Contemporary Political Philosophy (4333)

Fall 2018

Department of Political Science and Philosophy

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Class Times and Rooms: Thursday, 2-4:50pm, Rassman 263

Required Texts: A comprehensive collection of contemporary (continental) political philosophy does not exist, and if it did it would be very expensive because most of the writings are still under copyright. So there is no textbook for the class. I will post all of the texts (thematically) on Blackboard.

Course Description

Following the death of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), continental political philosophy shattered into a bewildering array of new 'isms.' If the nineteenth century could be described as the high water mark of liberalism, conservatism, and nationalism, the twentieth century saw a marked change in developments; communism, Fascism, Nazism, Marxism, feminism, existentialism, structuralism, post-structuralism, postmodernism, post-colonialism, environmentalism, and multiculturalism, to name just a few, have come to dominate the contemporary political horizon. It would be impossible to cover all of these 'isms' in a sixteen week semester course, so in this course students will be introduced to these new movements in thought via the continental tradition rather than the Anglo-Saxon tradition of political philosophy. As we shall see in this continental tradition Nietzsche inaugurated the turn towards 'the body,' and Heidegger did the same for the meaning of the 'text' as a sites of conflict and examination that remains with us today. In the course of the semester we will examine the following concepts; culture, the state, ideology, subjectivity, difference, rights, freedom, technology, oppression, and post-colonialism. Thus we will take a look at some of the traditional concepts of political theory, such as 'freedom' as well as the newer ideas such as 'subjectivity.'
The Class
Senior seminar format. I will introduce the subject or topic of discussion for ten to twenty mins then we will open up the class for a discussion of the texts. We will take a ten minute break in the middle of the class and return for the second part of the discussion.

Class Attendance Policy
Class attendance at ASU is mandatory and a class roll will be taken. If you miss three consecutive classes the ASU registrar will be informed. If you miss more than five classes during the semester you may receive a fail for the course overall (depending on the circumstances). The only legitimate reasons for missing classes or leaving classes early are sickness or medical appointments, or a domestic emergency (i.e. ‘car trouble,’ for example, is not a domestic emergency). Exceptions to this reviewed on a case by case basis.

Class Etiquette
Participation yes, but boorish behavior and/or verbal bullying is unacceptable. I reserve the right to ask any student to leave the classroom. In the event that any student refuses to leave the classroom when asked the campus police may be called (I have been teaching at ASU for 16 years and I have never had to do this, but there is always a first time). Be respectful when you address others people. You may disagree with what other people say but the challenge is to show the weaknesses in their arguments and to build better ones, not to bully, intimidate, or humiliate.

Class Prohibitions (*unless I am presented with an accommodation)
NO SLEEPING IN CLASS (If you are too tired to stay awake in class you should not be in class) NO PHONES
NO EARBUDS
NO DIPPING NO VAPING
*NO LAPTOPS
NO HOT FOOD
PLEASE DON’T PASS MESSAGES
DO NOT LEAVE CLASS AFTER SIGNING IN WITHOUT PERMISSION DO NOT ENGAGE IN DISTRACTING BEHAVIOUR

Class Preparation
Always bring your texts to class. Bring notebook or note paper and pencil/pen. Always complete the reading assignment before class. Be prepared to listen and answer questions

Multiple Choice Tests
You will take TWO multiple choice tests (25% each), you will have ONE participatory grade (25%), and a final Blue Book Exam (25%). These tests will be on the subject matter of the previous five weeks of class, these are not cumulative.
*Final In-class Blue Book Exam*

The final class exam is NOT open book. A detailed rubric of how these papers are assessed is posted on Blackboard. You will be expected to write an answer of about 1000-1200 words (roughly four or five sides of the Blue Book). You will be given an exam paper with several optional questions based upon the last weeks of the course. In my experience the main reason why students here at ASU underperform with regard to finals is that they do not engage with course material. Papers often tend towards 'stream of consciousness' with few references to what has been studied. It is expected in a philosophy class, even an intro class, that you have learned some of the philosophers' names and can accurately point to what ideas are associated with these philosophers and how to deploy these ideas in a coherent fashion. Higher grades will be awarded to those who can do some of this.

* All course work must be completed for a final grade.

**The Angelo State University Honor Code**

Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the Student Handbook. In other words, when you submit your work, you claim that the work is yours. If someone else wrote it for you or you got it from someone else (internet, other student’s class...), then you are not the author and thus will get a zero for that assignment. Any idea that is not yours should be properly referenced.

**Disabilities**

Please let me know if you have any special need due to any learning disability. Persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office.

**ASU Mission Statement**

Angelo State University, a member of the Texas Tech University System, delivers undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and professional disciplines. In a learning-centered environment distinguished by its integration of teaching, research, creative endeavor, service, and co-curricular experiences, ASU prepares students to be responsible citizens and to have productive careers.

**Grading Scale**

A-90% Outstanding  
B-80% Very good  
C-70% Satisfactory  
D-60% Min required  
F-59% Fail
Assessment
ASU Student Learning Objectives

Critical Thinking Skills (CT)

CT1. Gather, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information relevant to a question or issue.

CT2. Develop and demonstrate a logical position (i.e. perspective, thesis, and hypothesis) that acknowledges ambiguities or contradictions.

Communication Skills (CS)

CS1. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective written communication. CS2. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective oral communication.

Social Responsibility (SR)

SR1. Demonstrate intercultural competence.

SR2. Demonstrate knowledge of civic responsibility.

SR3. Demonstrate the ability to engage effectively in the campus, regional, national or global communities.

Personal Responsibility (PR)

PR1. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate choices, actions and consequences as related to ethical decision-making.

The Course
(I reserve the right to change the course readings)

First class is an organizational meeting. Introduction to issues of contemporary political philosophy: "Nietzsche as a turning point," Habermas, the continental/analytical split etc. Also, the course is not organized according to theorist, or studying each theorist in turn chronologically and so forth, but thematically.

The texts are organized in folders in Blackboard, I will release the new folder of texts every two weeks, to give folks time to work through them.
Weeks one and Two
THEME: Language and the Text

Weeks Three and Four
THEME: Culture and Conflict

Weeks Five and Six
THEME: Ideology

FIRST MULTIPLE CHOICE TEST

Weeks Seven and Eight
THEME: Subjectivity and the Body

Weeks Nine and Ten
THEME: Technology and the Body

Weeks Eleven and Twelve
THEME: The State, Oppression, Surveillance and Control

SECOND MULTIPLE CHOICE TEST

Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen
THEME: Postcolonialism
Weeks Fifteen and Sixteen

THEME: Postmodernism

Final Blue Book Exam

Tuesday, December 11, 1-3pm