

**Politics 4200F/9752A: Political Thought and ‘Modernity’:
Power: its forms, its limits, its future**

**Instructor: D. Long Room: 4112 Time: Mondays, 12:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Office hours: Mon. & Wed. 11:30 – 12:15 & 2:30 - 3:30; Tuesdays 10 – 11 a.m.**

IMPORTANT NOTICE RE PREREQUISITES/ANTIREQUISITES: You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites, and that you have not taken an antirequisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as a basis for appeal. If you are found to be ineligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time and you will receive no adjustment to your fees. This decision cannot be appealed. If you find that you do not have the course requisites, it is in your best interest to drop the course well before the end of the add/drop period. Your prompt attention to this matter will not only help protect your academic record, but will ensure that spaces become available for students who require the course in question for graduation.

Office of the Dean, Faculty of Social Science

Prerequisites for this course (UWO Calendar) are: Political Science 237E and one additional course in political theory, or permission of the instructor.

‘Modernity’? This seminar is one of a series aimed at reconsidering ‘modernity’ as it pertains to political thought. What IS ‘modernity’? Is it/ was it a specific time period? A style of thinking? A way of life? Is it ‘over’? Or does it still pervade present thought and shape our visions of the possibilities for our political future? Can the ‘modern’ be distinguished from the ‘pre-modern’ and the ‘postmodern’ in plausible and useful ways? Is there a ‘modern’ or ‘modernist’ mind set? Let’s suppose (anyone seen *The Truman Show*?) that we are acting and thinking inside the bubble of a ‘modernist’ paradigm: is it possible for a theorist to stand aside from, or outside of, that paradigm and see/say things really differently? Yes, it is. But is it easy or comfortable? NO.

This year’s theme is ‘Power: modern and postmodern views’.

In the 21st century power is assuming new forms (Twitter anyone?), finding new locations (Twitter anyone?) and breaking down old barriers (globalization – or Twitter?). Much of the power we encounter in today’s world is simply not on the ‘radar screen’ of traditional political science. And this is only one of the central - and intensifying - problems of modern politics. Political science doesn’t understand the new realities shaping its own core concept. The idea that what we need now in political theory is ‘more of the same’ is unappealing and ineffectual. We need new ways of looking at and talking about power urgently. Our traditional understanding of it is in danger of becoming ‘academic’ in the worst sense of that word.

There IS a modern ‘paradigm’ (i.e. a comprehensive and seemingly inescapable world-view; a definition of ‘reality’), and it includes a paradigmatic modern conception of power. It builds Sir Francis Bacon’s ‘human empire’ on the basis of Newton’s mathematical and mechanical principles. It is grounded in a pseudo-science of ‘human nature’, and modern political science serves its goals. Globalized democratic capitalism is its ‘concretization’. The modern

modes of power which entrench and 'fine tune' this post-Newtonian paradigm are legitimized by scientific rationalization: reason and knowledge are thought to control and direct it. Yet the bloodthirsty historical record of the 20th century and recent outbreaks of global economic and social instability fly in the face of such claims. When it defends selected forms, locations, or applications of power, exactly what IS modern political science defending?

Core Topics and possible readings:

In preparing the course I have identified a very manageable selection of texts which will, I think, promote critical reflection on the phenomenon / concept of power and provide a sequence or pathway of sorts for our work as a group:

- 1) **Modern political thinking about power as introspection: Glenn Tinder's *Political Thinking: the perennial questions*** will function for us as a 1970s 'time capsule', calling to mind a time when confidence was high that careful reflection could empower Political Scientists to measure, locate, control and direct power. We will read selections from it to examine the assumptions which were in its day beyond question – unchallengeable elements of the modern paradigm: that power could be created, limited and distributed like Tim Horton's franchises, according to a comprehensive plan, and that outside the 'sphere' of power there is a 'space' of freedom, where power has no purchase, no hold on us.

Note: I will make selections from this (old) book available at the class 'Owl' site.

- 2) **Political theory on the cusp: *Politics and Vision* (rev. 2004; first edition 1960).** In this extraordinary work, Professor Sheldon Wolin, one of the greatest democratic theorists of the 20th and 21st centuries, provides an unique perspective on '**modern and postmodern power**'. He argues that political theory in 'the West' since about 1600 has owed much to Francis Bacon's call (1605) to all humankind to cease 'cutting each other to pieces' and instead

"... to make peace between themselves, and turning with united forces against the Nature of Things, to storm and occupy her castles and strongholds, and **extend the bounds of human empire**, as far as God Almighty in his goodness may permit." (*De Augmentis Scientiarum* Book 4, Ch. 1)

The ultimate 'human empire' is the empire of global capitalism. Inside it, modernity accomplishes its political mission with the arrival of a 'universal, homogeneous state': global capitalist democracy. In this state modern power achieves full, successful and conclusive deployment... Or does it? In *Politics and Vision*, Wolin examines and ultimately rejects the most pervasive forms of modern power: corporate, organizational, cultural, ideological and political. He also concludes that as a form or structure of power, political democracy (actually politics generally) has become a 'fugitive'.

Note: I will post selections from Wolin at the class 'Owl' site.

3) **Postmodern Power I:**

Michel Foucault: from Sovereignty to Disciplinary power to the Security State.

Text: 'Security, Territory, Population: lectures at the College de France, 1977-8'.

Foucault's greatest contribution to political theory is his development of two new models of power: disciplinary power and biopower. He develops them in the context of a critique of the juridical theory of power exemplified in Hobbes's theory of sovereignty. Here Barry Hindess's book *Discourses of Power: from Hobbes to Foucault* [1996] will be useful. I have ordered it, as Weldon does not seem to have a copy.

Note: I will post selections from Foucault on Power, including the text named above, at the 'Owl' site. When my copy of Hindess arrives I will also post selections from it for your use.

4) **Postmodern Power II: Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*.** Freely acknowledging his enormous indebtedness to Foucault, Agamben nonetheless follows his own very distinctive path in modelling power on the idea of 'the ban' (not the contract) and rooting his account of sovereignty in the paradoxical 'state of exception'. His identification of the concentration camp as the true paradigmatic representation of power is extremely controversial. Agamben's idea of 'Biopolitics' is both like and unlike Foucault's.

Note: I will post selections from *Homo Sacer* at the course 'Owl' site.

5) **Modern critiques of power:**

Technological power: George Grant *Technology and Empire* (1969); Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: How the internet is changing the way we think, read and remember* (2010)

Organizational / Corporate power: Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, Chap. 10, 'The Age of Organization and the Sublimation of Politics' and Chap.7, 'Power and Forms'.

6) **Postmodern Problematizations of Power:**

Hardt and Negri, *Empire*. This book is not just another account, critical or uncritical, of American power. It is a serious attempt to re-conceive 'Empire' in the light, among other things, of Foucault's and Agamben's work on 'biopower'.

7) **A 'hybrid' topic: from Tocqueville's and Wolin's 'democratic despotism' to Derrida's 'democracy to come': disillusionment with, or renewal of, democratic power?**

Several chapters of Alexis de Tocqueville's iconic work *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840) and of Wolin's landmark work *Tocqueville: between two worlds* (2001) are devoted to the dreaded possibility of a new democratic form of 'despotism' (Wolin called it 'inverted totalitarianism'). For Derrida, on the other hand, democracy is simply 'openness': 'no democracy, no deconstruction; no deconstruction, no democracy'. The question is: which of these captures the likely or possible future form of democratic power?

These are only **some** of the themes and sources that are available to us. My "picks" as listed above are all, as I see it, interesting and important, but **I am always open to presentations, texts, and projects that you generate yourselves. In fact I much prefer them.** Do not hesitate to let me know if you have your own ideas for presentations and papers that will harmonize with the goals and scope of this course. **Communication between you and me is crucial. I will do my best to ensure that every student finds a project that truly interests them. I will conspire freely with all interested individuals to develop exceptional essay topics and presentation packages of readings and questions.**

A Hypothetical Timetable of Meetings:

I do not intend to set out at this point a compulsory sequence of seminar topics. This sequence is simply an example of the sort of things we could do. I will finalize a sequence of topics for this year after I confer 1-to-1 with every member of this year's group. However, the schedule below will at least give you the dates of our meetings and help you to select dates for your presentations and to plan your work in the course.

1. Sep. 12th: Student Info / Outlines: discussion of course goals and themes.
2. Sep. 19th: Wolin on 'Modern and Postmodern Power'
3. Sep. 26th: Wolin on Corporate power in the era of liberalism
4. Oct. 4th: Grant Grant on Technology and Power? *The Shallows?*
5. Oct. 10th: Thanksgiving Monday
6. Oct. 17th: Michel Foucault on Disciplinary power'
7. Oct. 24th: Foucault and Giorgio Agamben: what is 'biopower'?
8. Oct. 31st: Is there power in 'civil society'? Robert Putnam and Larry Diamond
9. Nov. 7th: Globalization and power: 'Cultural Imperialism'? 'Anarchical Community'?
10. Nov. 14th: Hardt and Negri: problematizing imperial power
11. Nov. 21st: Tocqueville, Wolin, Derrida: problematizing democratic power
12. Nov. 28th: Tocqueville, Wolin, Derrida: problematizing democratic power
13. Dec. 6th:

The seminar will only succeed if each seminar member works 1) with the source material, 2) with the other members, and 3) with me to develop and pursue lines of investigation which really interest her/him. I will act as a resource person. One-to-one interviews with each seminar member will be used to establish the member's background and areas of interest. Only after I have talked (one-to-one) with each of you will the actual schedule of presentations for the term be finalized. I want the final timetable to reflect primarily your interests, not mine.

Finally: **Where do our grades come from?**

Summary: Each seminar member will write a short **commentary** on a **single self-selected reading** at the start of term, make one **seminar presentation** during the term, act as **commentator** on another student's presentation, and hand in a **major paper** at the end of (or in the course of) the term.

Your final grade will be arrived at as follows:

1. **Commentary**: a short (8 - 10 page) commentary on a single source text, chosen from among a list identified at the start of the term, to be submitted by **Monday, October 4th 2010**

In the past this has proved a very valuable way to 1) get you focussed and engaged with the course, 2) help you pick out themes and authors for presentations and major papers, and 3) give me an early idea of your writing styles, interests and abilities. We'll discuss some of the texts you have chosen in subsequent seminars. **Value: 15%**.

2. **Instructor's assessment of seminar presentation** (including preparation and distribution in **advance** of a package of readings and an outline of topics/problems for discussion, as well as actual delivery of presentation): **Value: 20%**

3. **Instructor's assessment of performance as commentator**: as a commentator you play **three roles in the week leading up to the presentation** on which you are to comment: 1) you are the 'model student' who reads carefully and completely everything the presenter asks us all to read and consider; 2) you are the presenter's primary supporter and critic, offering criticisms and appreciation appropriate to the quality of the work done; and 3) you are the presenter's link to the other students, helping them to 'get' what the presenter is 'getting at'. You do NOT have to hand in written comments to me, though you may if you wish to. You DO have to communicate with and really work to help the presenter, and make the class session a better one in any way that you can that has the presenter's support. **Value: 10%**

4. **Major term paper** - due at last class of term (**December 6th 2010**) or before that at your convenience: **Value: 40%**

5. Instructor's assessment of member's **seminar participation**: **Value: 15%**

Notice that 55% of your grade will be determined on the basis of your written assignments, while the other 45% will be based on various aspects of your participation in actual classroom sessions. A seminar is only worthy of the name if the whole group shows a commitment to it. I expect all members to attend, to do their best to prepare each week, and to contribute consistently to constructive, rational and mutually supportive critical discussion. **A seminar is not a "zero-sum" game. The grades you earn are not earned at the expense of other students. Be generous and supportive with one another – you will only gain by it.**

Re. late penalties etc.

UWO recently introduced a strict new policy on 'academic accommodations':

For any assignment worth less than 10% of your final grade in the course: contact your instructor (me) *immediately* if the need arises for an academic accommodation on either medical or compassionate grounds. All requests to me for accommodations must be in writing, giving specific and documented grounds for the special arrangement. Medical documentation must show that the student was unable for medical reasons to complete the assignment(s) in question on time and in full. Make-up tests, extensions of deadlines etc. will only be arranged when these steps are followed and these standards are met.

For any assignment worth 10% or more of your final grade in the course: you must take your documentation (in the case of medical grounds a UWO "Student Medical Certificate", obtained online or from Academic Counselling and filled in by a doctor at the time of your initial consultation) **not to me but to the Academic Counsellors of your home Faculty.** They will decide on your eligibility for an accommodation, and then get in touch with me about specific steps to be taken.

**APPENDIX TO UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OUTLINES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Prerequisite checking - the student's responsibility

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

Essay course requirements

With the exception of 1000-level courses, most courses in the Department of Political Science are essay courses. Total written assignments (excluding examinations) will be at least 3,000 words in Politics 1020E, at least 5,000 words in a full course numbered 2000 or above, and at least 2,500 words in a half course numbered 2000 or above.

Use of Personal Response Systems ("Clickers")

"Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning.

Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence."

Security and Confidentiality of Student Work (refer to current *Western Academic Calendar* (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/>))

"**Submitting or Returning Student Assignments, Tests and Exams** - All student assignments, tests and exams will be handled in a secure and confidential manner. Particularly in this respect, leaving student work unattended in public areas for pickup is not permitted."

Duplication of work

Undergraduate students who submit similar assignments on closely related topics in two different courses must obtain the consent of both instructors prior to the submission of the assignment. If prior approval is not obtained, each instructor reserves the right not to accept the assignment.

Grade adjustments

In order to ensure that comparable standards are applied in political science courses, the Department may require instructors to adjust final marks to conform to Departmental guidelines.

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 the following Web site:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>."

Submission of Course Requirements

ESSAYS, ASSIGNMENTS, TAKE-HOME EXAMS **MUST** BE SUBMITTED ACCORDING TO PROCEDURES SPECIFIED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR (I.E., IN CLASS, DURING OFFICE HOURS, TA'S OFFICE HOURS) OR UNDER THE INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE DOOR.

THE MAIN OFFICE DOES NOT DATE-STAMP OR ACCEPT ANY OF THE ABOVE.

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>

Students registered in Social Science should refer to <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/> <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/havingproblems.asp> for information on Medical Policy, Term Tests, Final Examinations, Late Assignments, Short Absences, Extended Absences, Documentation and other Academic Concerns. Non-Social Science students should refer to their home faculty's academic counselling office.

Plagiarism

"Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence." (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

Multiple-choice tests/exams: "Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating."

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>

PLAGIARISM*

In writing scholarly papers, you must keep firmly in mind the need to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another writer's words or ideas. Different forms of writing require different types of acknowledgement. The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of publication, and page number.

Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writers' ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source, these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases in their suspension from the University.

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Adopted by the council of the Faculty of Social Science, October, 1970; approved by the Dept. of History August 13, 1991

Accessibility at Western

Please contact poliscie@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.