

COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEORY

GLST.7132

Prof. Emma Rodman
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Office: Dugan Hall 201K
Office hours: Thursday 1-2 pm (in person); Wednesday 3-4 pm (on zoom)
Course website: TBD
Seminar meeting: Thursdays from 3:30-6:20 pm in Dugan 104

Course Description

This course aims to introduce students to substantive topics in political theory at a global scale as well as to the main methodological issues that arise when we do research in something often called “comparative political theory.” Globalization has exposed not only the shortcomings and blind spots of traditional Western political theory, but also the violence, dispossession, and oppression which have undergirded the development of political communities in the modern world. Given this heritage, what might truly comparative and global political theory look like?

This course explores an expanded canon of texts and authors, some traditional to Western political thought and some largely unread within that tradition, in order to guide students as they frame their own vision of global political thinking. No prior expertise in political theory or political and social philosophy is assumed.

Course Outline

We begin with the beginning: what is political theory? What kinds of questions and research methods do political theorists employ? What is comparative political theory, and how does it challenge traditional understandings and methods of political theory?

Thus armed, we turn to a substantive engagement with a selection of both canonical and non-canonical texts. In a one semester course, it is not possible to engage either with the full canon of political thought nor with the substantial and growing literature that has, in various ways, a more comparative and global bent. Instead, we read selections from both camps which are focused around a few political themes: social contract theory, equality and freedom, power and the state, and citizenship.

We close by considering the new methodological difficulties raised by the pursuit of a more global or comparative political theory, as well as how a comparative or global approach to theory prompts reflection on the very parameters of what counts as “political.”

Evaluation and Grading

Participation (20%): Prior to each course meeting, you are expected to upload a one paragraph response to some element of the readings for the week. This should not include summary, but should instead be a critical reflection or questions about some element of the readings which can guide both the discussion leader as well as your own engagement in seminar. You are also expected to participate actively in seminar discussion, and to miss no more than one seminar meeting during the semester.

Discussion Leadership (15%): You will be assigned a leadership role for one or more class meetings (depending on enrollment). You will present major themes and questions in a 10 minute presentation at the start of class, drawing on both your own readings and on the posts of other students. This presentation should not be a

summary but rather a critical and synthetic framing of the readings to help jumpstart discussion. You will also turn in a 2-4 page response paper (essentially, a write up of your presentation).

Paper Proposal (15%): You are required to write up a preliminary discussion of your final paper argument and post it to Blackboard. This may take any form that is most useful to you (a rough draft, an outline, a research design, a proposal, etc.). You will be graded pass/fail (i.e., if you turn in the assignment, you will receive full points). You are encouraged to read and offer comments on one another's materials, but it is not required that you do so. After my review of your written proposals and any peer comments offered by your colleagues, I will meet with you (likely via Zoom) to approve your topic as well as discuss how to refine your argument and approach before you begin writing the final paper.

Final Paper (50%): The final paper should be an 8,000-10,000 word paper on an approved topic which takes the form of a draft journal article for a political theory or theory-sympathetic journal.

Course Schedule

* = reading available on course website

Note: I suggest you read the readings in the order that I list them in the syllabus

Sept. 1 – Introduction and syllabus review

Sept. 8 – What is political theory?

Introduction, *Oxford Handbook of Political Theory* (only pgs. 3-26)*

Wolin, Sheldon. 1969. "Political Theory as a Vocation." *The American Political Science Review*. 63 (4): 1062–82.*

Berlin, Isaiah. "Does Political Theory Still Exist?" In *Concepts and Categories*. 2014. 2nd Edition.*

Galston, William. 2010. "Realism in political theory." *European Journal of Political Theory*. 9 (4): 385–411.*

Sept. 15 – What is comparative political theory?

McWilliams, Susan. 2014. *Traveling Back: Toward a Global Political Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. "Introduction."

March, Andrew. 2009. "What Is Comparative Political Theory?" *The Review of Politics*. 71 (4): 531–565.

Dallmayr, Fred. 2004. "Beyond Monologue: For a Comparative Political Theory." *Perspectives on Politics*. 2: 249–257.

Euben, Roxanne. 1997. "Comparative Political Theory: An Islamic Fundamentalist Critique of Rationalism." *The Journal of Politics*. 59 (1): 28–55

Sept. 22 – Methods and approaches in comparative political thought

Jenco, Leigh Kathryn. 2007. "What Does Heaven Ever Say? A Methods-centered Approach to Cross-cultural Engagement." *The American Political Science Review*. 101 (4): 741-755.

Gray, S., 2016. "Cross-Cultural Intelligibility and the Use of History: From Democracy and Liberalism to Indian Rajanikal Thought." *The Review of Politics*, 78(2), pp.251–283.

El Amine, Loubna. 2016. "Beyond East and West: Reorienting Political Theory through the Prism of Modernity." *Perspectives On Politics*. 14 (1): 102–120.

Gordon, Jane Anna. 2014. *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon*, New York: Fordham University Press. "Introduction"

Recommended:

Stam, R. & Shohat, E., 2009. "Transnationalizing Comparison: The Uses and Abuses of Cross-Cultural Analogy." *New Literary History*, 40(3), pp.473–499.

Bonura, Carlo. 2013. "Theorizing Elsewhere: Comparison and Topological Reasoning in Political Theory." *Polity*, 45(1), pp.34–55.

Sept. 29 – Social contract theory

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Ch. 13-14, 17-18, 21.
Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*. Ch. 1-5, 7-15, 18-19.
Rousseau, Jean Jacques. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*.

Oct. 6 – Social contract theory, cont.

Mills, Charles. *The Racial Contract*. “Overview”
Pateman, Carole. *The Sexual Contract*. Ch. 1.
Graeber, David and David Wengrow. *The Dawn of Everything*. Ch. 1-2.
Kropotkin, Petyr. “Mutual Aid.”

Oct. 13 – Equality and freedom

Kant, Immanuel. “What is Enlightenment?”
Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. Ch. 1-4.
Anderson, Elizabeth. “What is the Point of Equality?”
Aristotle, *Politics*. Book III, Ch. 12-13; Book V, Ch. 1; Book 6, Ch. 2-3.

Oct. 20 – Equality and freedom, cont.

Ackerly, Brooke A. 2005. “Is Liberalism the Only Way Toward Democracy? Confucianism and Democracy.” *Political Theory*. 33: 547–557.
Bai, Tongdong. 2019. *Against Political Equality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Selections)
Feldman, Noah. 2002. “Political Equality and the Islamic State.” *Philosophical Topics*. 30 (2): 253–72.
Loos, Tamara. 1998. “Issaraphap: The Limits of Individual Liberty in Thai Jurisprudence.” *Crossroads*, 12:1. 35-75.
Plato, *The Republic*, Book 8: 543a-547a, 557a-558c, 559d-564a

Oct. 27 – Citizenship and membership

Douglass, Frederick. 1855. *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Ch. 18 (“New Relations and Duties”) and Ch. 19 (“The Runaway Plot”)
Douglass, Frederick. 1852. “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”
Rogers, Melvin. 2015. “David Walker and the Political Power of the Appeal.” *Political Theory*. Vol. 43, No. 2. 208-233.
Walker, David. 1829. *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*. (Selections)
Yaure, Philip. 2022 [forthcoming]. “On Plantation Politics: Citizenship and Antislavery Resistance in Douglass’s *My Bondage and My Freedom*.” *Philosophical Studies*.

Nov. 3 – Citizenship and membership, cont.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. (Introduction)
Clifford, James. “Identity in Mashpee.”

Nov. 10 – Power and the state

Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, “Melian Dialogue”
Bodin, Jean. *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, Book I, chapters 1-10
Madison, James. *The Federalist Papers*, #10 and #51
Debate at Valladolid in 1550–1551 between Sepulveda and da las Casas

Nov. 17 – Power and the state, cont.

Foucault, Michel. “Governmentality”
Scott, David. 1995. “Colonial Governmentality.” *Social Text*, no. 43, Autumn, 191–220.
Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. (“On National Culture”)
Césaire, Aimé. 1955. *Discourse on Colonialism*. (Selections)

Week of Thanksgiving break – Final paper proposals due

No class meeting; each student will upload their proposal in advance and is responsible for reading and commenting on all of the others; individual meetings with me via Zoom as needed

Dec. 1 – Challenges in comparative political thought

Rudolph, Susanne Hoeber. 2005. “The Imperialism of Categories: Situating Knowledge in a Globalizing World.” *Perspectives on Politics*. 3 (1).

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 1993. “Thick Translation.” *Callaloo* 16 (4): 808-819.

Mehta, Pratap Bhanu. 2000. “Cosmopolitanism and the Circle of Reason.” *Political Theory*. 28(5): 619-639.

March, Andrew. 2016. “Is there a Paradox of Learning from the Other?: Four Questions and a Proposal.” *The Muslim World*.

Said, Edward. “Traveling Theory.”

Dec. 8 – What counts as the political?

Garner, R., 2017. “Animals and democratic theory: Beyond an anthropocentric account.” *Contemporary Political Theory*. 16 (4): 459–477.

Battistoni, Alyssa, 2017. “Bringing in the Work of Nature.” *Political Theory*. 45 (1).

Kymlicka, W. & Donaldson, S. 2016. “Locating Animals in Political Philosophy.” *Philosophy Compass*, 11(11), pp.692–701.

Nagel, Thomas. “What Is It Like To Be A Bat?”

Dec. 16 – Final Papers due to me via email by 5 pm

Course Details, Policies & Miscellany

Communication

It is important that you check your UML email regularly, as I may send out vital course information via email throughout the semester. If for any reason I need to cancel class, I will communicate via email.

You are welcome to contact me via email for logistical inquiries (such as making appointments). Please use your UML email account for such correspondence. Substantive questions and discussion are very much encouraged but will be reserved for office hours and in-person meetings. My email address is emma_rodman@uml.edu. I make every effort to reply to emails within 48 business hours of receiving them (i.e. if you email me on Monday morning, I'll reply by Wednesday morning; if you email me on Friday evening, you can expect to hear back by Tuesday evening). Please note that this timeline applies even when deadlines loom: i.e. if you have a question about a paper, please be sure to be in touch at least 48 hours before it is due.

Finally, I reserve the right to modify this syllabus over the course of the semester as necessary. Indeed, I anticipate such modifications, and would encourage you not to read too far ahead. I will communicate all such modifications both over email and, when practical, in our seminar meetings.

Office Hours

In fall 2022, my in-person office hours are 1-2 pm on Thursday, and my Zoom office hours are on Wednesday from 3-4 pm. My office is in Dugan Hall in the Political Science Department suite on the second floor of the building (suite 201, office K). You are welcome to request an appointment to meet at an alternative time.

Policy on Technology

Cell phones, tablets, and laptops are strongly discouraged in class. There is a large body of research that demonstrates that taking notes on paper allows for better focus and retention. There is a similarly large body of anecdotal evidence that no one can help watching the activities taking place on the screen of the person sitting next to them. That said, I recognize that many of you use your devices exhaustively for notes (as do I). But: if we happen to see you using your laptop for anything other than seminar materials, you'll be publicly shamed and demoted back to paper and pen for the rest of the semester.

Late Policy

Late work will not be accepted. Exceptions will possibly be made given prompt and (if necessary) documented consultation with the instructor. For full consideration, make sure to correspond with me via email *prior* to a late submission rather than afterwards.

Plagiarism

Do not copy another person's writing or ideas and claim them as your own! Should you engage in any form of academic dishonesty, you will receive a 0.0 for the assignment and a Notification of Academic Dishonesty Form will be filed with the Office of the Provost. University policies and guidelines regarding academic dishonesty and plagiarism can be found at <https://www.uml.edu/catalog/undergraduate/policies/academic-policies/academic-integrity.aspx>

Student Mental Health & Well-Being

These are strange and uncertain times. If you or someone you know are experiencing mental health challenges at UMass Lowell, please contact [Counseling Services](#). My understanding is that they offer free in-person counseling for all students.

Disability Services & Accommodations

If you have a documented disability that will require classroom accommodation, please notify me as soon as possible, so that we might make appropriate arrangements. Please speak to me during office hours or send me an email, as I respect, and want to protect, your privacy. Visit the [Student Disability Services webpage](#) for further information.

If you wish to observe a religious holiday that is not recognized by the University calendar, please let me know in advance, so that I may accommodate your absence from class.

Recordings & Privacy

Massachusetts is a two-party consent state, which means it is illegal to record someone without their permission. To protect everyone's privacy and promote free discussion, audio and video recording of our seminar discussions are prohibited, unless you are registered with Disabilities Services and recording of class sessions is an approved accommodation. In that case, please see me so we can discuss your accommodation and fair use of recordings.