STPEC 101
Introduction to Social Thought & Political Economy (STPEC)
Spring 2015
Tuesdays 4:00-6:30 PM
Hasbrouck Lab 104B

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Email messages will be answered within 48 hours

Office Hours: Mondays 1:30 to 2:30 PM and by appointment
Machmer Hall Room E-27C

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, issues of power, political economy, 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; how to communicate for effective dialogue; and how to begin to identify axes of oppression/resistance such as race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ablebodyness and other social issues.

STPEC 101, like STPEC's other core classes, is seminar-style 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**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept Reviews (3)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project Abstract</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Home Final</td>
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*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 three (3) 3-5 page concept reviews. Following the **Main Concepts** listed every week, students will define and contextualize four (1) concepts and apply this concept 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 3, February 24, and March 10

**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 March 31. Presentations April 14 and 21.

**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 21. Due April 28.

**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.

Course Calendar

Week 1: January 20—Words Best Left Un-Said and Intro to STPEC

Week 2: January 27—Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism, also known as globalization, is the philosophy behind today’s capitalism. How did capitalism change since the 1970? 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

Week 3: February 3—What is Social Theory?

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


Main Concept: Theory as a Social Production

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

Week 4: February 17 – TUESDAY IS A MONDAY – NO CLASS
**Week 5: February 24 — Socially Constructed Axes 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

**Week 6: March 3 — 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?


Main concepts: Eurocentrism, Colonialism, Globalization

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

**Week 7: March 10 — 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 8: March 17 – SPRING RECESS NO CLASS**

**Week 9: March 24 — 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?

Main concept: Immigration

**Week 10: March 31 — 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?


Watch at home video: Michelle Alexander, author of "The New Jim Crow" - 2013 George E. Kent Lecture

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gln1JwDUI64

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

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

**Week 11: April 7 — Queer Theory**

Identity (or more precisely subjectivity) is a constellation of multiple and unstable positions. Queer theorists study the social process that tend to normalize and stabilize sex, gender, race, and other embodiments of different axes of oppression/resistance. “Queer” is whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. It demarcates not a positivity (a thing) but a positionality in regards to the normative.

Duggan, Lisa. 1992. Making it perfectly queer. Socialist Review (22) 1, Pp. 11-

**Week 12: April 14 — Gender and Feminisms**
What is gender? What is a “gender analysis”? How is gender constructed?


And

http://sociology.morrisville.edu/readings/SOCI101/SOS28-Lorber-NightToHisDay.pdf

Watch: How Behavior Creates Gender – Judith Butler
http://critical-theory.com/watch-judith-butler-behavior-creates-gender-3-minutes/

Main concepts: Feminisms and Gender.

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

Week 13: April 21 — Masculinities

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


Main concept: Masculinities

Week 14: April 28 - Student Presentations and course wrap-up

**********Take Home Exam Up in Moodle April 28 **********

**********Friday May 5: Take Home Final due date**********

Bibliography


Duggan, Lisa. 1992. Making it perfectly queer. Socialist Review (22) 1, Pp. 11-


