday 04/13: Heterosexualism and Modernity
Maria Lugones, “Heterosexualism and the Modern/Colonial Gender Order”
Thursday 04/15: Imperialism, Gender & Conquest
Andrea Smith, Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide, Ch. 1 (p. 7-33)
Analytical Essay #4 due

Week 13: Postcolonial Thought and Modernity
Tuesday 04/20: Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference" (pp. 3-23)
Thursday 04/22: Partha Chatterjee, “Populations and Political Society” (pp. 27-51)
Final Paper Synopsis and Bibliography due

Week 14: New Technologies in the Context of Imperialism and Resistance
Tuesday 04/27: Gyan Prakash, "The Image of the Archaic, "in Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India (pp. 86-120)
Thursday 04/29: Lila Abu Lughod, “Egyptian Melodrama: Technology of the Modern Subject?” (pp. 115-133)

Week 15
Tuesday 05/04: Course wrap-up

FINAL PAPER DUE ON 05/10, Monday