

SYLLABUS

Philosophy 470 B1/Political Science 404 B1: *Topics in Social and Political Philosophy/ Topics in Political Philosophy*

Winter Semester 2013, W 1000-1250, Assiniboia Hall 2-02A

<http://cressidaheyess.com/students/phil470pols404>

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Office hours: Friday 1115-1300 starting January 11 and ending April 5 (no office hours on February 22). Also by appointment.

Policy about course outlines can be found in §23.4(2) of the University *Calendar*.

This syllabus is only available on-line as a PDF at <http://cressidaheyess.com/students/PHIL470POLS404>. It may be amended to correct errors, or to make minor additions or changes as the course progresses with consent of students registered in the course; subsequent editions of the syllabus will be posted alongside the original.

The most recent version of the syllabus is binding.

“Every course outline must include an indication of how students will be given access to past or representative evaluative course material” (GFC 23.4). As this course does not include an exam, this regulation is not applicable.

Course description

If politics is “the study of relations of power,” then it seems clear that bodies—as the locus of the exercise of numerous power relations—are appropriate objects of political analysis. Yet much of the progressive literature on “the politics of the body” continues to treat bodies *as* objects (even while being critical of objectification). This course has a very specific intellectual aim: to examine the body as a political object *and* subject; to simultaneously investigate how bodies are rendered into objects to be acted on politically, and to consider lived experience or the first-personal perspective relevant to that investigation.

On the one hand, Michel Foucault’s “genealogical” work on docile bodies (most centrally in *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Sexuality Volume 1*) provides one rich model for understanding how bodies emerge as the site of disciplinary and biopolitical power. However, his views have been notoriously vulnerable to the criticism that he treats subjectivity as a product of discourse and is unable to conceptualize political agency, or attribute any value to lived experience. On the other hand, phenomenology—a philosophical tradition that studies consciousness from a first-personal perspective—takes more seriously than perhaps any other the epistemic value of the subject’s own point of view. Contemporary existential phenomenology (perhaps especially feminist phenomenology) is less invested in identifying the essence of conscious awareness than its intellectual originators, and more attuned to its own location within historical and cultural horizons. Nonetheless, phenomenological writing is persistently open to the charge that it is excessively subjective and apolitical.

This course takes place, then, at the place where these two approaches come together and clash or complement each other. It interweaves the philosophical and the political in an attempt to think big about bodies as objects of political contestation, while taking seriously the political potential of embodied lived experience (the body as *Leib*) and without always reducing “the body” to *Körper* (inanimate, an object, or simply a product of some larger political structure). We’ll read two books that exemplify each approach: Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, and Drew Leder’s *The Absent Body*. In the second half of term we’ll look at a variety of more specific real-world contexts where these two philosophical methods are played out in radical political debates. Topics to be covered include prisons, feminine body comportment, sexual experience, racial embodiment, the politics of veiling, and queerness.

Reading

There are two books required for this course, both available at SUB Bookstore:

Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Vintage, 1977).

All other readings (for the second half of term) are articles or chapters. The reading averages two articles of 15-20 pages per week; there are a couple of weeks when we’ll read three articles, and these will require a bit of extra time spent reading. Careful preparation for class activities and discussion is expected. Give yourself time to get, print (if necessary), and read the texts. If you find yourself perplexed by the level of detail at which the readings are discussed, or unable to recall the content of arguments you’ve read when we analyse them in class, you may not be reading well. Look at the guidelines posted on the course website.

Schedule

Class will meet from January 9 to April 3 every Wednesday 1000-1250, with the exception of Wednesday February 20 (reading week). There is no class on April 10 but we will have one informal evening meeting in lieu towards the end of term at a mutually convenient time to be arranged. Please make every effort to arrive on time for class and please do not leave early unless you have an unavoidable reason on a particular day. 100% attendance and active participation is the norm for a seminar, so please let me know if you will miss a particular week for reasons of illness, family emergency etc.

Evaluation

- 15% of grade for participation in all aspects of the seminar.
- 60% of grade for motivating and posing four critical questions about an assigned reading throughout the term. (250 words each, submitted over e-mail by 5pm the evening before the class in which the reading is discussed.)
- 25% for a seminar paper due April 5. (To be returned by April 23.)
- Optional: rewrite your paper based on my feedback for a grade increase. If the revised version is an improvement, you'll get the higher grade. (If it's worse, your grade won't go down!). Due by April 30.

Advice, expectations, and standards for grading for each evaluated component of the course will be discussed in class and posted on the course website.

If you have any concerns about your ability to meet the course requirements, or if you need any accommodations due to a disability, don't hesitate to contact me *as early in the term as possible*.

If something goes terribly wrong in your life, avoid at all costs skipping class, not handing your work in or doing it really badly, and then showing up in April when you realize a poor grade is inevitable to plead your case. If you explain yourself as soon as possible it is much easier to sympathize and help you avoid penalties.

Policy on academic dishonesty:

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

See:

<http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour/303OffencesUndertheCode/3032InappropriateAcademicBehav.aspx>

Class-by-class schedule

Week 1: January 9: Introduction to the course

Reading: Drew Leder, "A Tale of Two Bodies: The Cartesian Corpse and the Lived Body"

Podcast: Anne Phillips on ownership and the body

Part I: Frameworks

Week 2: January 16: Bodies and phenomenological method I

Reading: Drew Leder, *The Absent Body*, pp. 1-68.

NB: January 18 is drop/add deadline.

Week 3: January 23: Bodies and phenomenological method II

Reading: Drew Leder, *The Absent Body*, pp. 69-106 + 126-148 [note that pages 138-148 draw on the material we read in Week 1].

Week 4: January 30: from phenomenology to Foucault

Reading: Todd May, "Foucault's Relation to Phenomenology"

Discipline and Punish, pp. 3-31.

Week 5: February 6: Docile bodies

Reading: *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 135-194

Week 6: February 13: Disciplinary and bio-power

Reading: *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 195-228 + 293-308.

History of Sexuality Volume 1, pp. 15-49 + 135-159 (as time permits)

Week 7: February 20: READING WEEK

Part II: Applications

Week 8: February 27: Prisons

Reading: Lisa Guenther, "Beyond Dehumanization: A Post-Humanist Critique of Solitary Confinement."

Sarah Pemberton, "Neoliberal Prisons: Revisiting *Discipline and Punish* in the 21st Century."

Week 9: March 6: "Feminine" body comportment

Sandra Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power."

Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality."

Dianne Chisholm, "Climbing Like a Girl: An Exemplary Adventure in Feminist Phenomenology."

Week 10: March 13: Sexual experience

Reading: Linda Alcoff, "Dangerous Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Pedophilia."

Linda Alcoff, "Phenomenology, Poststructuralism, and Feminist Theory on the Concept of Experience." [NB: that these two articles by Alcoff overlap quite a bit]

Johanna Oksala, "Sexual Experience: Foucault, Phenomenology, and Feminist Theory."

NB: March 15 is the last day to withdraw without academic penalty

Week 11: March 20: Queer phenomenology

Sara Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology."

Gayle Salamon, "Boys of the Lex: Transgenderism and Rhetorics of Materiality."

Week 12: March 27: Race

Ladelle McWhorter, "Racism and Biopower"

Linda Alcoff, "Toward a Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment."

Week 13: April 3: Racialized/gendered bodies

Gayle Salamon, "'The Place Where Life Hides Away': Merleau-Ponty, Fanon, and the Location of Bodily Being."

Alia Al-Saji, "The Racialization of Muslim Veils: A Philosophical Analysis."

[optional] Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled."