

Western University 2018-19

~~Political Science 3207G, Section 001~~

9504b: **Critical Political Theory** (2018-19)

Instructor: Nandita Biswas Mellamphy

Office hours: Mon. 1:30-2:20pm, or by appointment, SSC 4133

Contact: nbiswasm@uwo.ca or 519-661-2111 ext. 81161

Class location and times: Mon. 11:30-1:20 PM, SSC 4105

Course Description: Is the global digital revolution currently underway *enriching* or conversely, *impoverishing* democracy? Does democracy still serve as a normative concept? This course explores how the internet and new media/communication technologies transform and constrain, as well as enable and disable democratic theories and practices. Attention will be paid to developing rigorous and critical interpretations and analyses of various democratic theories, especially 'deliberative', 'agonistic'/'radical', 'cyber', and 'queer' theories of democracy.

Course Texts (on order at the campus Bookstore):

- *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton).
- *The Democratic Paradox*, Chantal Mouffe (Verso).
- *Cybering Democracy: Public Space and the Internet*, Diana Saco (Minnesota).
- *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Jasbir Puar (Duke).
- *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Jacques Rancière (Minnesota).

*Other Required Course Materials will be available on the course website (OWL).

Learning objectives:

By the end of this course, students will:

- Be familiar with a range of critical political theories of democracy, as well as develop critical and rigorous interpretations of these theories.
- Have gained an appreciation of the range of approaches and interpretations of democracy that are used in political research.
- Demonstrate an awareness of how power, culture and history condition/influence knowledge formation and be able to situate knowledge historically and contextually
- Demonstrate well developed, independent information literacy and research skills and be able to identify goals for their own professional development and further learning
- Work effectively with others, demonstrating the skills of giving constructive and critical feedback to peers, responding to feedback, and using active listening

Breakdown of Evaluation:

- Class Participation: this is not an attendance mark; you will be evaluated on your in-class discussion and participation = 10%
- Seminar Presentation (includes oral 25% and 10% written components): 35%
- Final Research Essay: 55% Due by electronic submission **no later than April 15, 2019.**

Assignment Deadlines and policies: Please consider these deadlines 'sacred'! Only in cases in which the student has presented appropriate documentation to their Academic Counseling Officer will any extensions without penalty be considered. Late essay submissions are subject to a penalty deduction of 5% a day (from the due date until the day that the assignment is received by the instructor, including weekends and holidays). **To discuss these policies further, please feel free to meet with me.**

Course Website (OWL): Everything having to do with each component of the course will be available on the course website. *The website has not been developed to be a replacement for attending class.* Problems with accessibility to the course website cannot be used as a basis for missing deadlines or appealing your grades. This means that if you are having problems accessing the course website, you must notify your instructor as soon as possible and you will be directed to a computer technician.

Computer, Cell-phone and Other Gadgets Policy:

- You may use your computers to take notes during lectures, but I reserve the right to ensure that you are not text-messaging, surfing the internet, or distracting other students.
- No digital recording (either voice or image) of the lectures is allowed.
- All cellphones (and similar technologies) must be turned off, silent or on 'vibration' mode during the duration of the class and during tutorials.

Communication Policy: I encourage you to visit me during my weekly office hours to introduce yourself, ask questions, or seek clarifications about the readings. Otherwise you can also communicate with me through email (at my uwo email address; please allow up to two days for responses). You can always leave me a voice message on my campus telephone (extension 81161).

Statement on Academic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Support Services: Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health at Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. See Appendix for details.

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

Weekly Reading Schedule (subject to modification):

* indicates that the reading is available as a pdf on the course website.

- All readings (both main and additional) are required.
- During week 1, please sign up for your seminar presentation (sign up sheet will be posted on my office door).

Jan. 7

Week 1: Introduction to the Course

How do social media impact on democracy? Are social media killing democracy? Has the digital revolution been good or bad for democracy? Have democratic theories adequately responded to the transformative but potentially disruptive effects of digital politics?

Jan. 14

Week 2: The 'Self-Destruction of the Enlightenment': Critical Theory and Histories of Critique
Main Readings

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectics of Enlightenment*, especially Introduction, The Concept of Enlightenment, and The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception.

<https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=lwVjsKcHW7cC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Walter Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History',

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>

Judith Butler, 'What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue',

http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/butler/en/#_ftnref1

Additional Seminar Readings

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/mar/25/anders-breivik-frankfurt-school>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/01/negative-dialectics-frankfurt-school-adorno>

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/apr/08/frankfurt-school-dialectic-of-enlightenment>

Jan. 21

Week 3: Normative vs. Non-Normative (or Cryptonormative) Critical Theories

Main Readings

Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense',

https://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/Philosophers/Nietzsche/Truth_and_Lie_in_an_Extra-Moral_Sense.htm

Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History',

<http://www.naturalthinker.net/trl/texts/Foucault,Michel/Foucault,%20Michel%20-%20Nietzsche,%20Genealogy,%20History.pdf>

Nancy Fraser, 'Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions,

https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/3123299/mod_resource/content/1/Nancy%20Fraser%20Foucault%20on%20modern%20power.pdf

Additional Seminar Readings

The Genealogy of Morality, Preface (p. 1-9).

http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political_Thought/GenealogyofMorals.pdf

*Kevin Olson, 'Genealogy, Cryptonormativity, Interpretation', in *Foucault Studies*, No. 18, pp. 253-260, October 2014.

Jan. 28

Week 4: Theories of Democracy: Is Democracy Still a Norm?

Seyla Benhabib, Introduction, "The Democratic Moment and the Problem of Difference" in *Democracy and Difference*, p. 3-18.

Anne Phillips, 'Dealing with Difference', in Benhabib's *Democracy and Difference*, p. 139-152.

Sheldon Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy" in *Democracy and Difference*, p. 31-45.

Additional Seminar Readings

*Frank Cunningham, "Introduction", "Problems of Democracy", "Liberal Democracy," in *Theories of Democracy*, p. 1-51.

Feb. 4

Week 5: Deliberative Democracy and Its Critics

Main Readings

Jurgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in *Democracy and Difference*, p. 21-30.

Iris Marion Young "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy" in *Democracy and Difference*, p. 120-135.

Nancy Fraser: Subaltern counterpublics, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2016/11/06/nancy-fraser-subaltern-counterpublics/>

Additional Seminar Readings

*Frank Cunningham, "Liberal Democracy and the Problems," in *Theories of Democracy*, p. 52-72; "Democratic Pragmatism" in *Theories of Democracy*, p. 142-162; "Deliberative Democracy," in *Theories of Democracy*, p. 163-183.

Feb. 11

Week 6: Agonistic/Radical Democracy and Its Critics

Main Readings

Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, p. 1-59; "For an Agonistic Model of Democracy", p. 80-107.

*Jodi Dean, 'Politics Without Politics' in *Reading Rancière*, p. 73-94.

Additional Seminar Readings

*Frank Cunningham, "Radical Pluralism" in *Theories of Democracy*, p. 184-197.

Feb. 18 & 25:

Reading Week/No Class

March 4

Main Readings

Week 8: Dissensus

Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement* (whole book).

March 11

Week 9: Cyberdemocracy: Is the Internet democratic?

Main Readings

Diana Saco, *Cybering Democracy: Public Space and the Internet*, p. xi-74.

*Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 3.

Additional Seminar Readings

*Jodi Dean, "Why the Net is Not a Public Sphere" in *Constellations*, vol. 10, number 1, 2003, 95-112.

March 18

Week 10: Queering Democracy

Main Readings

Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, p. 1-66.

Additional Seminar Readings

*Michael Warner, 'Publics and Counterpublics' (short).

March 25

Week 11: Democracy and the Politics of Exceptionalism

Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, p. ix- 165.

Additional Seminar Readings

Wendy Harcourt, 'Introduction', *Bodies in Resistance: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Age of Neoliberalism*

March 25 (Last Class)

Week 12: Democracy and Network Politics

*Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*.

April 15: Final Research Essay due