

# STPEC

Social Thought and Political Economy

## Fall 2022 Course Catalog

---

UMassAmherst

College of Social &  
Behavioral Sciences

### STPEC 101 | Introduction to STPEC

TuTh | 11:30am – 12:45pm

Shemon Salam

3 credits

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 and how to make an argument; communicate for effective dialogue, and how to begin to identify social justice issues.

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

*This class is open to STPEC majors only.*

---

### STPEC 291X | STPEC Executive Committee

Time TBD

Hoang Phan

1 credit

Enrollment required for students serving as representatives to the STPEC Executive Committee. Requirements for credit include: attending an orientation session and all student representative and full Executive Committee meetings, delivering weekly announcements to designated STPEC courses and, in STPEC courses in which they are enrolled, facilitating a 15 min forum prior to both full Executive Committee meetings.

*This course will be scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time.*

---

### STPEC 320 | Writing for Critical Consciousness

M | 4:00pm – 6:30 pm

Graciela Monteagudo

3 credits

Junior Year Writing

The STPEC Junior Writing Seminar focuses on individual development of voice. We will weave this theme through standard essay assignments, weekly response papers, cover letters and resumes, and a research paper with a theme of your choosing. I encourage integration of ideas from your other courses and experiences. Be prepared to think critically and examine texts carefully. We will be sharing our writing with each other – be ready to give and receive constructive feedback. This course meets only once a week; attendance is crucial.

*Enrollment is limited to 15 students. STPEC majors only. Prerequisite: College Writing or equivalent.*

---

### STPEC 391H | STPEC Core Seminar I

TuTh | 2:30pm – 3:45pm

Graciela Monteagudo

4 credits

STPEC Core Seminar I focuses on major theoretical currents in political theory and the historical circumstances that gave rise to those theories - in particular Liberalism, Marxism, Anarchism, Decolonial, and Poststructural theories. As this is an interdisciplinary class, we will be bringing in analytic tools from various disciplines paying attention to the historical construction and reception of ideas.

*Enrollment is limited to 15 students. STPEC majors only.*

*PREREQUISITES: One Intro to Social Theory course and one Intro to Political Economy Course chosen from the STPEC Recommended Course List.*

---

**STPEC 392H | STPEC Core Seminar II**

**TuTh | 1:00pm – 2:15pm**

**Shemon Salam**

**4 credits**

STPEC Core Seminar II focuses on the development of social struggles, political economy, and theory from the 1960s to the present. Continuing our analysis of racial capitalism and empire, Core II will explore how these formations changed due to economic crisis, national liberation, and class struggle. We will research the connections between race, class, gender, sexuality, disease, and other axes of oppression under racial capitalism. A major research paper of the student's choosing will be produced over the course of the semester allowing students to more deeply engage with a topic, and to practice applying the critical methodological and theoretical tools developed in the STPEC curriculum.

*Enrollment is limited to 15 students. STPEC majors only.*

*PREREQUISITES: One Intro to Social Theory course and one Intro to Political Economy Course chosen from the STPEC Recommended Course List.*

---

**STPEC 491H | STPEC Focus Seminar I**

**Tuesday | 4:00 - 6:30pm**

**Rachel Weber**

**4 credits**

**Abolition: Theory and Practice in the Massachusetts Criminal Justice System**

Abolitionist politics continuously evolve in both academic contexts and on the ground in courthouses, prisons, and grassroots organizing. However, the work done in developing new theories and policies and the work done in localized community settings rarely intersect. In this class, we will examine the criminal justice system in Massachusetts through lenses of both theory and practice, and envision meaningful ways to cross-pollinate these two necessary arms of abolition movements. Coursework will include readings related to abolitionist theories, the history of the criminal justice system and policing in Massachusetts, local resistance campaigns, transformative justice, and topical case law, as well as in-person observation in courthouses. Guest speakers will include defense attorneys, local organizers, abolitionist practitioners in related fields, and more.

*PREREQUISITE: STPEC 391H*

*Enrollment is limited to 15 Senior and Junior STPEC majors only. Sophomores who obtain permission to enroll from the instructor should contact Monica Garcia for an override. Students may take Focus Seminars to fulfill upper level requirements. See the Recommended Course list for this semester to find out which category this seminar will fulfill and ask Monica to apply that change on Spire.*

---

**STPEC 492H | STPEC Focus Seminar II**

**Wednesday | 4:00pm – 6:30pm**

**Kevin A. Young**

**4 credits**

**Strategies for Liberation**

How can marginalized groups wield collective power? Why do social movements choose the strategies that they do? What makes them effective? This seminar explores these questions through a survey of theoretical, historical, and contemporary perspectives on mass-based resistance. As we will see, scholars and organizers have offered many different answers. Case studies will come

particularly from the U.S. context, but also from El Salvador, Mexico, Russia, and elsewhere. The last month of the semester will be partly structured around students' own interests, with each student researching a social movement of their choosing.

*PREREQUISITE: STPEC 391H*

*Enrollment is limited to 15 Senior and Junior STPEC majors only. Sophomores who obtain permission to enroll from the instructor should contact Monica Garcia for an override. Students may take Focus Seminars to fulfill upper level requirements. See the Recommended Course list for this semester to find out which category this seminar will fulfill and ask Monica to apply that change on Spire.*

---

**STPEC 494PI | Praxis**

**Shemon Salam**

**3 credits**

**W | 11:15pm – 1:45pm**

**Integrative Experience**

This course tackles the latest developments in racial capitalism by analyzing social struggles and organizations since the economic crisis of 2007. Using the latest research on gender, class, race, empire, and sexuality this course looks at how crisis and struggle are simultaneously shaping the world. For the final project students will write a paper focusing on social struggles during the pandemic.

As an integrative experience (IE) course students are encouraged to draw on knowledge from prior courses, life experiences, and readings from outside the class. Praxis will be driven by applying theory to the real world. This course is highly student driven: composed of presentations, small group discussions, debates, and self-reflection.

*This course satisfies the Integrative Experience requirement for BA-STPEC majors.*

---

**STPEC 498Y | Practicum – Exploring the Intersection of Theory and Practice**

**Hoang Phan**

**3 credits**

This course fulfills the STPEC internship requirement. Students in this course undertake an internship of 120 hours or more in an organization of their choice, and engage in critical reflection on their experience. Fieldwork placements are identified and arranged by each individual student and must be approved by the instructor. Students are encouraged to use this class as an opportunity to synthesize knowledge gained in the classroom and test its applicability to “real life” situations.

*To enroll, submit a completed STPEC internship contract before the end of add/drop. Note: you must meet with Monica Garcia and get approval of your placement before you turn in your contract. She can be reached at [mmgarcia@umass.edu](mailto:mmgarcia@umass.edu).*

---

**The following courses do not fulfill any STPEC or University requirements**

**STPEC 298: Practicum (1-12 credits, mandatory pass/fail)**

**STPEC 398: Practicum (1-12 credits, graded)**

These two options are for students doing elective internships (i.e., this course does not fulfill the STPEC internship requirement). The primary differences between the courses are grading (STPEC 298 is pass/fail) and recommended final paper length: students in STPEC 298 write about 2-3 pages per credit, and students in STPEC 398 write about 3-4 pages per credit. Students in these courses receive one credit for every 40 hours of work that they complete in an organization of their choice. They must find a faculty sponsor who is willing to grade their written work and submit a grade. The STPEC Internship Advisor can provide assistance with finding placements and faculty sponsors, but this is ultimately each student's responsibility. *To register, speak with Monica Garcia, Director of STPEC's Internship Program and complete a STPEC Internship Contract by the end of add/drop.*