

PSC/WSP 356.001: POLITICAL CONFLICT

Spring 2001

Class Time: T, Th 1:00-2:20

Classroom: HL 102

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course *does not* intend to survey the major themes and approaches in the field of peace and conflict studies nor does it intent to equip you with a primer or a set of technical skills on how to resolve or mediate conflicts. While the above may happen inadvertently, the aim of this course is much more modest. What we wish to do is to examine the accuracy of the following edict by the British novelist Graham Green: "Politics is in the air we breathe." To accomplish this task, we would look at how political ideologies, economic policies, or social prejudices have and will continue to shape our lives both as individuals and member of larger communities.

To decipher and dissect our own as well as other people's "politics," we will investigate the following set of topics: (a) our proclivity to obey authorities; (b) the relationship between power and violence; (c) the impact of social change on gender roles; (d) the rapport between structure and culture; and (e) the liaison between individual freedom and economic development.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY

A sage (Karl Jaspers) once said: "University life is no less dependent on students than on professors. The best professors flounder helplessly at a school where the student body is unfit. Hence, it is all up to the young people who are supposedly entitled to study. They must show themselves worthy of this privilege to the best of their ability."

This course has been organized on the premise that you are worthy of this privilege. The success of this course depends entirely on your continued and sustained participation. Therefore, I ask that you be agile participants and intervene as often as possible in class discussion. Please keep in mind that in this class you will be exposed to a wide range of behaviors, customs, experiences, and world-views that may differ from your own. This exposure may force you to question your present "understanding" of these problems or to unlearn what is already yet wrongfully learned. Who knows by the end of the course you might feel that you have taken part in a serendipitous voyage of discovery.

I expect you to complete all assigned readings *before* each class meeting, so that you are familiar with the idioms, theories, and controversies with which we are dealing. Since my presentations will complement rather than reiterate the assigned readings, it is expected that you attend *all* class meetings. Attendance in those sessions where a video is shown is important since you must relate the videos to your various paper assignments.

Please do not hesitate to see the TA or the instructor should you have problems with the course, or just want to talk. Our office hours provide us with an opportunity to get to know you better. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to take advantage of our office hours to pursue interests and concerns not raised in class. Students who may need special consideration because of any sort of disability should make an appointment to see us in private.

COURSE REQUIREMENT

- (1) The course will involve a fair amount of reading, writing, and speaking. Students are expected to write a minimum of three or a maximum of four *reflection* (not research) papers on the major course themes. Those who decide to write four papers will have their lowest grade dropped. The objective of this exercise is to provide you the opportunity to succinctly articulate your thoughts and muster support for your arguments. The papers should be between 6 to 8 pages, typed, stapled, and double-spaced. Please be advised that late papers will be substantially penalized. As such, students need to speak to me beforehand if, because of some bona fide emergency, they need an extension of the deadline. Further guidelines on how to write the papers will be provided in class. The four papers are respectively *due* on February 13; March 6; April 3, and May 1.
- (2) To facilitate your intellectual participation, a listserv will be set up for this course. You are encouraged to use this venue to voice your opinions, engage in spirited - yet polite - debates with your classmates, and make queries.
- (3) In addition, we will assign a minimum of two students to lead each class discussion. During these 15-20 minutes presentations, you are expected to engage your classmates in an animated discussion of the material read. To make this a worthwhile exercise, student presenters are expected to e-mail their critical commentary and discussion questions to the listserv one to two days before their scheduled presentations.

GRADING CRITERIA

Papers	(75%)
Oral Presentation	(15%)
Quality of Class and Listserv Discussions	(10%)

The final grade will also consider improvement during the term.

Knowledge without ethics is not so much bad ethics as inferior knowledge.

-- Ashis Nandy

REQUIRED TEXTS

Hannah Arendt, On Violence. Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1970.

Jay MacLeod, Ain't No Makin' It: Aspirations & Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood. Boulder: Westview Press, 1995.

Peggy Orenstein, Flux: Women on Sex, Work, Kids, Love, and Life in a Half-Changed World. New York: Doubleday, 2000.

Willem Reich, Listen, Little Man!, Noonday Press, 1974.

Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom. New York: Anchor Books, 2000.

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 16: Overview of the Course: Logistics, trajectory, expectations, and goals

Unit 1: On Obedience and Violence

Jan. 18: Reich – pp. ix-67

Jan. 23: Reich – pp. 68-128

Jan. 25: Videos: "*Faces of the Enemy*" (VC 6509) & "*The Language of War*" (VC 7525)

Jan. 30: Video: "*The Triumph of Evil*" (VC 0137)

Feb. 1: Arendt – pp. 3-31

Feb. 6: Arendt – pp. 35-56

Feb. 8: Arendt – pp. 59-87

Unit 2: Gender and Social Change

Feb. 13: Orenstein – pp. 1-60

(1st paper is due)

Feb. 15: Orenstein – pp. 61-120

Feb. 20: Videos: "*Dowry Deaths in India*," "*Sex Business in Southeast Asia*," and "*Women Warriors*" (VC 7523)

Feb. 22: Orenstein – pp. 121-184

Feb. 27: Orenstein – pp. 185-236

Mar. 1: Orenstein – pp. 237-293

Unit 3: Impact of Race and Class on Social Mobility

Mar. 6: MacLeod – chapters 1-2

(2nd paper is due)

Mar. 8: MacLeod – chapter 3
Mar. 13: No class (*Spring Break*)
Mar. 15: No class (*Spring Break*)
Mar. 20: MacLeod – chapters 4-5
Mar. 22: MacLeod – chapters 6-8
Mar. 27: MacLeod – chapters 9-10
Mar. 29: MacLeod – chapter 11 & Appendix

Unit 4: The Liaison Between Freedom and Development

Apr. 3: Sen – Introduction & Chapter 1
Apr. 5: Sen – Chapters 2&3 (3rd paper is due)
Apr. 10: Sen – Chapter 4
Apr. 12: Videos: “*Paying the Price: Killing the Children of Iraq*,” (VC 9237)
Apr. 17: Sen – Chapter 5
Apr. 19: Sen – Chapters 6 & 7
Apr. 24: Sen – Chapters 8 & 9 “*Malaysian Tribe*”
Apr. 26: Sen – Chapter 10
May 1: Sen – Chapters 11 & 12 (4th paper is due)

1. Discuss evidence for and against the proposition, “All political conflicts – including ethnic, religious, gender, and generational conflicts –ultimately boil down to class conflicts. Rich people tend to be politically favored and poor people are not, regardless of ethnicity, religion, gender, or age.