

## **JUNIOR COLLOQUIUM: CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY**

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**CSS 371**

Spring 2023

M/W 2:50-4:10 PM | Fisk 305

*Professor Nina Hagel (she/hers)*

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Office hours 318 High Street, Room 102, or on zoom

Sign up at [calendly.com/ninahagel](https://calendly.com/ninahagel)

*Version Jan 11, 2023 – subject to minor revisions*

This course surveys some of the prominent texts and major themes in contemporary political theory, from WWII to today. The course is arranged according to three problematics: justice and the liberal order, freedom, and race.

We will consider a range of problems, including the nature of modern power; the contested character of democracy, equality and liberty; the relationship between political, social, and economic life; the problem of the emancipation and enfranchisement of marginal or subordinated groups; and some of the subterranean forces that contour political life and motivate its inhabitants. We will also be attentive to the ways these texts sketch a relationship between democracy, empire and colonialism. Still, these texts are so intellectually rich and vast that you will undoubtedly be drawn to themes in addition to those listed above, and you are welcome to raise and develop these interests during the course.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

All of the texts can be found in the course reader, which you must purchase and bring to class. As of now, I am not asking you to purchase any texts for class beyond the course reader.

You **must** read the text before class. Class time is not meant to summarize the content of the text, but rather, to interpret, analyze, and think deeply about the text. While I expect that you will have questions about these texts, the questions should be based on having already read the text.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify, explain and contrast different concepts that arise in contemporary political thought;
- Identify, assess, and construct different interpretations of texts in political theory;
- Deploy these different concepts in order to interpret and analyze concrete political problems;
- Advance and justify written and spoken arguments with robust textual evidence.

### **REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS**

**Mask Policy:** Masks are required in class until future notice.

**Assignments:** This course requires regular attendance, weekly posts to the Moodle forum, a midterm, two papers, occasional reflective writing, and a presentation.

*Midterm.* The midterm will be held in class on March 1<sup>st</sup> to test your comprehension of the readings.

*Papers.* You will write two short papers concerning a theoretical question that arises from the class. Paper one will focus on using a thinker to analyze an instance of freedom or unfreedom in the world. Paper two will focus on putting two theorists in conversation with one another.

*Moodle Posts.* Every week, you must post a discussion question to the Moodle forum. Your discussion question must: (1) spend one paragraph isolating the argument or idea you want to focus on, situating it in the text, and reconstructing it; (2) spend a second paragraph developing a critique, question, or insight that follows from what you've just reconstructed. The questions should engage a central claim (rather than a peripheral one), and avoid trying to summarize the entire book. Posts are due 10 AM the day of class. (To be clear, you must post *before* our meeting time)

Responses are graded credit, late, or no credit, based on conforming to the above standards. A Late grade gets converted to No Credit if it is more than 5 days late. Grades are posted on the gradebook function of Moodle. (Go to the menu on the left-hand side >> click grades >> click user report).

*Reflection responses.* These are graded CR/U and are about 500 words each. They are a chance to take stock of your own progress and thinking. In the first reflection, you will write about which concept or argument you have found the most compelling and why. In the second reflection, you will answer a series of questions about your paper and writing process. In the third reflection, you will answer a series of questions about your own development as a political theorist throughout this class.

*Pecha Kucha presentation.* You will create and upload a 7-minute presentation summarizing the arguments in readings for the day. This is due 48 hours after the end of the class in which the reading is discussed. (5 PM Weds or Friday) See the last page of the syllabus for the presentation schedule. More detailed instructions will be posted to Moodle.

**Grades:** Course grades will be assigned based on the following distribution:

*Class attendance / participation* – ongoing, 20%

*Midterm* – held Mar 1, 15%

*Paper 1* – “problem focused” paper on freedom, due Apr 19, 20%

*Paper 2* – “thinker-focused” paper on race, due May 16, 20%

*Moodle posts*– weekly posts, ongoing (CR/U), 10%

*Reflection responses* – occasional reflection pieces, (CR/U), 5%

*Pecha Kucha presentation* – deadlines vary, 10%

Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 a grade for every 24 hours late.

All assignments must be completed and receive a passing grade in order to pass the course.

Any major assignment more than 10 days late will trigger a UPR to your class dean and advisor.

**Electronics:** No laptops, phones or electronic readers (including iPads or Kindles). The only exception is if you have a note from the accessibility office. I find that electronics inhibit rather than enhance classroom discussions. To enforce this: if I catch you texting or checking your phone in class, I won't say anything, but will deduct 25% from your participation grade that day.

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation are both required. There are different ways you can participate—by posing and answering questions in the large group conversations, by contributing to discussion in your small-group, by adding to the questions in the small-group google docs sheet, and by posing follow up questions and responses on the Moodle forum. Because I care that we all participate, and because I am genuinely curious about what you think, I will regularly *cold call* you (without warning) during the semester.

Anything more than two unexcused absences will significantly impact your participation grade. Four unexcused absences will trigger an Unsatisfactory Progress Report to your advisor and dean. Six unexcused absences will result in failing the course.

**Reading:** Again, it is absolutely essential to read the text before class. While I don't expect you to have understood everything, I expect that you have read the text and given it your best effort. The texts we are reading must be read with care in order to be understood and learned from. They cannot be skimmed, speed-read or read when exhausted. The thinkers and ideas build on one another, and so if you do not keep up with the reading schedule, you will be lost during the class. Carve out time in your schedule to reading them.

**Office hours:** I post regular office hours at [calendly.com/ninahagel](https://calendly.com/ninahagel). If these times don't work for you, please reach out and we can find another time. As a rule of thumb, I prefer to discuss administrative matters via email and substantive matters synchronously over zoom.

Why come to office hours? You can ask further questions, deepen your knowledge of course material, discuss paper ideas, connect the themes of the course to your other intellectual interests and pursuits, and discuss your progress in the course. I especially encourage you to meet with me if you have any reservations about participating in class, or if there is anything happening inside or outside of class that is impacting your learning experience.

**Zoom policy:** My default is not to turn on zoom unless I know that a student has a medical reason for not attending. You must email me *four hours* in advance to ask for the zoom link.

**The “hidden curriculum”:** There are a lot of unwritten skills, knowledge and rules that you need to learn in order to succeed at Wes—things like how to cultivate relationships with professors and peers, how to handle setbacks, what resources and opportunities Wes has, cultural norms (e.g. stating your preferred pronouns). Sometimes it's hard to know where to get this information or even *what* information we need to get. Learning the hidden curriculum might be tricky if you don't already have trusted people who've attended a school like Wes. If this sounds like you, I'd be happy to talk to you more in office hours about what these norms are.

**Academic Integrity:** At its simplest, academic integrity means that the work you submit must be your own unless collaboration is specifically allowed, that you use only those resources allowed; that you express yourself in your own words unless you are quoting, and that you properly acknowledge and cite the ideas, information, and other work that you used or that contributed to your understanding.

Your academic work is governed by Wesleyan's Honor Code, found [here](#), and by any additional standards I set in the syllabus or in individual assignments. The Honor Code provides a fuller discussion of academic integrity and definitions of plagiarism, misuse of sources, and cheating. You are responsible for reading the Honor Code carefully and abiding by its terms.

Violations of academic integrity are serious and can result in severe consequences at both the course and college levels. If I suspect a violation of the code, I cannot impose a sanction of my own—I *must* refer you to the Honor Board. Procedures for suspected violations are explained [here](#).

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021 or can be reached by email ([accessibility@wesleyan.edu](mailto:accessibility@wesleyan.edu)) or phone (860-685-2332).

**Religious/Spiritual Observance Resources:** If you anticipate that your religious/spiritual observance may conflict with academic obligations such as attending class, taking examinations, or submitting assignments, you can work directly with your professor to make reasonable arrangements. Should you require additional support or guidance, please feel free to reach out to Rabbi David Teva, Director of the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at [dleipziger@wesleyan.edu](mailto:dleipziger@wesleyan.edu) or any of the chaplains in the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at <https://www.wesleyan.edu/orsl/index.html>. For a list of a religious holidays celebrated by members of the Wesleyan community, go to Wesleyan's Multifaith calendar which can be found at: <https://www.wesleyan.edu/orsl/multifaith-calendar.html>.

**Title IX Resources:** If trauma inhibits your ability to fully participate in class, please contact Debbie Colucci, Title IX Coordinator, at [dcolucci@wesleyan.edu](mailto:dcolucci@wesleyan.edu), or your class dean. Additionally, and if you are comfortable, you can work directly with your professor to make reasonable arrangements.

**Additional Resources:**

The [Writing Workshop](#) provides resources to help you develop as writers.

The [peer advising program](#) works individually with students to provide peer advice regarding topics such as time management, organization, study strategies, and many other academic skills.

[Peer tutors](#) provide supplementary course-content instruction for students who request them. Peer tutoring is provided free of charge; students can receive up to two hours of tutoring each week per course.