

POLSCI 609 (Winter 2007)

# Contemporary Continental Political Philosophy

Lars Rensmann

The University of Michigan  
Department of Political Science  
Haven Hall  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1045

Course:  
Tue 4am – 6pm  
...Hall

Office Hours:  
Tue, Thu 2 – 3.30pm  
7719 Haven Hall  
Phone: 734-936-0089  
e-mail: rensmann@umich.edu

## Course Description

The course will provide an in-depth introduction to central themes, approaches, and issues of contemporary, 20<sup>th</sup> century Continental/European political philosophy. It explores the distinct traditions of modern continental political thought, the philosophers' often "critical" take on the sphere of politics and on (political) modernity (in both a Kantian and a Marxian sense), and their relation to the history of ideas. The course especially examines the distinct continental relationship between political and social theory, and the way different theorists address their interrelatedness and boundaries. We will also particularly focus on the ways in which political power, order, modernity, and transformation are conceived and judged. Authors figuring most prominently are Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Carl Schmitt, Hannah Arendt, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida.

## Prerequisites

Graduate Standing. May not be repeated for credit.

## Readings (to be purchased)

Max Horkheimer/Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976)

Carl Schmitt, The Concept of the Political (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

Hannah Arendt, Crises of the Republic (New York: Harvest, 1972)

Hannah Arendt, On Revolution (Penguin Classics, 2006)

Antonio Gramsci, The Antonio Gramsci Reader (New York: New York University Press, 2000)

Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge and Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-

1977 (New York: Pantheon, 1980)

Jacques Derrida, The Politics of Friendship (New York: Verso, 2006)

Jürgen Habermas, The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998)

All other/additional readings will be compiled in a course pack, to be picked up at EXCEL on South University, across the street from GOOD TIME CHARLY'S.

## **Course Requirements**

Students are expected to attend all sessions. Readings must be completed in advance. In this graduate seminar, the primary requirement consists of two small research papers, each of them 10-12 pages, one to be handed in during the term and one to be handed in at the end of the term. Each paper will account for 40% of the grade. In addition, every student will have to provide a short presentation on authors or selected text material. Together with active class participation, this accounts for 20% of the final grade. Students must fulfill all course requirements to receive a grade in this course.

## **Syllabus: Readings and Weekly Topics**

**January 9:** *Making Sense of Contemporary Continental Political Philosophy: Introduction to the Course*

Introductory Lecture

**January 16:** *Theodor W. Adorno & Max Horkheimer, the Hegelian-Marxist Legacy, and the Critique of Modernity & Liberalism*

Readings: Theodor W. Adorno/Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment (Introduction, pp. 3-81), Karl Marx, The Fetishism of the Commodity and its Secret, in Marx, Capital: Volume 1. Critique of Political Economy (...:Penguin Classics, 1992), pp. 163-177

**January 23:** *Theodor W. Adorno: Negative Dialectics and Politics*

Readings: Theodor W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics (New York: Continuum, 1973), pp.3-57; Theodor W. Adorno, Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life (New York: Verso, 1978) (excerpts).

**February 6:** *Carl Schmitt's Notion of the Political and his Critique of Liberal Democracy & Parliamentarism*

Readings: Carl Schmitt, The Concept of the Political (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Schmitt, The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000) (excerpts)

**February 13:** *Beyond Marx and Schmitt: Hannah Arendt on Power, Violence, and the Revival of Democratic Politics*

Readings: Hannah Arendt, On Violence, in Arendt, Crises of the Republic

**February 20:** *Constituting the Good Republic: Hannah Arendt on Revolution*  
Readings: Hannah Arendt, On Revolution, pp.

**February 27: SPRING BREAK**

**March 6:** *Antonio Gramsci and the Concept of Political Hegemony*  
Readings: Antonio Gramsci, The Antonio Gramsci Reader (excerpts)

**FIRST RESEARCH PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CLASS PERIOD**

**March 13:** *Michel Foucault and the Question of Power & Governmentality*  
Readings: Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge and Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977 (excerpts)

**March 20:** *Jacques Derrida, Difference, and the Post-Structural Turn in Political Thought*  
Readings: Jacques Derrida, The Politics of Friendship (New York: Verso, 2006) (Excerpts)

**March 27:** *Jürgen Habermas and the Deliberative/Communicative Turn in Political Theory*  
Readings: Jürgen Habermas, Conceptions of Modernity, in Habermas, The Postnational Constellation; Habermas, Three Normative Models of Democracy, in Habermas, The Inclusion of the Other; Habermas, On the Internal Relation between Law and Democracy, in Habermas, The Inclusion of the Other

**April 3:** *In Defense of Constitutional Democracy: Jürgen Habermas and Political Theory beyond the Nation-State*  
Readings: Jürgen Habermas, The Nation, the Rule of Law, and Democracy, in Habermas, The Inclusion of the Other; Habermas, Kant's Idea of Perpetual Peace: At Two Hundred Years' Historical Remove, in Habermas, The Inclusion of the Other

**April 10:** *Continental Political Philosophy Revisited/Paper Presentations*  
Readings: TBA

**April 17:** *Wrapping Up: Paper Presentations and Concluding Discussion*  
Readings TBA

**SECOND RESEARCH PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CLASS PERIOD**