

## **Political Science 250: Contemporary Political Theory (Spring 2010)**

Wednesdays, 1-3:30 p.m. in PPHAC 338

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:45 p.m. to 4 p.m.

### **Course description**

Barbara Ehrenreich's new work entitled *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America* opens our discussion this semester. I chose Ehrenreich's work in order to consider something few of us may regard as political, optimism. We will consider optimism in the United States in its extreme forms just as we would any other political ideology—a school of thought with a history and a form of consciousness with political consequences. How might optimism relate to political analysis? Other readings by Judith Butler, Ulrich Beck, and Michael Sandel respond to a variety of political dilemmas of thought and action. We will interweave these readings with short readings from Nancy S. Love's *Dogmas & Dreams*. Every student will choose and present one short text from the anthology in order to teach the group about liberalism, conservatism, socialism, fascism, feminism, environmentalism, nationalism, and globalization, respectively. The structure of our meeting reflects this work: we begin with a student presentation on a particular ideology and continue with our main reading of the day.

### **Course objectives**

- Knowledge of modern political ideologies
- Familiarity with scholarly political analysis of twenty-first century issues
- Connections between canonical and contemporary political analysis
- Close readings, critical discussions, and scholarly writing

### **Books available for purchase at the Moravian College Bookstore**

- Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk* (Polity, 2007)
  - Judith Butler, *Frames of War; When is Life Grievable?* (Verso, 2009)
  - Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America* (Metropolitan, 2009)
  - Nancy S. Love, *Dogmas & Dreams: A Reader in Modern Political Ideologies* (CQ, 2006)
  - Michael Sandel, *Justice: What is the Right Thing To Do?* (Farrar, 2009)
- Additional readings may be added during the course of the semester.

**TBA evening event** with two other groups to watch and discuss videos of various viewpoints represented in *Bright-Sided*. One group is studying popular culture with Dr. Reynolds, and the other group is studying positive psychology with Dr. Dunn.

Wednesday, January 20	Introduction
Wednesday, January 27	<p>Presenter: Armando Chapelliquen</p> <p><b>LIBERALISM</b></p> <p>Chapter 3: James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, <i>The Federalist Papers</i>, nos. 10 and 51</p> <p>Barbara Ehrenreich, <i>Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America</i>, Introduction and chapters 1-4</p>
Wednesday, February 3	<p>Presenter: Elena Tominus</p> <p><b>LIBERALISM</b></p> <p>Chapter 5: Franklin D. Roosevelt, “The Continuing Struggle for Liberalism”</p> <p>Ehrenreich, chapters 5-8</p>
Wednesday, February 10	<p>Presenter: Ryan Dietrich</p> <p><b>CONSERVATISM</b></p> <p>Chapter 8: Michael Oakeshott, “On Being Conservative”</p> <p>Judith Butler, <i>Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?</i> Introduction and chapters 1 and 2</p>
Wednesday, February 17	<p>Presenter: Steven Feldman</p> <p><b>CONSERVATISM</b></p> <p>Chapter 10: Irving Kristol, “The Neoconservative Persuasion: <i>What it was, and what it is</i>”</p> <p>Butler, chapters 2-5</p>
Wednesday, February 24	<p>Presenter: Erin Walker</p> <p><b>SOCIALISM</b></p> <p>Chapter 14: Karl Marx, “Estranged Labor”</p> <p>Ulrich Beck, <i>World at Risk</i> Chapters 1-4</p>
	<b>SPRING RECESS</b>
Wednesday, March 10	<p>Presenter: Seth Hartman</p> <p><b>SOCIALISM</b></p> <p>Chapter 17: V. I. Lenin, <i>State and Revolution</i></p> <p>Beck, chapters 5-8</p>

Wednesday, March 17	<p>Presenter: Anthony Valente  <b>ANARCHISM</b>  Chapter 22: Henry David Thoreau, "Essay on Civil Disobedience"</p>
	Beck, chapters 9-12
Wednesday, March 24	<p>Presenter: Alexander Dasti  <b>FASCISM</b>  Chapter 27: Andrew Macdonald, <i>The Turner Diaries</i>  Michael Sandel, <i>Justice: What Is the Right Thing To Do?</i>  Chapters 1-3</p>
Wednesday, March 31	<p>Presenter: Jessica Rosato  <b>FEMINISM</b>  Chapter 33: Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"</p>
	Sandel, chapters 4-6
Wednesday, April 7	<p>Presenter: Lianna Lopez  <b>ENVIRONMENTALISM AND ECOLOGY</b>  Chapter 36: Ralph Waldo Emerson, <i>Nature</i></p>
	Sandel, chapters 7-9
Wednesday, April 14	<p>Presenter: Elizabeth Barrera  <b>ENVIRONMENTALISM AND ECOLOGY</b>  Chapter 38: Al Gore, <i>Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit</i></p>
	Sandel, chapters 9-10
Wednesday, April 21	<p>Presenter: Jordan Mertz  <b>NATIONALISM AND GLOBALIZATION</b>  Chapter 46: Edward W. Said, "Origins of Terrorism"  Presenter: Abigail Kaintz  Chapter 47: Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?"</p>
	Readings to be chosen by the group
Wednesday, April 28	<p>Presenter: Jason Pauloski  <b>NATIONALISM AND GLOBALIZATION</b>  Chapter 48: Benjamin R. Barber, "Jihad vs. McWorld"</p>
	Readings to be chosen by the group Teaching evaluation

## Evaluation

Engagement, including daily notes	30%	ongoing
Formal presentation	10%	Scheduled individually
Paper 1	20%	2/26 by 4 p.m. in COM 206
Paper 2	20%	3/26 by 4 p.m. in COM 206
Final examination	20%	5/5, 1-3:30 p.m. in PPHAC 338

## Daily notes

You will need to prepare two passages and two questions based on your independent reading of the text. Please bring one copy for yourself and one copy for me. Note that these texts are demanding and may require multiple readings. One question should address the *Dogma & Dreams* reading of the day. The other questions should be based on our main reading. No daily notes are required on your formal presentation day.

## Formal presentation

Please choose one text in your assigned ideology section of Love's *Dogma & Dreams*. Read the text and research the author and the ideology. Consider how you can teach this ideology to the class. Prepare a one-page handout. We will set aside 45 minutes to one hour for presentations and discussions of the text from *Dogmas & Dreams*. Please feel free to get creative and/or to use technology. Make this thinker and text your own by offering the class a masterful lesson. Tip: Overprepare!

## What does an engagement grade represent?

- A** Critical, innovative and careful reading of all assignments; substantial notes or written preparation for discussion; frequent text-based contributions; contribution of discussion-shaping questions; careful engagement of the arguments of others; support of positive discussion dynamics.
- B** Complete and careful readings; consistent notes or written preparation for discussion; lively, substantial, and argumentative text-based contributions; contribution of independent questions; engagement of the arguments of others.
- C** Incomplete or superficial readings; minimal notes or written preparation for discussion; regular (at least once per meeting) discussion participation.
- D** Incomplete or missing readings; lack of notes or written preparation for discussion; mostly passive presence.
- F** Persistent, vegetative state; low-level trance; slightly elevated body temperature

## **General Course Information**

I invite you to visit my office hours. Please be in touch with any questions and thoughts you may have about our work together. I am happy to help you with difficulties relating to your reading of our texts as well as challenges that may arise with regard to assignments. If you are having trouble participating in discussions, I can help you strategize in order to improve your enjoyment of and performance in this course.

We will discuss written assignments two weeks in advance. I will offer instructions on how to prepare for examinations in the class preceding the examination date.

Expect to work six hours on average outside of class per week. The workload varies, and the texts can be challenging. Give yourself plenty of time to read, review, and take notes on texts. Our interest is in deep readings and in gaining a solid toolkit of political theory questions, concepts, and arguments. **Please also note that this syllabus is subject to change.**

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a learning disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

In order to pass this course, you must submit all assignments.

I strongly discourage late assignments, except in appropriately documented emergency situations. For the sake of equity, please do not ask for special treatment. Late work is penalized at 50% of the assignment grade.

Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment in this class. Please see Moravian College Student Handbook for an account of academic honesty. See <http://www.moravian.edu/studentlife/handbook/academic2.htm>

Be diligent in your studies and attend class. Undocumented absences beyond the first will harm your engagement grade at the rate of 5% of your total course grade (per absence).

This is an academic setting in which the goal is thoughtful discourse. Neither food consumption, nor mobile phone noise, nor phone activity (texting) of any kind is permitted. Students who disturb the atmosphere of learning will be asked to leave the room for the rest of class.

**Please support a culture of intellectual discussion.**

