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**Office:** Anderson 334  
**Hours:** T, 10:30-1:30  
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### **POT 6505: Politics and Theory**

**Course Description:** This course is designed to introduce graduate students to political theory. It begins by situating “theory” within the broader discipline of political science, and highlights some of the methodological debates and self-understandings that have emerged from this connection. The rest of the course focuses largely on familiarizing students with a variety of ways of thinking about and “doing” political theory, with the aim of ascertaining what might be gained from approaching politics from the particular standpoint(s) under consideration. A number of these approaches have been important, in various ways, for people studying everything from American politics and international relations, to comparative politics and public policy. More broadly, the course prompts its participants to critically interrogate their own epistemological, moral, and political commitments, and the relationship these bear to their particular field of academic interest.

**Course Requirements and Grading:** Your grade for this class will be based on four components:

- 1.) One presentation/response paper (20%) (**see guidelines below**)
- 2.) Class participation (15%)
- 3.) Discussion Questions (15%).

This course is based on a seminar format; therefore regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Every participant is also required to prepare two or three discussion questions for each meeting. You must email those questions to me and the rest of your classmates by **Wednesday** of each week. The questions should refer to issues raised by your reading of the author’s argument.

- 4.) One take home exam (50%). The final exam will be a 48-hour take home exam with the dates TBD. The goal is to provide students with practice for comprehensive exams. Students will choose two questions from a list of possibilities. Answers should be approximately 8-10 pages (typed, double-spaced) per question.

## **Required Texts:**

John J. Gunnell, *The Descent of Political Theory: The Genealogy of an American Vocation* (University of Chicago); ISBN: 0226310817

Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, Canto reprint edition; ISBN: 1107689538

*The Marx-Engels Reader* (Norton); ISBN: 039309040X

Jonathan Wolff, *Why Read Marx Today?* (Oxford); ISBN: 0192805053

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Harvard); ISBN: 0674005112

Carole Pateman and Charles Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Polity); ISBN: 0745640044

Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism* (Princeton), ISBN: 978-0691145891

Donald P. Palmer, *Structuralism and Poststructuralism for Beginners* (Writers and Readers); ISBN: 0863161936

Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford); ISBN: 0192801805

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge); ISBN: 0415389550

Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Western Rationalism* (Princeton); ISBN: 069105844X

## **Course Outline:**

**August 25: Introduction**

**September 1: No Class (APSA)**

**September 8: Political Theory and Political Science: From Marriage to Divorce**

Reading: John J. Gunnell, *The Descent of Political Theory*; John J. Gunnell, "Pluralism and the Fate of Perestroika: A Historical Reflection" (with replies by James Farr, Robert O. Keohane, David D. Laitin, Kristen Renwick Monroe, Anne Norton, Sanford F. Schram, and a response by Gunnell), in *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 2015): 408-430.

**September 15: The Ineluctability of Political Theory**

Reading: Charles Taylor, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man,” “Neutrality and Political Science”; Leo Strauss, “What Is Political Philosophy?” Sheldon Wolin, “Political Theory as a Vocation”; Leslie Paul Thiele, “Theory and Vision”; Mark Bevir and Asaf Kedar, “Concept Formation in Political Science: An Anti-Naturalist Critique of Qualitative Methodology”

**September 22: History of Political Thought**

Reading: Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas”; Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, J.G.A. Pocock, “The Concept of a Language and the *métier d'historien*: Some Considerations on Practice”; Dan O’Neill and Ben J. Taylor, “The Cambridge ‘School’ (or ‘Mentality’) of Interpretation”; Terence Ball, “Political Theory and Conceptual Change”

**September 29: Marx(ism)**

Reading: *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 26-52, 53-54, 66-105, 143-165, 172-173, 187, 344-345, 3-6, 299-302, 594-617, 203-217, 305-306, 336-339, 469-500; Jonathan Wolff, *Why Read Marx Today?*

**October 6: Analytical Liberalism and its Heirs**

Reading: John Rawls: *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*

**October 13: The Intersection of Race and Gender**

Reading: Carole Pateman and Charles Mills, *Contract and Domination*

**October 20: Democratic Theory**

Reading: Sheldon Wolin, *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Specter of Inverted Totalitarianism*

**October 27: “Postmodernism”**

Reading: Donald P. Palmer, *Structuralism and Post-Structuralism for Beginners*; Catherine Belsey, *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction*; Michel Foucault, “Panopticism,” “The Subject and Power”;

**November 3: Queer Theory**

Reading: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*; Nicola J. Smith and Donna Lee, “What’s Queer About Political Science?”; *New York Magazine* feature on Judith Butler, <http://nymag.com/thecut/2016/06/judith-butler-c-v-r.html>

**November 10: Comparative Political Theory**

Reading: Roxanne Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Western Rationalism*

**November 17: “What Should Political Theory Be Now?”**

Reading: Special issue of the journal *Political Theory*, August 2002; 30 (4); contributions by: Stephen K. White, George Kateb, Adriana Cavarero, James Tully, Wendy Brown, Ruth Grant, Ian Shapiro

**November 24: No Class (Thanksgiving)**

**December 1: Conclusion/Review Session**

**SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS/RESPONSE PAPERS:**

**Guidelines:**

1. As a presenter, you are taking on the role of teacher for your peers in the seminar. Make sure that you lay out the arguments in the text(s) in a clear and concise manner. Identify what you take to be the most important concept(s) in the text. Limit yourself to one or two issues, since you will need to give a thorough treatment to each one. In order to develop a critical commentary, you will need to discuss the concept(s) you have selected by referring extensively to the text(s). You should quote crucial passages in order to analyze them in more detail; however, you should not rely on the citations to speak for you. Look for not only the basic meanings of the terms in question but also subtle nuances and even contradictions in the text. Your own voice should emerge indirectly in the critical analysis. By pointing out any tensions, oversights, and contradictions in the author’s argument, you will also be developing your own position. In the conclusion, you should leave us with 2 or 3 questions to frame the beginning of class discussion. The oral presentation will be informal. The presenters will each have roughly 10-15 minutes to highlight the main points of their papers and sketch out what they take to be the most interesting lines of discussion.
2. Your paper should be about 8-10 pp. in length.
3. Edit and proofread your paper for spelling and grammar.
4. Send your paper to the class via e-mail attachment (in Word). Please also paste the text of the paper into the body of your e-mail message.
5. The seminar participants should read the response papers before class; therefore, for full credit you must email your paper the day before class.
6. All presenters must meet with me the week prior to the one in which they are presenting for a list of relevant secondary literature to consult.