STPEC 101
Introduction to Social Thought & Political Economy (STPEC)
Spring 2014
Tuesdays 4:00-6:30 PM
Dickinson, Room 214

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Email messages will be answered within 48 hours

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30 to 2:30 PM
and by appointment
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Course Overview and Structure

Welcome to STPEC 101. This course will familiarize new students with the program and its vision. STPEC is a rigorous, democratically run, interdisciplinary academic program. STPEC is also a community of students, staff, instructors, alumni, and friends that will help you navigate your time at UMass. Ideally this course will also familiarize us with each other.

The content of this course is organized around concepts students will encounter in their other STPEC requirements, as well as in the STPEC community and the greater world. It will provide an introduction to social theory, political economy, race and ethnicity, gender, masculinities and femininities, globalization and inequality in the Global North and the Global South. Assignments facilitate exploration of these and related topics. Students will have the opportunity to learn the value of social theory, how to make an argument; communicate for effective dialogue; and how to begin to identify social justice issues.

STPEC 101, like STPEC’s other core classes, is seminar-style. This means small groups with an emphasis on discussion and reflection.

Attendance Policy

Because this class is based on our discussions attending every class is crucial. Make every possible effort to not skip classes as the theories we are analyzing build on each other. It would be hard to understand what comes next if you did not participate in the class discussions of the previous theories and case studies.
Excused Absences: If you are forced to miss all or part of a class period due to a known conflict, please email me in advance. If you are forced to miss a class due to an emergency (illness, family crisis, etc.), contact me as soon as possible.

Unexcused Absences: You are allowed 2 unexcused absences. More than 2 unexcused absences will result in the loss of a letter grade in the participation portion of your final grade.

Lateness: Arriving to class late is disruptive to the instructor and to other students, and puts you at a disadvantage during the class. Unless you have cleared it with me previously, each 2 classes you are late will count as an unexcused absence. Arriving to class more than 30 minutes late also counts as an absence.

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 me immediately so we can make appropriate arrangements to support your learning and success.

We also understand that there can be barriers to receiving documentation, or that psychological or learning disabilities may present themselves in the course of adapting to the college environment and heightened academic expectations. Students are urged to be proactive and meet with me if they feel they are experiencing such barriers to their success in this course.

Class Dynamics

We expect students to engage in class discussions respectfully, thinking critically about your own perspective and maintaining openness to ideas and experiences that are in conflict with your own.

The content of this course will lead to a number of discussions about “hot topics” such as class, gender, and racial constructions. Students are expected to engage in these conversations sensitively and with openness to critique. If you feel you cannot speak in class, please talk with me privately after class and we’ll figure out strategies that might help.

Grading

Attendance and Participation 20%
Concept Reviews 30%
Final Project Abstract 10%
Final Project 15%
Take Home Final 25%

**Attendance and Participation:** This includes thoughtful comments and questions during class time to support discussion, contribution to small groups, and attendance.

*Concept Reviews:* Students will write four (4) 3-5 page concept reviews. Following the *Main Concepts* listed every week, students will define and contextualize four (4) concepts and apply these concepts to a news story, cultural artifact, or a story from their own lives, supporting their analysis with references to the relevant readings. Students are encouraged to take a creative approach to their concept reviews while prioritizing significant analysis and referencing the readings.

**Due dates:** February 11, March 11, April 1, April 15

*Final Project:* This is a collective, open-format project. It is a personalized response to the issues covered in the course. It can be a research paper, extended essay, or an artistic project, as long as it is a well developed and complete. Your group must hand in an abstract on April 8. No more than 3 people per group.

**Due date:** Abstract April 8. Presentations on April 22 and 29.

*Take Home Final:* Five questions that students need to respond at length, using the concepts and ideas learned in class. Citation of appropriate texts is required. More details will follow.

**Due dates:** Distributed on April 22. Due May 2.

**Note On Lateness:** The instructor will not accept late submissions. If you know you will have a conflict, please contact me ahead of time.

**Technology Policy**

This class will rely heavily on texts posted online in Moodle. If you can annotate and underline texts online, you can bring your laptop to class for reference, but you cannot use the computer for any other task, except that of taking notes. Checking email, FB, twitter, etc., will amount to being absent from the class and will be graded accordingly. Attendance and participation amount to 30% of your overall grade.

Please turn your cell phone off during class.

**Citations**
Wikipedia can and should be used as a general reference. It is a great way to get acquainted with different authors and ideas, but it does not work as academic citation. You can use the site but then you must check on the references and quote from the references read, not from the information supplied by Wikipedia.

When you cite an outside source, you must cite it in academically acceptable formats. This includes references to websites. Just the name of the author and the book is not sufficient, or mentioning that the text is online. If you do not know how to cite academically, you can consult the online guide by the American Anthropological Association, http://www.aaanet.org/pubs/style_guide.htm.

**Academic Honesty**

DO NOT PLAGIARISE. That means no copy and pasting, and no direct paraphrasing. Any form of academic dishonesty (including but not limited to plagiarism from another student's writing) will result in an automatic failure in this course, following UMass policies. In addition, UMass requests that instructors turn students to the University Academic Honesty Board for further academic discipline, a process that does not sound like fun for anybody involved.

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**Course Calendar**

**Week 1: January 21—Introduction to the Class**

**Week 2: January 28—What is Social Theory?**

Why is social theory important for social change? Who produces social theory?


Main Concept: Theory as a Social Production

**Week 3: February 4—The Social Production of History**

“Until lions write their own history the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter”. This African aphorism expresses the relationship between power and truth in the writing of history. What is the importance of history and how do narratives help reproduce social order?


Main concept: Erasures of History and Power Constructions
Week 4: February 11 — Axis of Power/Resistance

Ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, physical ability: social constructions around this societal issues can function as spaces where people assert their subjectivities in defiance or acceptance of society’s normalizing efforts. But, what is a social construction?


Main concept: social constructionism

***********Assignment Due: CONCEPT REVIEW #1***********

Week 5: February 18 – Monday Class schedule – No Class

Week 6: February 25 – The social construction of Race

How was the notion of race constructed in the United States and Europe? What power structures and social processes were at stake in this construction? How did social movements struggle to start changing this construction?


American Anthropological Association, Understanding Race video
http://www.understandingrace.org/history/timeline_movie.html

The Human Spectrum
http://www.understandingrace.org/humvar/spectrum.html

The game of life experience
http://www.understandingrace.org/lived/game/index.html


Why “Reverse Racism” is not possible

http://m.dailykos.com/story/2010/07/15/884649/-Why-there-s-no-such-thing-as-Reverse-Racism

Main concept: Race and Racism

Week 7: March 4 — Gender and Feminisms
What is a gender analysis? How is gender constructed?


Watch: How Behavior Creates Gender – Judith Butler

http://critical-theory.com/watch-judith-butler-behavior-creates-gender-3-minutes/

Main concepts: Feminisms and Gender.

Week 8: March 11—Masculinities

Western society has not always defined masculinity in the same way. How do these variable definitions of masculinity impact people and their lives?


************************Assignment Due: CONCEPT REVIEW #2***************************

Main concept: Masculinities

Week 9: March 18 – SPRING RECESS NO CLASS

Week 10: March 25—Queer Theory

All readings in MOODLE

Week 11: April 1—Eurocentrism, colonialism and globalization

How does Eurocentrism justify imperialism and colonialism? What are the intellectual processes that enable colonizers to envision the colonized as savages? What does this discourse allow for, and what are its consequences?


************************Assignment Due: CONCEPT REVIEW #3***************************

Main concepts: Eurocentrism, Colonialism, Globalization

Week 12: April 8—Immigration and the United States

How do national security policies that systematically endanger the physical integrity and wellbeing of global populations become morally, politically and socially sustainable?
Reading: TBA

Main concept: Immigration

************************** DUE DATE FOR FINAL PROJECT ABSTRACT**************************

**Week 13: April 15 — Neoliberalism**

Neoliberalism, also known as globalization, is the philosophy behind today’s capitalism. How did capitalism change since the 1970s? Why were these changes necessary? Who did these changes benefit? What kind of world were we left with?


Capitalist Crisis

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOP2V_np2c0

Memoria del Saqueo (Argentina’s Neoliberal Economic Collapse)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CzS6eHqtnQ

Main concepts: Neoliberalism, Capitalist Crises

************************** Assignment Due: CONCEPT REVIEW #4****************************

**Week 14: April 22 – Student Presentations**

**************************Take Home final distributed, due Friday May 2****************************

**Week 15 – April 29 - Student Presentations and conclusions**

**************************Friday May 2: Take Home Final due date****************************

**Bibliography**


Jaggar, Alison M. and Paula S Rothenberg. 1984. Theories of Women’s Oppression. In Feminist Frameworks: Alternative Theoretical Accounts of the Relations Between Women


