

The Concept of Political Power: Power and Autonomy

POLI 4110.201 (3 credits)
Spring 2024

INSTRUCTORS

Professor Emma Rodman
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Office: Dugan Hall 201K

Office Hours: Tuesdays from 2:30-4:30 pm (zoom) and Wednesdays from 2-3 pm (in-person or zoom), as well as by appointment

GENERAL LOGISTICS

Seminar meeting: Wednesdays 3:30 pm to 6:20 pm in Coburn Hall, Room G30

Blackboard: Readings, the most-up-to-date copy of the syllabus, and essay prompts will be posted

COURSE DESCRIPTION

If much of western liberal political thought has been preoccupied with limiting and structuring the power of the state, then the flip side of that preoccupation has been a corresponding commitment to the idea of individual autonomy. In other words, we limit the power of the state in order to protect the autonomy of the individual, and the state's power is justified only as far as it *enhances* rather than *erodes* our autonomy. This framework – that state power and autonomy operate in direct tension with one another – is a central paradigm of the western liberal political tradition in which we live. We begin the course within this framework, and then move to trouble, complicate, and critique both the concept of individual autonomy and the concept of political power. We will engage with thinkers in the Marxian, critical, existentialist, post-structuralist, and post-colonial theoretical traditions, all of whom think about both power and autonomy in ways that strongly depart from liberalism.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To develop:

- A grounding in the central concepts, arguments, and thinkers who have grappled with the concept of power
- An appreciation for how political theories of power inform the study and practice of politics and political science
- Skills in analytical, interpretive, and reflective writing
- An understanding of the relationship between power and inequality, oppression, violence, and injustice

UNIVERSITY ESSENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES (ELO) DESIGNATIONS

- Written and Oral Communication (WOC)
- Diversity and Cultural Awareness (DCA)

REQUIRED TEXTS

These texts are available for purchase at the campus bookstore in the University Crossing or other bookstores; if you select used copies, you should be able to pick up all three for less than \$40. Please do your best to secure the same edition and publisher; this will ensure that page numbers as well as translation choices remain consistent. Copies of these texts (in the recommended editions) are also on reserve at the library, where they may be checked out in two hour intervals.

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings* (Hackett; 1994)

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Oxford University Press; 2009)

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove Press; 2008)

All other course readings will be posted to the course website on Blackboard. These are marked with a “*” in the course schedule, below.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Your grade in this course will be based on three short (approx. 3 pg. double spaced) response papers, discussion leadership of one class session, one longer paper in lieu of a final exam (8-10 pages double spaced), and various forms of participation in (and prior to) seminar. There are no exams in this course. I will circulate writing prompts for the final paper with more detailed instructions and guidelines approximately three weeks before the due date. Writing assignments and participation will be weighted and due as follows:

Discussion leadership		5%
Response paper 1		10%
Response paper 2		10%
Response paper 3		10%
Final Paper	<i>Due on Blackboard 5/1/24 by 3:30 pm</i>	40%
Participation		25%

Final paper: The final paper will involve a required writing workshop in lieu of one meeting of our seminar. You are required to attend this workshop and to bring three printed copies of a complete rough draft of your essay. If you do not attend or bring the required materials, your essay grade will receive an automatic deduction of 1.0 (i.e. a 4.0 paper will be reduced to a 3.0).

Response papers: You will select three seminar meetings for which you will write a short (about 3 pgs. double spaced) response paper. These papers are due to me at the start of class; please bring a printed and stapled copy and hand to me in person. These papers should provide a short summary of the reading, but the majority of the paper should focus on reflection, criticism, and analysis. You should also close your paper by listing three discussion questions for the class. (Note: you may *not* write a response paper for the class meeting where you are the discussion leader.) These will be graded “High Pass/Pass/Fail”.

Discussion leadership: You will be responsible for leading the discussion for one seminar meeting. You should prepare a short (approximately 10 minute) oral presentation. You should also create a handout with talking points and discussion questions, which you can print and bring to class for your colleagues (ask me if you need help printing). We will assign dates for discussion leadership responsibilities on the first day of class. You should also meet with me in office hours or via Zoom prior to your leadership day

to discuss the content and themes of the reading. During seminar, you and I will co-lead the discussion. There are eleven meetings where students will lead and 18 students; therefore, most seminars will be co-led by two students. If you would particularly prefer not to work with another student, a handful of students will have that opportunity.

Participation: This is a seminar format class, which is likely not be something you've experienced yet at UML. We are all responsible for making the seminar lively and engaging; in short, a success. Thoughtful and sustained participation as an active citizen/member of the seminar is therefore expected and required. Interaction in seminar, attendance at office hours, and performance on any in-class writing or group work all count toward participation. Your participation should demonstrate that you have carefully done the reading, that you are thoughtfully and critically analyzing the texts and ideas presented, and that you can respectfully engage with the views of others who may differ from you. This does not mean you need to understand everything! Effective participation means not only speaking, but also active listening and the asking of thoughtful questions. Students are also expected to complete the assigned readings before lecture, to arrive on time and prepared for seminar and discussion, to adhere to course policies, and to interact respectfully with their fellow students and instructors; failure to do so will seriously hurt your participation grade. Participation is essential; as such, it is worth 25% of your final grade and will be graded aggressively and seriously. If you have any concerns at all about your ability to effectively participate in this course, you should see me immediately so that we can discuss them.

Honors Ready Designation

This course is designated as “Honors Ready,” which means that Honors College students can take the course and receive honors credit for it. To be designated as an honors course, you must complete additional honors material. In my courses, this means that you select an additional work on the theme of the course (in consultation with me) to read closely and you complete a 30-minute Oxford style oral examination on that material. To receive honors credit, you must receive an 85% or better on the oral examination. I am happy to provide a list of texts or discuss possibilities in office hours. In the past, students have selected selections from Malcolm X's autobiography, Jean Paul Sartre's “Existentialism is a Humanism,” Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*, and essays by Audre Lorde, among others.

If you would like to have this course count as an honors course, please send me an email with the text you would like to read or the time you'll come by office hours to talk about your options. Once you decide on a text, we will set an exam date.

Course Schedule

* = reading posted on course website

LIBERALISM

- Wednesday 1/17: Introduction to the course; Political Power, Violence, and Morality
Read: Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (the Melian Dialogue)*
Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation* (selections)*
- Wednesday 1/24: Constraining State Power with Institutional Design and Rights
Read: James Madison, *The Federalist Papers* (#10; #51)*

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (selections)*

Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (selections)*

*Declaration of Independence**

*Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen**

MARXISM

Wednesday 1/31: Capitalism and State Power

Read: Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question" – pg. 1-26

Wednesday 2/7: Capitalism and Violence

Read: Karl Marx, *Capital* ("The Secret of Primitive Accumulation" & "The Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation") – pg. 294-300

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (selections) – pg. 157-176

Karl Marx, "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*" (selections) – pg. 210-212

Wednesday 2/14: Ideology and Desire

Read: Antonio Gramsci, "Problem of the 'Collective Man' or of 'Social Conformism'" (from *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*)*

Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (from *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*)*

Wednesday 2/21: Ideology and Desire, cont.

Read: Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (selections)*

Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic: the Erotic as Power"*

SUBJECTIVITY

Wednesday 2/28: Ideology, Autonomy, and Self-Making

Read: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* ("Zarathustra's Prologue (§ 1-5)"; "On the Three Transformations"; "On the Professorial Chairs of Virtue"; "On Reading and Writing"; "On the New Idol"; "On the Love of One's Neighbor"; "On the Bestowing Virtue"; "On the Way of the Creator"; "Upon the Isles of the Blest"; "On the Superior Human (§ 1-3)"; "On the Rabble"; "On the Tarantulas"; "On Self-overcoming"; "On Children and Marriage"; "On the Spirit of Heaviness"; "The Convalescent"; "The Seven Seals (or: The Yea- and

Amen-Song”); “The Drunken Song”) – pg. 9-17; 23-24; 25-27; 35-36; 43-45; 53-54; 54-56; 73-75; 249-251; 83-85; 85-88; 98-101; 60-62; 166-169; 188-193; 200-203; 277-278

No class on 3/6; UML Spring Recess.

Wednesday 3/13: State Power, Capillary Power, and the Disciplined Self
Read: Michel Foucault, “The Body of the Condemned”

Michel Foucault, “Panopticism”

Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (selections)*

GENDER

Wednesday 3/20: Discipline and Gender
Read: Sandra Lee Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power”

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (“Introduction (to vol. I)”); “Introduction (to vol. II)”); “Conclusion” – pg. 3-17; 279; 753-766*

Wednesday 3/27: Gender, Sex, and the “I” Who Acts
Read: Franz Kafka, “Before the Law”

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (“Preface (1999),” “Preface (1990),” “Ch. 1: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” (selections), “Ch. 3: Subversive Bodily Acts” (selections), “Conclusion: From Parody to Politics”)*

RACE & COLONIALISM

Wednesday 4/3: Race and the Autonomous Subject
Read: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (“Introduction”; “Ch. 7: The Negro and Recognition (Part B: The Negro and Hegel)”); “Conclusion”; “Ch. 5: The Fact of Blackness”) – pg. 7-14; 216-222; 223-232; 109-140

Assignment: Final paper topics distributed

Wednesday 4/10: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Autonomy
Read: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (“Introduction”)*

Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (selections)*

I will not attend class 4/10 due to professional obligations; the TA will run class in my absence

Wednesday 4/17: Extra class built into the schedule to accommodate potential seminar

cancellations due to snow and inclement weather; if not needed, I will circulate additional readings for this class meeting and lead class myself.

Wednesday 4/24: Read: *No assigned reading*

Assignment: Required writing workshop for final papers

Wednesday 5/1: Final papers due on Blackboard by 3:30 pm

COURSE DETAILS, POLICIES, & MISCELLANY

Communication

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

Students 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 communications 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 almost certainly will modify it. I will communicate all such modifications both over email and in lecture.

Office Hours

I enjoy meeting with students during office hours (see the beginning of this syllabus for details)! I'm also available by appointment. My office is in Dugan Hall in the Political Science Dept. suite on the second floor of the building (suite 201, room K).

Health Notes

I am immunocompromised and will be wearing a mask during our class meetings and in office hours. I would greatly appreciate it if you would wear a mask as well during class, but I am not requiring it. My office, however, is a mask-required place; if you prefer not to wear a mask, I will ask you to schedule our meetings over Zoom rather than in person.

Policy on Technology

Cell phones, tablets, and laptops are not permitted at any time 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 one row in front of them. If you have a compelling reason to request an exception to this policy, please see me. Please bring paper copies of readings and notes to class.

Writing Skills & Tutoring

Good writing only comes with practice and revision. As you work through your writing assignments for this course, I encourage you produce drafts, revise them, and discuss them with each other as well as with me. I also strongly encourage you to avail yourself of the Center for Learning and Academic Support Services (CLASS). CLASS will be offering [tutoring](#) and [Writing Center](#) services in-person at both O'Leary Library (during the day) and at Fox Hall (nights and weekends). You may drop in any time to the tutoring center. The Writing Center requires that you make appointments; you may book up to two 45 minute sessions with a tutor per week.

Late Policy

Uncompleted or missing papers will receive a grade of 0.0. Late assignments will be docked one grade interval per day. That is: 3.7 paper, if turned in past the deadline, will become a 3.3, if turned in more one full 24-hour day late, will receive a 3.0, and so on (a point deduction for each day). Exceptions *may possibly* be made given with 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! This course puts a strong emphasis on developing your skills as a writer and thinker, which requires you to struggle through the process of writing in your own voice about your own ideas. You would be well advised to stay far, far away from online sources of summary or Wikipedia pages. If you are confused about a thinker or concept, talk to me and not to the internet. Should any of the internet's language seep into your work – or should you engage in any other 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. Note this includes undisclosed use of generative large language models like ChatGPT; all uses of such models must be disclosed in the paper in writing. Note that I am quite experienced and adept at detecting plagiarized work as well as LLM-produced language. 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 times. If you or someone you know are experiencing mental health challenges at UML, please contact [Counseling Services](#). My understanding is that they offer free in-person counseling for all students.

Recordings & Privacy

Massachusetts is a two-party consent state, which means it is illegal to record someone without their permission. Recordings of classroom lectures are my intellectual property. Audio and video recording of my lectures is prohibited. In addition, sharing or selling recordings or transcripts of classroom activity, discussions, or lectures with any other person or medium without my permission is prohibited. I do want to notify you that our discussions are recorded, however, in order to comply with approved accommodations of disabilities for students registered with Disability Services at UML; those students are also prohibited from sharing or selling those recordings.

Disability Services & Religious 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. Additionally, please notify me if you will be observing Ramadan so that I (and other students) can avoid bringing food and drinks to class.