

The Concept of Political Power: Power and Autonomy  
POL S 273

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**INSTRUCTOR**

Emma Rodman  
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Office: Gowen Hall 44  
Office Hours: Monday from 1-3 pm and by appointment

**TEACHING ASSISTANT (TA)**

Grace Reinke ([reinkeg@uw.edu](mailto:reinkeg@uw.edu))

**GENERAL LOGISTICS**

Course website: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1271278>  
Lecture: Tuesday/Thursday from 9-10:20 in Johnson Hall 175

**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 Marxist, 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.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

These texts are available for purchase at the University Book Store or other bookstores; if you select used copies, you should be able to pick up all four for less than \$50. Please do your best to secure the same edition and publisher; this will ensure that page numbers as well as translation choices remain consistent (this is especially important for Beauvoir). Copies of these texts are also on reserve at the Odegaard Library Reserve Desk (2<sup>nd</sup> floor), where they may be checked out in four hour intervals.

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

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

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Vintage Books; 2011)

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

All other course readings will be posted to the course website.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Your grade in this course will be based on two short essays (800-1000 words), one longer paper in lieu of a final exam (2500-3000 words), and participation in lecture and section. There are no exams in this course. I will circulate writing prompts with more detailed instructions and guidelines approximately two weeks before the assignment due date. Writing assignments and participation will be weighted and due as follows:

Essay 1	Due Tuesday, April 23 <sup>rd</sup> in lecture	15%
Essay 2	Due Friday, May 17 <sup>th</sup> in quiz section	25%
Final Paper	Due Wednesday, June 12 <sup>th</sup> on course website	40%
Participation		20%

Essay 2 will involve a required writing workshop in lieu of lecture on May 16<sup>th</sup>. 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).

Thoughtful and sustained class participation is required. Interaction in section and lecture, attendance at office hours, and performance on any in-class quick writes or group work all count toward participation. Please note that Grace and I are interested in the quality, not necessarily the quantity, of your contributions. 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. Effective participation means not only speaking, but also listening and asking questions. Students are also expected to complete the assigned readings before lecture, to arrive on time and prepared for lecture and discussion, to adhere to course policies, and to interact respectfully with their fellow students and instructors; failure to do so will be reflected in your participation grade. Participation is worth 20% of the final grade.

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### *Course Schedule*

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\* = reading posted on course website

## **LIBERALISM**

Tuesday, April 2 <sup>nd</sup> :	<u>Introduction</u>
Thursday, April 4 <sup>th</sup> :	<u>Political Power, Violence, and Morality</u>
	Read: Thucydides, <i>The Peloponnesian War</i> (the Melian Dialogue)* Max Weber, <i>Politics as a Vocation</i> (selections)*
Tuesday, April 9 <sup>th</sup> :	<u>Constraining State Power with Institutional Design</u>
	Read: James Madison, <i>The Federalist Papers</i> (#10; #51)* Montesquieu, <i>The Spirit of the Laws</i> (selections)*
Thursday, April 11 <sup>th</sup> :	<u>Constraining State Power with Rights</u>

Read: Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (selections)\*  
*Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (included in the Paine reading)\*

Assignment: Essay 1 topics distributed

## **MARXISM**

Tuesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>: Capitalism and State Power

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

Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup>: 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

Note: I will be at a conference in California; guest lecturer

Tuesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>: Bourgeois Ideology

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

Antonio Gramsci, “Problem of the 'Collective Man' or of 'Social Conformism'” (from *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*)\*

Assignment: Essay 1 due at the beginning of lecture to Grace

Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup>: Ideological Hegemony

Read: Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” (from *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*)\*

## **SUBJECTIVITY**

Tuesday, April 30<sup>th</sup>: Ideology and Autonomy

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)”) – pg. 9-17; 23-24; 25-27; 35-36; 43-45; 53-54; 54-56; 73-75; 249-251

Note: I will be at a conference in the U.K.; guest lecturer

Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>:

Autonomy and Self-Making

Read: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (“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. 83-85; 85-88; 98-101; 60-62; 166-169; 188-193; 200-203; 277-278)

Assignment: Essay 2 topics distributed

Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>:

The Disciplined Self

Read: Michel Foucault, “Panopticism”\*

Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>:

Capillary Power

Read: Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (selections)\*

**GENDER**

Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>:

Discipline and Gender

Read: Sandra Lee Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power”\*

Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>:

Note: No lecture or assigned reading; required writing workshop during lecture

Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>:

Assignment: Essay 2 due at the beginning of quiz section to Grace

Tuesday, May 21<sup>st</sup>:

Gender and the Autonomous Subject

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

*Recommended:* Judith Butler, “Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*”\*

Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>:

Gender and the Autonomous Subject

Read: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (“Ch. 10: Woman's Situation and Character”; “Ch 14: The Independent Woman (selections)”) – pg. 638-664; 721-726; 738-751

**RACE & COLONIALISM**

Tuesday, May 28<sup>th</sup>:

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”) – pg. 7-14; 216-222; 223-232

Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup>:

Race and the Autonomous Subject

Read: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (“Ch. 4: The So-Called Dependency Complex of Colonized Peoples”; “Ch. 5: The Fact of Blackness”) – pg. 83-108; 109-140

Assignment: Final paper topics distributed

Tuesday, June 4<sup>th</sup>:

The Colonial, Intersectional Subject

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

*Recommended:* Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu, *Family Matters* (Introduction)\*

Thursday, June 6<sup>th</sup>:

Liberalism, Race, Power, Autonomy

Read: Emmanuel Levinas, “Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism”\*

Wednesday, June 12<sup>th</sup>:

Assignment: Final paper due on Canvas by 9 pm

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## **COURSE DETAILS, POLICIES, AND MISCELLANY**

### *Communication*

It is important that you check your UW email regularly, as I and/or Grace may send out vital course information via email throughout the quarter.

Students are welcome to contact me via email for logistical inquiries (such as making appointments). Please use your UW email account for such correspondence. Substantive questions and communications are very much encouraged but will be reserved for office hours and in-person meetings. I will make every effort to reply to your emails within 48 hours.

Finally, I reserve the right to modify this syllabus over the course of the quarter as necessary. I will communicate all such modifications both over email and in lecture.

### *Access & Accommodations*

Disability Resources for Students (DRS) offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary or permanent disability that requires accommodations (this can include but is not limited to: mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical, or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or [uwdrs@uw.edu](mailto:uwdrs@uw.edu). If you have a letter from DRS documenting the need for academic accommodations, please present this letter to me at the beginning of the quarter so that we can discuss and

arrange accommodations.

If you wish to observe a religious holiday that is not recognized by the University calendar, please let us know in advance, so that we may accommodate your absence from class.

### *Policy on Technology*

Cell phones, tablets, and laptops are not permitted in lecture or section. 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.

### *Writing Skills*

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 Grace. I also strongly encourage you to avail yourself of the Political Science Writing Center. You may make up to two free appointments each week with writing tutors, who will read your work and offer feedback on how to strengthen it. You may make those appointments online at <https://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/>. The Writing Center also has a wide range of useful handouts on their website; these cover various writing tasks, such as constructing thesis statements, writing strong paragraphs, final draft checklists, and many more.

### *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 Grace and me – not the internet. Should any of the internet's language seep into your work – or should you engage in any other form of plagiarism – you will receive a 0.0 for the assignment and you will be reported to the Arts and Sciences Committee on Academic Conduct. Such a report is typically transmitted on background checks, as well as to law and graduate schools with your transcripts. Note that Grace is quite experienced and adept at detecting plagiarized work. University policies and guidelines regarding cheating and plagiarism can be found at <https://depts.washington.edu/grading/pdf/AcademicResponsibility.pdf>.

### *Grade Disputes*

Grace is responsible for all grading in this course. Please take 24 hours to review her comments on any assignment. If you feel there has been a grading error, bring a one-page written response to her office hours within seven days, responding to her feedback. She will discuss your appeal with you and will take up to one week to re-grade your work *in either direction*. If you remain unsatisfied, you may appeal the grade to me. Please note that I will not discuss your grade with you until you have completed the preceding appeal steps. If you remain unsatisfied after that point or feel the grade is discriminatory or unjust, you may appeal to the Associate Chair of the Political Science Department, Prof. Mark Smith, at [masmith@uw.edu](mailto:masmith@uw.edu).

### *Policy on Late Papers*

Uncompleted or missing papers will receive a grade of 0.0. Late assignments will be docked 0.5 per day. That is: a 3.5 paper, if turned in past the deadline, will become a 3.0; if turned in one full day late, it will receive a 2.5, and so on. Exceptions will be made given prompt and (if requested) documented consultation with your TA. For full consideration, make sure to correspond via email prior to a late submission rather than afterwards. Exceptions to the late policy include: family emergencies, serious health and wellness issues, and logistical emergencies.

## *Anarchist Thought*

In a ten week course, we cannot cover all of the interesting schools of political thought on power. One glaring omission from this course is anarchist thought as typified in thinkers like Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who asserted that “anarchy is order without power.” If you are interested in exploring anarchist thought, I am happy to discuss this with you in office hours. I would recommend as a starting point that you read Emma Goldman's essay “Anarchism: What It Really Stands For,” which I have posted to the course website.