

Political Science 203: Political Thought Since 1900
Professor Leonard Feldman

Hunter College, Spring 2021
Tues, Fri 9:45-11 am
ONLINE

Prof. Feldman's Contact Information:

Virtual Office hours:

Tuesday and Friday 11:30 am to 1:30 pm and by appointment.

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This is the third course in the three course historical sequence of political theory classes. While it is a bonus if you have taken one or more of the previous two courses (POLSC 201 and POLSC 202), this is not a prerequisite. We will be examining some of the most significant political theories and political theorists of the 20th century, divided into four roughly chronological and thematic sections. In each of these sections we will examine the theoretical works in relation to their historical contexts. But in addition, we will extract ideas and arguments from the books we read to try to help us make sense of our current political predicament as well, and do so in part by staging encounters between these political theories and other cultural objects such as videos, political polemics and short stories. The goal here is not to engage in a mechanical act of applying the theory to a case, but to bring together multiple texts such that they might illuminate each other.

Learning Outcomes

By the completion of this course you will be able to identify and explain core arguments in 20th century political thought, and locate these arguments in their historical contexts. You will develop skills in applying abstract arguments to concrete political examples, in reading critically as you interpret difficult theoretical texts, and in structuring your own written arguments with logical rigor and the careful use of textual evidence.

Class Format and General Expectations

This course will be a mixed discussion/lecture format and a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous course delivery. Therefore regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. You must prepare for every class by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course texts, and bringing to our online discussions issues, questions, and passages for discussion. Have the relevant text with you when you watch the lectures and attend classes on Zoom.

Blackboard is the hub for this class, and it is essential that you log in to Blackboard at least every other day. While this syllabus gives you essential information

concerning reading assignments and the schedule of classes, it's the Blackboard site where you'll find each week's set of Voicethread lectures, reading and writing assignments, study questions, and the link for joining our Friday Zoom class.

I will also make use of Blackboard's communication functions to send important email announcements to you. Thus it is very important for you to (a) check Blackboard at least every other day and (b) make sure that the email address that Blackboard has registered for you is an email address you check regularly. If it isn't, change your email address on Blackboard by clicking "Update Email" on the upper left-hand tools menu.

Academic Integrity

Any deliberate borrowing of the ideas, terms, statements, or knowledge of others without clear and specific acknowledgment of the source is intellectual theft and is called plagiarism. It is not plagiarism to borrow the ideas, terms, statements, or knowledge of others if the source is clearly and specifically acknowledged. Students who consult such critical material and wish to include some of the insights, ideas, or statements encountered must provide full citations in an appropriate form. Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

Office of Accessibility

Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/or Learning) consult the Office of Accessibility located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance please call 212-772-4857, TTY 212-650-3230.

Required Books

1. Max Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
2. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*
3. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*
4. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*
5. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*
6. Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*

These required texts are available for purchase online via the Hunter Bookstore (hunter.textbookx.com). If you have access to alternative editions of the text, either paper or electronic, you may use those instead. When citing/quoting from an alternative edition,

you must provide a complete citation in a footnote or bibliography. We will read work by several other political theorists as well, and those texts will be available on Blackboard, in the weekly coursework folder.

Course Requirements

This class is graded out of a total of 500 points.

- 10 discussion board posts posted to Blackboard (15 points each, **150 points total**) *Your post is **due by Tuesday 9:45 am** each week.* Each post should be about 1 page (2-3 paragraphs) and follow the prompt provided in the weekly coursework folder. There are thirteen Tuesdays on the schedule with assigned readings, so you can skip 3 without penalty.
- 10 responses to others' discussion board posts. These are due Friday of the same week and should be at least 1 paragraph. (**50 points**)
- A 6 page midterm essay due March 28th (**100 points**)
- A 10-12 page final comprehensive essay exam due May 24th (**150 points**).
- Class Participation (regular participation in Tuesday's live class (30 points, 2 points per class – 1 point for your attentive presence and 1 point for participating in discussion and break-out group work), and completion of Friday's lecture (20 points, 1 point per lecture – complete viewing of the lectures and offering a comment if required.) (**50 points**)

Weekly Format

This course is designed as a hybrid of synchronous and asynchronous elements. **Each week's activities and assignments will be posted in a single folder on Blackboard.** You can access this folder by clicking on "Weekly Coursework."

The basic structure is as follows:

Sunday-Monday: Complete the reading assignment for Tuesday's class and consult any questions or guides posted in the weekly coursework folder.

Monday: Write a 2-3 paragraph post in response to the prompt in the Blackboard discussion board. (The post is due Tuesday morning by 9:45 am, no exceptions/extensions.)

Tuesday: Live (synchronous) class held on Zoom at 9:45 am. The Zoom link for class is the same each week:

(Also available on Blackboard in the weekly coursework folder and as an announcement.)

Wednesday and Thursday: Complete the reading assignment for Friday, using any questions from the weekly coursework folder as a guide.

By Friday: I will post my voicethread lecture covering Friday's readings on Thursday. By the end of the day on Friday, watch my voicethread lecture and leave a comment, if required. (To get participation credit for engaging with the Voicethread lecture, you need to complete viewing the entire Voicethread presentation by 11:59 pm on Friday.)

By Friday: Reply to one other student's post on Blackboard discussion board by the end of the day (11:59 pm).

A note about technology

Expectations regarding Zoom classes: To the greatest extent possible, please keep your camera on during our live Zoom classes. It's helpful to me to be able to see your reactions. Please mute your microphone when you are not speaking.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

I. Economics, Culture and the Political in the Early 20th Century

F 1/29 Course Introduction: LIVE CLASS on Zoom. (NOTE: This is the only Friday with a live class. All other live classes will be on Tuesdays.)

TU 2/2 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Value Pluralism in Modernity
Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation"

FR 2/5 VOICETHREAD LECTURE Religion and Capitalism
Weber *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* chapters 1 and 2

Also available here: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/weber/protestant-ethic/index.htm>

TU 2/9 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: The Dark Side of Capitalist Rationalization
Weber *Protestant Ethic* chapter 3-5

FR 2/12 no class

TU 2/16 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Societal Pluralism, Hierarchy and Conflict
Weber, "Classes, Status Groups and Parties" and Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition"

FR 2/19 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: The Fusing of Economic, Cultural and Political Power: Hegemony
Antonio Gramsci, excerpt from *Prison Notebooks* pp. 233-38, 323-35*

TU 2/23 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener"*

FR 2/26 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: The Political as Existential Conflict
Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*

TU 3/2 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Liberalism's Evasion of the Political
Schmitt, *Concept of the Political* finish

FR 3/5 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: What can Weber, Gramsci and Schmitt tell us about the current political predicament?

Jacob Whiton, "Where Trumpism Lives"

<https://bostonreview.net/politics/jacob-whiton-where-trumpism-lives>

II. Post-World War Two: The Aftermath of Fascism and the De-Colonization Struggle

TU 3/9 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Introduction to Hannah Arendt
Hannah Arendt, excerpt from *Origins of Totalitarianism*
(Film excerpt from *Shoah*)

FR 3/12 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*
Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X098U8_oU1Q&feature=emb_logo

TU 3/16 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Arendt, *Eichmann*, finish and *On Violence*

FR 3/19 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

TU 3/23 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*

FR 3/26 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: Fanon *Wretched of the Earth*

SU 3/28 Midterm Essay due

III. Justice in the “Affluent Society”: Welfare Liberalism and Neoliberalism

TU 4/6 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: John Rawls, “A Well-Ordered Society”

FR 4/9 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: Rawls, “Institutions of a Just Basic Structure,”
Justice as Fairness, a Restatement

TU 4/13 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Robert Nozick, excerpt from *Anarchy, State and Utopia* and Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, chpt 1

FR 4/16 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: Friedman, *Capitalism* chpt 2 and George Monbiot, “Neoliberalism: The Ideology at the Root of All Our Problems”

IV. Contemporary Challenges to (Neo)Liberalism

TU 4/20 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Wendy Brown, excerpt from *Undoing the Demos* and *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*

FR 4/23 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism*

TU 4/27 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Brown, *Neoliberalism*

FR 4/30 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations”

TU 5/4 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Cedric Johnson, “An Open Letter to Ta-Nehisi Coates” and “The Panthers Can’t Save Us Now”

FR 5/7 VOICETHREAD LECTURE: Reading TBA

TU 5/11 LIVE CLASS on Zoom: Review

FR 5/14: VOICETHREAD LECTURE: Concluding Lecture

Final Essay Exam due: Monday May 24th, 11:59 pm.