

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY (JPB157)

COURSE SYLLABUS

Semester: Winter 2023
Lecturer: Jakub Franěk (jakub.franek@fsv.cuni.cz)
Seminar leader: Václav Rut (55494011@fsv.cuni.cz)
Lectures: Mondays 9:30-10:50AM @ Room No. C123
Seminars: Thursdays 5:00-6.20PM; 6:30-7:50PM @ Room No. C123
Office hours: See <https://konzultace.fsv.cuni.cz> booking system

Course description

This course introduces the students to the most important topics discussed in contemporary political philosophy or political theory. The course is divided into four sections. The first one concerns the understanding of politics in the works of C. Schmitt, H. Arendt and C. Mouffe. The second section examines the relationship between theory and practice from the point of view of the critical theory and post-structuralism. The third section is devoted to the debate between the liberals and the communitarians. The fourth and last section of the course then turns to the various ways of (re-)interpreting (or appropriating) both ancient political theory and ancient political practice in contemporary political philosophy.

Aims and purpose

The primary aims of this course are to make students familiar with the important problems and questions discussed by contemporary political philosophy. Moreover, participation in the seminar should improve the students' analytical and argumentative skills.

Teaching methodology

This course uses a combination of lectures and seminars. The students will be expected to have read the assigned reading before the class so that they can participate in the discussion.

NB: The lectures will be held once a week. All students enrolled in this course are expected to attend the lectures. The seminar meetings will be held every other week. The class will be divided into four seminar groups (A, B, C, and D). Each seminar group will meet every other week. *The students will be assigned to seminar groups during the first week of the semester. The first seminar meeting will be held during the second week of classes.*

Course assignments / grading

Midterm exam:	40%
Active participation:	15%
Final in-class/online exam:	45%
COURSE GRADE:	100%

Grading scale

The Faculty of Social Sciences uses the following A-F grading scale:

A (excellent)	= 91-100%
B (very good)	= 81-90%
C (good)	= 71-80%
D (satisfactory)	= 61-70%
E (sufficient)	= 51-60%
F (fail)	= 0-50%

Literature

NB: All assigned texts will be available through the Moodle e-learning system. Additional texts may be assigned during the semester.

All students must register into this course in Moodle during the first week of classes.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

Hannah Arendt, "Philosophy and Politics"

Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*

Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures"

Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality (vol. 1)*

Ernesto Laclau, "Democracy and the Question of Power"

Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*

Robert Nozick, "Distributive Justice"

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*

John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness, Political not Metaphysical"

John Rawls, "Domaine of the Political and Overlapping Consensus"

Michael Sandel, "Democracy's Discontent"

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*

Leo Strauss, "What is Political Philosophy?"

Leo Strauss, "Three Waves of Modernity"

Course schedule

NB: The schedule of classes is subject to change and further specification. For more detailed information including required chapters of the assigned books and other reading materials, see Moodle.

I. On the political in the works of C. Schmitt, C. Mouffe and H. Arendt

Week 1: The concept of the political and critique of liberalism in C. Schmitt's work

Reading: C. Schmitt: *The Concept of the Political*

Week 2: Agonistic theory of democracy

Reading: C. Mouffe: *On the Political*

Week 3: Arendt's phenomenological theory of political action

Reading: H. Arendt: *Between Past and Future, On Human Condition*

II. Frankfurt school and post-structuralism

Week 4: J. Habermas' discourse theory of democracy

Reading: J. Habermas: *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*

Week 5: Michel Foucault on Power and Knowledge

Reading: M. Foucault: Two Lectures - Lecture Two (Lecture One - recommended only)
Discipline and Punish - Chapter 1
History of Sexuality Vol. 1 - Part 4, Chapter 2, Part 5

Week 6: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 7: From hegemony to a critique of ideology

Reading: E. Laclau: "Democracy and the Question of Power"

III. The debate between liberals and communitarians

Week 8: Rawls' theory of justice

Reading: J. Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*

Week 9: Communitarian critique of Rawls' liberalism

Reading: M. Sandel: *Democracy's Discontent*

Week 10: Libertarian critique of Rawls; Rawls' response to communitarians

Reading: R. Nozick: "Distributive Justice"; J. Rawls: "Justice as Fairness, Political not Metaphysical", "Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus"

IV. Turning back to where it all began

Week 11: Republican theories of democracy

Reading: TBA

Week 12: L. Strauss' and H. Arendt on Philosophy and Politics

Reading: H. Arendt: "Philosophy and Politics"; L. Strauss: "What is Political Philosophy", "Three Waves of Modernity"