

Political Science 2060
Human Futures: Introduction to Political Theory
Spring 2021

Instructor: Riley Valentine

Pronouns: they/them/theirs

Office: 328 Stubbs Hall

Class Time: M/W/F 11:20-12:30

Office Hours: Tu/Th 2:30-3:30

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Section One: Whose Futures?

The first section will begin with an analysis of Philip K. Dick, Aristotle, Hobbes, the Federalists, Antifederalists, and Frantz Fanon. We will examine *who* do they see being a political actor. How does this person shape political futures? We will investigate the political animal as one who is immanently human.

Memos and Questions due: February 1, February 19

All readings for this section are available on moodle.

No class January 20

Reading Schedule:

January 13-January 22: Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*

Topics: Transhumanism; mortality; what it means to be human in the age of technology

January 25-January 29: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, II, IV

Topics: The good; justice; virtues; what is a good life

February 3-5: Hobbes *Leviathan* Ch. 13-15

Topics: Politics and order; rationality as opposed to anarchism; fear of life or fear of death

February 8-10: Federalist No. 10, 84

Topics: Procedural democracy; technocracy; factions; view of wealth/poverty

February 12-17: Antifederalist, Brutus No. 1, DeWitt 2

February 24: Fanon, "On Violence"

Topic: What does it mean to be colonized; violence of creation

February 26: Fanon, "Weakness and Spontaneity"

Topics: Political liberation; independence and suffering

March 1: Fanon – National Consciousness

Topics: Dangers of nationalism

March 3: Fanon – National Culture

Topics: Power and trust; who protects rights and who gives them up; comparison of human nature with the Federalists; skepticism of power

Section Two: Building New Worlds from This One

The second half of this semester we will investigate power – where is it, how do we identify it, and where do we go from contemporary structures of power. To do this, we will use Chomsky, Foucault, and Brown to identify power. We will use Tronto, and Quifan to imagine alternative futures.

Memos and Questions Due: March 29, April 23

Final Question Day: April 26

Final Paper Due: May 9

March 5: Foucault, Chapter 1

Topics: Truth as collective; Chomsky and Foucault's conceptions of human nature; justice; who holds power

March 8: Foucault, Chapter 2-3

Topics: Innate capacity to see the truth; American ideology as cohesive; the role of students in politics; history and political science.

March 10: Foucault, Chapter 4, 6

Topics: Creation of knowledge; ideology in everyday life; biopolitics

March 15: Brown, Chapter 1-2

Topic: Democracy and neoliberalism; depoliticization of politics

March 17: Brown, Chapter 2-4

Topics: *Homo economicus*; neoliberalism as a governmentality; change in governance

March 19: Brown, Chapter 5-Epilogue

Topics: Social and political impacts of neoliberalism; education no longer educative; returning to Aristotle's notion of human being

March 31: Tronto, Introduction-Chapter 2

Topics: The values of care; history of care ethics

April 5: Tronto, Chapter 3-4

Topics: Traditional ethics as a system that privileges the privileged; care as a disposition and a practice

April 7: Tronto, Chapter 5-6

Topics: Problems of care; Care ethics as a political framework

April 9: Quifan, Chapter 1-3

Topics: Globalization of waste; environmentalism as care

April 12: Quifan, Chapter 4-7

Topics: Sinophobia and labor

April 14: Quifan, Chapter 8-11

Topics: A politics of revenge; tribalism vs globalization

April 16: Quifan, Chapter 12-15

Topics: Class divisions; technological futures

April 19: Quifan, Chapter 16-18

Topics: Transcending politics of revenge

April 21: Quifan, Chapter 19-Epilogue

Topics: Corporate politics; healthcare and class

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course is designed to introduce you to important political theorists, who have helped shaped our conception of politics. Much of political theory is a grappling with mortality, as beings who die, we seek to make a life that matters. This course will examine mortality from the lens of overcoming death to violence and death as inevitable. We will use these texts to examine how politics engages with death. The texts span from Frantz Fanon, who argued that Algeria could only free itself through violent revolution, to Philip K. Dick's exploration of what makes human life human through science fiction. The political realm is one in which we grapple with ideas over whether some lives should be prioritized, and how we can transcend our lifespans. In a world in which we want to live forever, who lives?

This class is meant to encourage you to think about how we encounter political contention of life and death in our lives, both politically and socially. My goal is that this class will help you to think critically about the world in which we live. In keeping with this outlook, we will approach the books analytically and hope to engage in the world with a more critical lens. In order to develop this lens, we will discuss the texts each class period with the intention of understanding these theorists' conception of political society, and within that political society who we are as political actors.

Texts

Chomsky and Foucault, *The Chomsky Foucault Debate*

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Chen Qiufan, *Waste Tide*

Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*

Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos*

All other texts are available on Moodle

Grading

The class is out of 1000 points.

1 paper (500 points)

4 book memos (200 points)

4 discussion days (150 points)

5 question assignments (150 points)

A+= 100-97/ A= 96-93/ A-=92-90

B+= 89-87/ B= 86-83/ B-= 82-80

C+= 79-77/ C=76-73/ C-=72-70

D+= 69-67/ D= 66-63/ D-= 62-60

F= 59 and below

Assignments

Your final paper must be 4-6 double spaced pages using Times New Roman 12 pt. font double-spaced. All citations should be in Chicago format. The paper must have a works cited page, also in Chicago format.

Throughout the semester students will be asked to write a one-page double spaced memo on four of the texts. Failure to follow the formatting guidelines will result in an immediate letter grade deduction. The memo should cover *one* premise the author examines. You should use these memos to think about which book you will want to write. For example, you could investigate Hobbes' usage of love as a passion, and what that means for a society founded on controlling passions.

This semester is discussion focused. At the end of our reading of the text, we will have discussion days in which students bring a question on the text that we will discuss as a class. On those days there will be no lecture; we will only discuss your questions.

A good question is directed and motivated by the text. You can also address what aspect of a thinker's argument do you question, and in that you must elaborate on why, using the text. Student examples of both memos and questions are available on moodle.

Your discussion questions are due 11:00am on discussion days. Your memos are due 11:59pm on discussion days.

Your final paper is due May 9th. The paper will be a critical analysis of one of the texts read in class. You will address one point that the author raises on the idea of mortality, death, and human being; you are required to examine the author's argument. This is done by taking a subject that the author raises and using quotations to discuss their argumentation.

The paper should not use personal pronouns such as "I"; it should use formal language. Using contractions and symbols such as "&" are informal and will be graded as such. The paper is intended to examine the text critically. There will be a letter grade deduction for not following the format guidelines. We will have numerous chances to discuss the paper throughout the semester, and I am available throughout the semester to discuss and read drafts.

Classroom Policies

Due to the classroom size, the course focuses on in-class discussion. Students are required to write memos on four of the readings. During discussion of the texts, students will be expected to have at least one question prepared for classroom discussion. The question must be on what we covered in the period from the last discussion. Please bring a typed copy of your question to class as an indication of being present. I expect students to be respectful to one another during class. Students should not interrupt one another and should be willing to fully hear another student's argument, whether or not they agree with one another.

Students are expected to attend every class. You have three excused absences, and two unexcused absences.

The question assignments cannot be made up, so it is in your best interest to attend class. If you experience an exceptional problem regarding your classroom attendances makeup assignments are available.

Regular attendance and keeping up with the readings are necessary to do well in the class.

Technology is more than welcome in the classroom. However, if you are going to use a laptop, you must sit at the back of the class to avoid distracting other students. If you need to sit to the front of the class for any reason, we can discuss this.