

Radical Political Thought

POLI 364 Fall 2013 CURRIE 408/409 M / W 8:35-9:55 AM	Professor Yves Winter email: yves.winter@mcgill.ca twitter: @whywinter Office: 418 Ferrier Office hours: W 2-4 pm & by appt TA: Janine Kanters email: janine.kanters@mail.mcgill.ca
---	---

Description

This course introduces students to the tradition of radical political thought with a focus on nineteenth and twentieth century theories of power and freedom. At its height in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, radical political theory was a type of theoretical practice that linked a critique of social and political orders to a revolutionary politics, that is, to a mode of politics aimed at the overthrow of the existing order. In the mid-twentieth century, this unity of philosophical-historical analysis, vision of freedom, and revolutionary politics has come undone. In this course, we will study this break-down and the consequences for the radical tradition in the present.

We will begin the course with an examination of the concepts of power and freedom in the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels before turning to various currents of twentieth century radical political thought. We will examine some of the founding texts of critical theory, theories of liberation and decolonization, the post-structuralist reframing of power and freedom in the late twentieth century, and theories of labor and freedom in a post-industrial society. The course is tied together by four questions: (1) what are the structure and appearance of social and political power? (2) where is the center of power and the site of domination? (3) what historico-political subject can transform this configuration of power? (4) what form does a radical social transformation take?

Prerequisites

This is a 300-level course. In accordance with departmental regulations, this means that students must have taken a 200-level course in the same field (i.e. POLI 231 or 232).

Learning Outcomes

The pedagogical objective is that by the end of this course students will be able to (or will have improved their ability to):

- define, identify, and discuss the themes, preoccupations, and limits of radical political theory
- contextualize the terms and concerns of political ideas
- interpret and explain challenging theoretical and philosophical texts
- recognize, distinguish, analyze, and evaluate theoretical arguments
- construct coherent and sound arguments

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase from **The Word Bookstore, 469 Milton Street** (cash or cheque only). They will also be on reserve in the Humanities & Social Sciences Library.

Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964). ISBN 978-0807014172

Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Vintage, 1977). ISBN 978-0679752554

Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. (New York: Vintage, 1990). ISBN 978-0679724698

Kathi Weeks. *The Problem With Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries*. (Durham : Duke University Press, 2011). ISBN 978-0822351122

All other readings (starred *) will be available on myCourses.

Students are encouraged to read texts in the original languages. Contact me for bibliographic information.

Assignments and Grades

Written assignments for this course will consist of **three** (5-6 page) papers.

All assignments are due on the dates indicated in the syllabus. They are to be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class. Late papers will be docked one third of a letter grade (5 percentage points) for every day late, including weekends. Extensions are available only for serious and documented reasons, and they must be requested ahead of time. No extensions will be granted on (or after) an assignment's due date. Do not send assignments via email unless otherwise instructed.

Your written work will be graded on originality, reasoning and argument, organization, clarity of exposition, and style. Essays will be graded out of 100; a detailed grading rubric will be posted on myCourses.

Final grades are calculated according to the following schedule. Please note that you must receive a passing grade (D) in each of the following four grade categories in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

First Paper	25%
Second Paper	30%
Third Paper	30%
Class Participation	15%

Classroom Policies

This course includes **mandatory conferences** which will start in the week of September 22 and continue until November 28.

Conferences have a **strict attendance** policy. Students with three or more absences should not expect a passing grade.

Research shows that people learn more when they actively engage the material and the learning process, rather than passively listen to the instructor. Class meetings will involve various forms of active

learning, including writing exercises. You are responsible for having read the assigned texts prior to the class meeting. Prepare for class by taking notes and by thinking about questions, ideas, or problems that arise in your reading. Be sure to bring books and hard copy printouts of readings to class.

McGill University values **academic integrity**. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#). Please note that I take plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty seriously, and your work will be reviewed for potential plagiarism issues by means of text-matching software.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant-e a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

[Research](#) shows that students who take notes by hand significantly outperform students who take notes on **mobile computing devices** (even when the devices are offline and used exclusively for note-taking). For your own educational benefit, While laptops and tablets are not prohibited in this class, I strongly urge you to leave them at home or stowed away in your bags. Needless to say, any use of electronic equipment may only be used for note-taking. Any other use (including e-mail, web surfing, games, chat, messaging, and so on) is distracting and disruptive to fellow students and is not permitted during class time.

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#) (514)398-6009.

Class Schedule

Sep 3 Introduction

Part 1: Sources of Radical Political Theory

Concepts: emancipation; bourgeois society; labor power; commodity; capital; surplus value; fetishism

Sep 8 Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question" [part I only] *

Sep 10 Karl Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital" *
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto" [parts I-II only] *

Sep 15 Karl Marx, "Value, Price, and Profit" [skim sections I-V and read rest closely] *

Sep 17 Karl Marx, *Capital. Volume One*, pp. 45-94 *

Part 2: Foundations of Critical Theory

Concepts: totality; reification; historical critique; revolutionary violence; critical theory

Sep 22 Georg Lukács, "What is orthodox Marxism?" *
Georg Lukács, "The phenomenon of reification" *

- Sep 24 Georg Lukács, "The changing function of historical materialism" *
 Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and critical theory" *

Part 3: Theories of Liberation

Concepts: conquest; plantation economy; colonialism; feudalism; gamonalismo; decolonization; violence; technological rationality; repressive desublimation; one-dimensional thinking

- Sep 29 José Carlos Mariátegui, *Seven Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality*, pp. 3-76 *
- Oct 1 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 1-62 *
- Oct 6 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 63-144 *
- Oct 8 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 1-83
First Paper Due
- Oct 13 Thanksgiving - No Class
- Oct 15 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 84-169
- Oct 20 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. 170-257

Part 4: Rethinking Power

Concepts: power-knowledge; discipline; panopticon; sexuality; discourse; biopower

- Oct 22 Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, pp. 3-69
- Oct 27 Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, pp. 73-82; 135-156; 162-194; 200-216
- Oct 29 Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, pp. 231-237; 257-306
- Nov 3 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, pp. 1-49
Second Paper Due
- Nov 5 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, pp. 51-131
- Nov 10 Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, pp. 133-160

Part 5: Rethinking Labor and Freedom

Concepts: immaterial labor; refusal; autonomism; wages for housework; postwork imaginaries

- Nov 12 Mario Tronti, "The Strategy of Refusal" *
 Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor" *
- Nov 17 Mariarosa Dalla Costa & Selma James, *Women and the Subversion of the Community* *
- Nov 19 Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The Soul at Work*, pp. 21-105 *

Nov 24 Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, pp. 1-78
Nov 26 Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, pp. 79-150
Dec 1 Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work*, pp. 151-234
Dec 3 Review
Third Paper Due