

PS 8440: Political Theory and Identity
M 5:30-8 pm, 413 GH
Fall 2010

Professor Heath Fogg Davis
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Office Hrs: T 1:30-3:30
+ by Appointment

Course Description

What does identity have to do with politics? In this graduate seminar, we take up this question from the perspective of the scholarly debates that have shaped the discourse within the discipline of political theory since the early 1990s. Which theories (or models) best capture the relationship between personal and public conceptions of familiar modern identities such as race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender expression, age, and ability? How might we best portray the intersections that exist between and among such identities? What is and/or should be the relationship between individualism and group affiliation/classification? As we grapple with these questions, we will also consider identities not usually discussed under the rubric of “identity politics,” such as criminality, medical status, homelessness, family membership, and rebellion. Our ideas about “the political” will also come under scrutiny as we study formal political venues such as political representation, social movements, and law and public policymaking.

Course Requirements

Discussions

Students are expected to have completed the weekly reading assignment before each meeting, and to come to class prepared to discuss the material. This seminar is a **learning community** that depends on everyone’s **active engagement**. We need you and your ideas in order to make this a vibrant space in which we all learn and grow intellectually. Our readings provide an anchor, not a limit, for our weekly discussions. I encourage you to make connections between the ideas you find in these texts and your own experiences, opinions, and questions. As a community, I encourage you to get to know your fellow students and to respond directly to one another in a respectful manner.

Attendance

We need you!

“Defender of the Text” Presentations

Each student will take a turn in leading our class discussions with a short 10-15 minute presentation of at least one of the major arguments of the week’s reading assignment. The presenter will serve as a “defender of the text,” which means presenting the author’s ideas in the strongest possible light (from within the text, if you will), regardless of the presenter’s own viewpoint. The purpose of this exercise is to generate substantive critical discussion. Please prepare a one-page outline of your presentation and bring it with you to class. I will make copies to distribute to each student. You will be graded both on the content and clarity of your handout and verbal presentation. This exercise requires that you distill the central argument of the text. Avoid giving a “comprehensive” blow-by-blow of the text.

Discussion Questions

Please post one substantive question based on the weekly reading assignment to our Blackboard site no later than noon the day of class. These questions can be based on any aspect of the

assigned readings for that class and must demonstrate substantive critical engagement with at least one major argument from the reading assignment. Presenters should post a question as well.

Research Paper

Students are required to write a 20-page research paper that stems from one or more of our course readings.

- a) A 1-2 page paper proposal, including a preliminary bibliography, is due in class **week 6**.
- b) Each student must present her or his prospectus to the seminar [**dates to be determined**]. Another student will serve as a discussant for each prospectus. I will match discussants with presenters.
- c) Final drafts of research papers are due at the beginning of our final class (**week 15**).

Grade Breakdown

“Defender of the text” presentation = 15%

Research paper proposal + its presentation = 15%

Discussant presentation = 10%

Critical discussion participation throughout the semester (includes weekly discussion questions posted to Blackboard, and contributions to class discussion)= 25%

Research paper = 35%

Note on Academic Conduct

You are expected to abide by the University’s rules of academic honesty. When you turn in someone else’s work under your own name, and/or paraphrase, quote, or borrow ideas that are not your own without proper citation, you commit plagiarism, a serious academic offense with consequences ranging from failing the course to disciplinary action by the University.

Students with Disabilities

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in Ritter Annex to arrange for reasonable accommodations for documented disabilities.

Statement on Academic Freedom

Freedom of speech is crucial in fostering a learning environment in which all feel welcome to participate. Please respect your colleagues’ viewpoints, even when they clash with your own. I also encourage you to consult the University’s policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02): http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02

Readings

Required Books:

Beltran, Cristina. 2010. *The Trouble With Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brown, Wendy. 2006. *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Feldman, Leonard. 2006. *Citizens Without Shelter*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Fraser, Nancy. 2003. *Redistribution or Recognition?* New York: Verso.

Charles Taylor, 1994. *Multiculturalism*, Amy Gutmann ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Shelby, Tommie. 2007. *We Who Are Dark*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Song, Sarah. 2007. *Justice, Gender, and the Politics of Multiculturalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Warner, Michael. 2005. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York, NY: Zone Press.

Young, Iris Marion. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Recommended:

Wayne C. Booth, Colomb, and Williams. 2003. *The Craft of Writing* (third edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Reading Assignments and Class Meeting Schedule

Week 1: 8/30

Introduction

No reading assignment

Week 2: 9/6

Labor Day—No Class

Week 3: 9/13

Taylor, *Multiculturalism*

Week 4: 9/20

Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*

Week 5: 9/27

Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition*

Week 6: 10/4

Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*

***Week 7: Wed 10/13, 12-2, location TBA**

Feldman, *Citizens Without Shelter*

Week 8: 10/18

No Class

Week 9: 10/25

Brown, *Regulating Aversion*

Week 10: 11/1

Shelby, *We Who Are Dark*

***Week 11: Wed 11/10, 12-2 pm, location TBA**

Song, *Justice, Gender, and the Politics of Multiculturalism*

Week 12: 11/15

Perspectives on Politics Symposium on "Choice Feminism" (articles to be distributed)

Week 13: 11/22

Beltran, *The Trouble With Unity*

Week 14: 11/29

Students' Choice: Class votes on topic and reading for today

Week 15: 12/6

Research Paper Presentations