

Brock University
Department of Political Science

4P07/5P07: Postmodern Political Theory
“Power, Knowledge, Inequality, Organization”
Fall 2013

Wednesdays 2:00 – 4:50 p.m.
MCG 310

Professor: Stefan Dolgert

Office: Plaza 345

Office Hours: Tuesdays noon – 1 p.m., Wednesdays 1 – 2 p.m., and by appointment

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“The truth is out there.” -- *X Files* opening epigram

“Deceive, Inveigle, Obfuscate.” -- also an *X Files* opening epigram

Are you free? What does political freedom mean? Are you being manipulated or enslaved? How would you know if you were or weren't? Do you know the truth? Is truth the opposite of deception, or is there some internal relationship between truth and power such that “manipulation” is not so easy to discern? Are you a democrat? Do you believe in “power to the people”? How do you know which people count as “the people”? Do you believe you live in a just and equal society? If so, why are there neighbourhoods in Hamilton where the citizens' health is worse than Turkmenistan? Should you be a communist in response to this? What IS a communist, anyway, other than someone wearing a fur hat with a Kalashnikov? Or maybe you want to be an anarchist? Did you love Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Toronto? Then maybe you should grow your hair out, hippie.

“Postmodernism” is many things to many people, but we are primarily concerned not with aesthetics (e.g. postmodern art) but with politics and philosophy, especially with those theories that are often classified as “post-structuralist.” We'll be looking at the questions in the paragraph above through the diagnosis supplied by Michel Foucault, and then considering possible strategies in response to this diagnosis by Jacques Rancière, Jodi Dean, and Edward Chambers. Foucault will give us the vocabulary to talk about power, knowledge, and inequality in modern society, while Rancière, Dean, and Chambers give us contending versions of how we should take action. For Dean, we must return to the idea of a communist party that will take a leading role in the struggle; for Rancière and Chambers, in differing ways, we need instead to respond with more democracy in order to challenge the current constitution of organized power represented by corporations and the state.

This class, though a “theory” course, is about bringing theory and practice together (some call this “praxis”). While we'll be reading some very dense theoretical texts, we should

at all times keep in mind those in vulnerable populations outside the halls of our university, and how our theories look when reflected through their experiences. We aren't in an ivory tower here – we are in the thick of this with everyone else – though sometimes we pretend that the university is immune to the problems of the wider world. It isn't. It may be a place of respite, at times, a place to collect ourselves to ask questions we don't always have the time to ask otherwise, but I think we'd be better off thinking about it as the stool in the corner of a boxing ring. You get your minute here to nurse your wounds and figure out why you're getting clobbered, but then when the bell rings you're back in the fight, throwing jabs and getting blows reigned upon your head. Keep your chin tucked in and always keep your hands up, my friends, and always stay thirsty.

Course Objectives

- 1) Explain the basic concepts in Michel Foucault's vocabulary, including genealogy, power, truth, biopower, discipline, and governmentality.
- 2) Use these concepts to diagnose contemporary social phenomena in Canada.
- 3) Relate Jacques Rancière's critique of politics and Jodi Dean's critique of democracy to Foucault's theories.
- 4) Understand basic statistics relating to social, economic, and political inequality in Ontario.
- 5) Understand the basic strategy of relational meeting developed by the IAF, especially as applied to Greater Edmonton Alliance.
- 6) Assess whether the strategies of Rancière, Dean, and Chambers are adequate to address contemporary disempowerment and inequality.
- 7) Ask yourself: what should we be doing right now that we aren't? How are our imaginations captured by "the idolatry of the actual"?

Course Textbooks

Chambers, Edward. *Roots for Radicals*
Dean, Jodi. *The Communist Horizon*
Foucault, Michel. *The Foucault Reader*
Rancière, Jacques. *Disagreement*

Class Style

This class will be conducted as a discussion-intensive seminar. This course will also utilize a number of different methods in presenting the materials, possibly including simulations, semi-formal debates, role-play, and short excerpts from contemporary films. Please come prepared to discuss the materials each day, and this means arguing about them in a thoughtful manner with your instructor and fellow classmates. These discussions should be respectful of others' views, but in no way does that suggest that we paper over our differences with others. We will learn from each other precisely to the extent that we can figure out exactly how much we disagree with one another.

Assignments:

Seminar Participation: 20%
Seminar Facilitation: 10%

Short Paper: 15% (5 pages, due October 2 in class). Questions will be distributed by the instructor in advance. This paper may be re-written after the Peer Review and submitted for a re-grade, which will be an average of the first and second versions of the paper.

This re-write option, if exercised, is due November 6.

Peer Review: 10% (due October 9). Instructor will provide a template.

Discussion Posts (online in the Forum, via Sakai): 10% (10 postings total, 1% each)

Tweets: 5% (5 tweets at 1% each)

Final Paper: 30% (15 pages for undergraduates; 20 pages for graduate students, due December 13)

Seminar Participation:

Given that this is a fourth-year/graduate course, participation counts heavily. Please make sure to actively (and thoughtfully) engage in conversation each session, and please check with the professor if you have any questions regarding your participation grade throughout the semester.

Seminar Facilitation:

Each student will be responsible for facilitating one of the class sessions, probably in conjunction with one other student. Facilitators do not need to provide a lengthy introduction on their appointed day, but should provide several questions or topics IN WRITING for discussion, and should be prepared to briefly introduce each question or topic. Facilitators must submit questions to the Professor by noon on Tuesday, before class that week.

Discussion Posts:

Prior to each week of class BEGINNING WITH WEEK TWO, each student is required to post one item to the Forum section of Sakai by 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday of that week. THERE IS NO POSTING DUE IN WEEK TWELVE. This posting is to be approximately 50-100 words. The grade will be based on whether the posting meets these requirements – it will not be graded for content, though postings that are clearly not related to the week’s readings, or that demonstrate a lack of acquaintance with the readings, will not be counted.

Each post should address a question to the text, or to one of the other student posts for that week. They can take many forms, and the following are just a few examples: 1) puzzle through what the author means... e.g. “Author X seems to state that Z is the case, but I cannot understand how this argument works, since the Author also says Y. One way to resolve this seeming dilemma is to include B in the argument, which removes the contradiction; 2) argue with the author... “Author M states X and Y, both of which result in a argument that is immoral (state why) and threatens democratic legitimacy (state why). Author M’s position is of no use to us in crafting a theory of tragedy; 3) “Student U has posted that Author P is wrong because of K. While I agree that K is a problem, Student U does not take into account Author P’s argument J, which answers the contradictions raised by Student U.” Hopefully these dreary examples will give you an idea of the flavour of the postings, but please do make your commentary livelier than what I have just written above! I expect that these postings will facilitate class

discussions by placing a number of issues on the table well before the actual class session, and I will likely be responding to some of the issues raised in my own discussion for that week.

Deadline to Withdraw is Friday, November 6, 2013

Last date for withdrawal without academic penalty and last day to change from credit to audit status for duration 2 courses without academic penalty.

Academic Integrity

In this course we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. You are encouraged to build on the ideas and texts of others; that is a vital part of academic life. You are also obligated to document every occasion when you use another's ideas, language, or syntax. You are encouraged to study together, discuss readings outside of class, and share your drafts during peer review and outside of class. In this course, those activities are well within the bounds of academic honesty. However, when you *use* another's ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signalling it with a standard form of academic citation.

The Tweet Life

Twitter accounts are required for class. Students will use the class hash tag and then must tweet something about the readings or something you found related to readings/video in class. Tweets are required 1x a week (for the first five weeks only, since this is an experiment) and if you tweet a link you must still preface it or link it to what we're doing in class.

Turnitin.com

Written assignments may be submitted through turnitin.com, at the instructor's discretion. Links and password will be supplied at the time of the assignment by the professor.

Students With Disabilities

As part of Brock University's commitment to a respectful work and learning environment, the University will make every reasonable effort to accommodate all members of the university community with disabilities. If you require academic accommodations related to a documented disability to participate in this course, you are encouraged to contact Services for Students with Disabilities in the Student Development Centre (4th Floor, Schmon Tower, ex. 3240). You are also encouraged to discuss any accommodations with the instructor well in advance of due dates and scheduled assessments.

Schedule Of Readings

September 4

Introduction to “Postmodern Theory” and Inequality Canadian Style (After Labour Day)
In-class Foucault exercise

September 11

Foucault I: Truth and Power

Louis Althusser: “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/1970/ideology.htm>

The Foucault Reader: “Truth and Power” pp. 51-75

The Foucault Reader: “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” pp. 76-100

September 18

Foucault II: Discipline

The Foucault Reader: “The Body of the Condemned” pp. 170-178

The Foucault Reader: “Docile Bodies” pp. 179-187

The Foucault Reader: “The Means of Correct Training” pp. 188-205

The Foucault Reader: “Panopticism” pp. 206-213

The Foucault Reader: “Complete and Austere Institutions” pp. 214-225

The Foucault Reader: “Illegalities and Delinquency” pp. 226-233

The Foucault Reader: “The Carceral” pp. 234-238

The Foucault Reader: “Space, Knowledge, Power” pp. 239-256

September 25

Foucault III: Biopower

The Foucault Reader: “Right of Death and Power Over Life” pp. 258-272

The Foucault Reader: “The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century” pp. 273-290

The Foucault Reader: “We ‘Other Victorians’” pp. 292-300

The Foucault Reader: “The Repressive Hypothesis” pp. 301-330

Charles Taylor, “Foucault on Freedom and Truth,” *Political Theory* 12 (1984) (available on Sakai)

Special Event (not required but strongly recommended):

Jacques Rancière at Trent University

“The Politics of Fiction”

Monday, September 30, 2013, 7:00 pm

Market Hall, 140 Charlotte Street, Peterborough, Ontario

October 2

What is to be Done? Rancière on Politics

Disagreement, pp. 1-60

October 9

Rancière on Democracy

Disagreement, pp. 61-140

FALL BREAK

October 23

Communism? You mean you want the USSR again???

The Communist Horizon, pp. 1-67

October 30

The People!

The Communist Horizon, pp. 69-156

SITE VISIT: ST. CATHARINES YWCA

November 6

Do we need “The Party”?

The Communist Horizon, pp. 157-250

Guest Video Conference: Jodi Dean

November 13

Canadian Voices

Taiiaiake Alfred, “Being Indigenous: Resurgences Against Contemporary Colonialism”

Politics and Identity IX, pp. 597-614

Reading to be chosen by the class (options provided by professor)

November 20

Relationships and Relational Meetings

Roots for Radicals, pp. 11-79

Greater Edmonton Alliance: <http://greateredmontonalliance.com>

November 27

Organize!

Roots for Radicals, pp. 80-142

PS. A few great films...

Matewan

Harlan County USA

The Corporation

Kahnesatake

PEER REVIEW GUIDE (and good to follow for your own writing)¹

1. Introduction. Is the first paragraph an adequate statement of the paper's topic and approach? Is there a clear thesis? Does the author merely summarize points of view without taking a position of her own? Did you know from the first paragraph where the paper was headed?
2. Continuity. Is the line of argument clear from paragraph to paragraph? Did each paragraph add to the argument?
3. Evidence. Did the writer support the argument in a convincing manner? Were quotations from the text well chosen? Was there adequate citation?
4. Grammar and Style. Does the paper have significant grammatical errors? Are there problems with spelling, punctuation, subject/verb agreement, parallel structure, sentence fragments, or frequent use of the passive voice, etc.? Does the author misuse words, or use words that are vague or colloquial?
5. Conclusion. Does the conclusion draw together the strands of the argument? Is it a sufficient statement of the paper's main points?
6. Strengths. What did you find best in the paper?

¹ Drawn in part from UW-Madison's "Integrating Writing Into Your Course"

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Because academic integrity is vital to the well-being of the university community, Brock University takes academic misconduct very seriously. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, which involves presenting the words and ideas of another person as if they were your own, and other forms of cheating, such as using crib notes during a test or fabricating data for a lab assignment. The penalties for academic misconduct can be very severe. A grade of zero may be given for the assignment or even for the course, and a second offense may result in suspension from the University. Students are urged to read the section of the Brock University Undergraduate Calendar that pertains to academic misconduct. Students are also reminded that the Student Development Centre (Schmon Tower, Room 400) offers free workshops on writing and study skills and on avoiding plagiarism.

POLICY ON LATE ESSAYS

The policy of the Department is that essays received by the instructor or deposited in the Political Science department Essay box after 4:00 p.m. or at a time designated by the instructor, of the date on which they were due will be penalized **two per cent** for each day late from Monday through Friday and **five per cent** for the period from Friday 4:00 p.m. to Monday 8:30 a.m., and that no paper will be accepted two weeks after the due date.

An essay is considered received when the **original** hard copy (printed-not disk) of the paper is in the hands of the instructor or in the box outside the Political Science Department's office. (ALL ESSAYS MUST INCLUDE A TITLE PAGE WITH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION CLEARLY MARKED: STUDENT NUMBER, TA and INSTRUCTOR'S NAME, COURSE NAME and NUMBER).

Having an essay date-stamped by security, or the library, or anyone else does **not** constitute receipt of the essay by the Political Science Department. Instructors may require that essays be submitted electronically through turnitin.com. In this case, students must consult with the Instructor on what constitutes a late essay.

Instructors may establish more restrictive deadlines or more severe penalties in particular courses – check the course outline. Extensions of due dates are granted only in circumstances that are beyond the student's control, such as health problems that are supported by a medical certificate or other, clearly equivalent, situations.

Time management problems are not grounds for extensions. You are strongly urged to avoid these penalties by beginning to work on essays early in the term; by setting your own target dates for completion that are several days before the due date; and by carefully budgeting your time.

POLICY ON RETURNING MARKED ESSAYS

Marked essays will normally be returned during class meetings or at the final examination.

Students who are not in class to receive their essays or do not receive them at the final examination can obtain them in two ways:

- √ directly from the instructor during his/her office hours (unless the instructor specifies in the course outline or by notice on his/her office door that this option is not available), and/or
- √ directly from the instructor on specific days and at specific times announced in class or posted on his/her office door.

Note: Essays that are not picked up within six months after the end of term will be shredded.

STATEMENT OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Please read and sign the following statement, and submit this sheet with your paper. Your paper will not be graded until you have submitted this form.

I, the undersigned, confirm that I understand that all the following constitutes academic misconduct according to Brock University's policy on academic misconduct, which in turn is consistent with general academic practice:

Quoting someone's words without using quotation marks.

Quoting someone's words without acknowledging the source.

Citing someone else's ideas in my own words but without citing the source.

Using someone else's organization of ideas.

Allowing someone else the opportunity to borrow material from my paper (e.g., by letting them have access to my paper when they are writing their own paper).

Writing the paper for another student, or doing some of the work for them (such as, but not limited to, reading the articles for them and providing them with notes on the articles).

Allowing someone else (or paying someone else) to write part or all of my paper, or do some of the work for me. The exceptions to this are that it is acceptable to allow someone to type the paper for me or make editorial comment on it. However, if someone types the paper for me, or if I incorporate an editorial suggestion, and there are errors in the typing or the suggestion was misguided, I take full responsibility for those errors.

Submitting this work to another course without both instructors' permission.

I confirm that I have not done any of the above forms of academic misconduct.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____