

Radical Political Thought

POLI 364 Fall 2017 CURRIE 408 M/W 2:35-3:55 PM	Professor Yves Winter email: yves.winter@mcgill.ca Office: 418 Ferrier Office hours: F 10-12 TA: Kelsey Brady email: kelsey.brady@mail.mcgill.ca
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Description

Most modern social and political institutions make explicit or tacit claims to embody principles of freedom, justice, equality, and/or solidarity. Radical political theories fundamentally contest these claims, offering trenchant critiques of the unfreedom, power, and domination characteristic of modern social life. This course introduces students to key themes and arguments in the analyses of domination and the theories of power and resistance put forward by a variety of authors drawn from the communist, anarchist, feminist, and anti-colonial traditions.

As 2017 marks the centenary of the October Revolution, we will be spending a significant part of the semester on revolutionary history and theory. Through an investigation into the texts, actors, and dynamics of the Russian Revolution, we will address a series of theoretical questions: What is the nature of the historical change that is anticipated by revolutionary politics? How are revolutions made? What are revolutionary conditions? What conception and theory of the state underlies revolutionary politics? What are the prospects for revolutionary politics in the contemporary world, and how useful is the revolutionary schema for thinking about contemporary radical politics?

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).

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.

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016. ISBN 978-1-60846-562-0

China Miéville, *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution*. London: Verso, 2017.
ISBN 978-1-78478-277-1

All other readings will be available on **myCourses**.

Assignments and Grades

Written assignments for this course will consist of **three essays** (1500 words each).

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 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 by email unless otherwise instructed.

Your written work will be graded on originality, reasoning and argument, organization, clarity of exposition, and style. A detailed grading rubric will be posted on myCourses. Essays are graded on the letter grade scale (A to F) where the individual letters correspond to the following grade points:

Grade	Grade Points
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
D	1.0
F	0

Final grades are calculated according to the following schedule. 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 18 and continue until December 1. If you want to stay in this class, you **must** enroll in and attend one of the four conference sections. Conferences have a **strict attendance** policy. Students with three or more absences **should not expect a passing grade** in the course. Conferences are scheduled for the following times:

Thursday	10:35-11:25	SH688, Room 491
Friday	12:35-1:25	456 Ferrier
Friday	2:35-3:25	SH 688, Room 491
Friday	3:35-4:25	SH 688, Room 451

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](#). I take plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty seriously and will not hesitate to refer cases of suspected plagiarism to the Associate Dean.

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 laptops and mobile computing devices (even when the devices are offline and used exclusively for note-taking). For your own educational benefit, I strongly urge you to leave laptops and tablets 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/MyAccess](#) (514)398-6009.

Class Schedule

S 6 Introduction

Part 1: The Political Economy of Domination

S 11 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Manifesto of the Communist Party" (1848) [parts I-II only]

S 13 Karl Marx, "Value, Price, and Profit" (1865) [skim sections I-V and read rest closely]

S 18 Michael Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital* (2012), chs. 1-3

Part 2: The Revolutionary Legacy

S 20 No class.

Read China Miéville, *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution* (2017), pp. 1-38

S 25 Rosa Luxemburg: "Reform or Revolution" (1900)

How to write a political theory paper

S 27 Peter Kropotkin, "From 'Representative Government'" (1885) "The Division of Labour" (1892)

Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For" (1910)

David Graeber, "The New Anarchists" (2002)

O 2 Vladimir I. Lenin, "Our Immediate Task" (1899) "The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement" (1900)

"What Is To Be Done?" (1902) "To the Rural Poor" (1903) "Socialism and War" (1915) "The Revolutionary Proletariat and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" (1915)

O 4 China Miéville, *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution* (2017), pp. 39-141

First Paper DUE

O 9 Thanksgiving

O 11 No class.

Read China Miéville, *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution* (2017), pp. 142-255

O 16 China Miéville, *October: The Story of the Russian Revolution* (2017), pp. 256-320

Part 3: The State Apparatus

O 18 Vladimir I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (1917), chs. 1-3

O 23 Frantz Fanon, "On Violence" and "Conclusion" (1961)

O 24 6:05-8:05 pm EDUC 620 (Note unusual time and place)

Screening of Alanis Obomsawin, [Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance](#) (1993), 119 mins

If you cannot attend the screening, watch the film on your own before October 25

O 25 Discussion of Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993)

- O 30 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935) , pp. 210-223, 229-247, 257-264, 275-276
- N 1 Ranajit Guha, "Colonialism in South Asia: A Dominance Without Hegemony" (1997)

Part 4: Contemporary Crisis: Political Economy of Neoliberalism

- N 6 Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy, "The Historical Dynamics of Hegemony" (2011)
Endnotes Collective, "[Misery and Debt](#)" (2010)
Second Paper DUE
- N 8 Michael Heinrich, "Crisis" (2012)
Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, pp. 17-45
- N 13 Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, pp. 175-222
- N 15 Vladimir I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (1917), ch. 5
Wolfgang Streeck, "How Will Capitalism End?" (2014)

Part 5: Contemporary Crisis: Racism and the State

- N 20 Jasper Bernes and Joshua Clover, "[The Ends of the State](#)" (2014)
- N 22 Jason E. Smith, "[Let Us Be Terrible: Considerations on the Jacobin Club](#)" (2016)
Joshua Clover, "A Theory of Riot" (2016)
- N 27 Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (2016), Intro, chs. 1-2
- N 29 Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (2016), chs. 3-5
- D 4 Keeanga-Yamahatta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (2016), chs. 6-7
- D 6 Endnotes Collective, "[Communisation and Value-Form Theory](#)" (2010)
Third Paper DUE