***Continental Political Thought: Democracy, Language, and Ethics***

UCLA

Department of Political Science: 116B

Winter 2020

Instructor: Dr. Kye Barker kyebarker@ucla.edu

Classroom: Haines A2 Office: Bunche 4258

Class time: 5-6:15pm Office Hours: W 2pm-4pm

**Course Description**

Continental political thought of the 20th century begins with a malaise towards representative democracy. The fruit of the republican revolutions of the 18th century and the democratic revolutions of the 19th century, representative democracy found itself to be the object of critique in the 20th century. This course aims to understand that critique, particularly as it was developed by continental political thinkers broadly on the left, and to pursue some of the alternative forms of political action and organization which they suggested might ameliorate the democratic deficit of the representative form. However, this course is not intended to present a comprehensive account of continental political thought, but rather offers a selection of authors around a shared set of questions.

Continental political thought has been shaped by a shared concern with language. This concern led to a significant question regarding contemporary representative democracy: if human beings are fundamentally shaped by and interrelated by language, then how can representative democracy be called democratic when it leaves nearly all citizens, outside of the moment of voting, without a voice? Furthermore, what ethical and linguistic practices are necessary to sustain the life of democracy? The readings for the course, which come from a few different traditions of thought that include Phenomenology, Critical Theory, Post-Marxism, and Post-Structuralism, engage with this set of problems. The course will be organized into three sets of readings. Each set deals with a similar bundle of concerns – democracy, language, and ethics – while giving priority to a different aspect of this bundle. The assignment structure for the course will be a combination of short writing assignments and quizzes.

**Required Texts**

*The following texts are required for this course and are available at the UCLA bookstore. While you are free to seek out cheaper options for purchase, make sure that they are the exact same editions as those assigned below. If in doubt, use the ISBN.*

* Judith Butler, *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Harvard University Press, 2018. ISBN: 9780674983984
* Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, Stanford University Press, 2005. ISBN: 9780804749510
* Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Verso, 2014. ISBN: 9781781681541
* Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, University of Illinois Press, 2006. ISBN: 9780252073267
* Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, University of Minnesota Press, 2004. ISBN: 9780816628452
* Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, MIT Press, 1988. ISBN: 9780262691260

**Course Overview and Reading Assignments**

***The Problem***

**Week 1. Schmitt: You Call This Democracy?**

* Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, pgs. 1-76

***Part 1. Democracy, Language, Ethics***

**Week 2. Arendt: Participatory Democracy**

* Hannah Arendt, “What is Freedom?” from *Between Past and Future* (CCLE)
* Hannah Arendt, “The Revolutionary Tradition and its Lost Treasure” from *On Revolution* (CCLE)

**Week 3. Habermas: Deliberative Democracy**

* Jürgen Habermas “Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Justification” from *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (CCLE)
* Jürgen Habermas, “Deliberative Politics: A Procedural Concept of Democracy” from *Between Facts and Norms* (CCLE)

*\*\*\*No class on Monday for MLK Day\*\*\**

**Week 4. Young: Critical Democracy**

* Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, Introduction-Chapter 3 (CCLE)

*\*\*\*First papers due on Turnitin Friday at 5pm and the following Monday in hard copy\*\*\**  
  
***Part 2. Language, Democracy, Ethics***

**Week 5. Althusser: The Closure of Ideology**

* Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” from *Lenin and Philosophy* (CCLE)

**Week 6. Laclau and Mouffe: The Opening of Radical Democracy**

* Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, pgs. xxi-8 & 75-177

**Week 7. Rancière: Democracy as Rupture**

* Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, all – (skim chapter 4)

*\*\*\*No class on Monday for President’s Day\*\*\**  
*\*\*\*Second papers due on Turnitin Friday at 5pm and the following Monday in hard copy\*\*\**

***Part 3. Ethics, Language, Democracy***

**Week 8. Levinas: Ethics of the Other**

* Emmanuel Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, all

**Week 9. Derrida: Democracy as Other**

* Jacques Derrida, “Différance” from *Margins of Philosophy* (CCLE)
* Jacques Derrida, “Part I: The Reason of the Strongest (Are there Rogue States?)” from *Rogues*

**Week 10. Butler: A Democratic Ethos**

* Judith Butler, *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Introduction, chapters 1, 3, 5, & 6

*\*\*\*Third papers due on Turnitin on Friday, March 20 by 5pm\*\*\**

**Course Expectation and Goals**

Simply put, the primary goal of this course will be to attempt to understand the assigned readings, which is no simple goal. Reading these books will be difficult, but immensely rewarding. *It will be absolutely essential that you complete all the week’s readings before the Monday meeting of class.* You should then bring the assigned readings and your notes to every class.Although the classes will primarily be organized around lectures, it is important that you still actively participate in class through taking notes, responding to the questions that I pose, and asking questions yourself. This means that you should come to class prepared with a few written questions. Additionally, and this is crucial, it will be paramount that you treat other participants in discussions with respect. We are dealing with controversial themes and texts, the meanings of which are essentially contestable. You will be encouraged to take a reasoned position on these texts beyond merely having an opinion.

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| A+ | 97-100 |
| A | 93-96.99 |
| A- | 90-92.99 |
| B+ | 87-89.99 |
| B | 83-86.99 |
| B- | 80-82.99 |
| C+ | 77-79.99 |
| C | 73-76.99 |
| C- | 70-72.99 |
| D+ | 67-69.99 |
| D | 63-66.99 |
| D- | 60-62.99 |

**Assignments and Evaluation**

Evaluation for the course will be based on quizzes and essays. I use the standard UCLA grading scale for all assignments and for the course as a whole (see right).

*Quizzes – 25% of Final Grade*

There will be six randomly assigned in-class quizzes throughout the quarter. Your lowest grade will be dropped, meaning that each quiz will be worth 5% of your final grade. These quizzes are meant to check that you are keeping up with the reading and attending class. The material covered in the quizzes will primarily include the reading assignment for the week in which they occur. You may use your own hand-written notes for these quizzes. Quizzes may only be made up in the case of emergencies. Make up quizzes will happen at the end of the quarter and will cover material from throughout the quarter.

*Three Papers – 75% of Final Grade*

The main assessment for this course will be in the form of three short argumentative essays of 3-4 pages due at the ends of the fourth, seventh and exam weeks. Respectively, the papers will be worth 20%, 25%, and 30% of your final grade, so that improvement will be weighed in your favor. For each essay, you will be tested on your ability to demonstrate the knowledge you have acquired about the ideas and theories of the course in the shape of a reasoned argument that draws upon the evidence of the texts themselves. More information will be provided when the assignment prompts are distributed.

The graded first and second essays will be returned before the following essays are due. Although there is a reader for the course, since I will be unable to grade all the essays myself, I will be more than happy to meet with you to discuss how to improve your papers. However, I ask that you wait at least a few hours after receiving your papers before seeking additional feedback.

**Additional Information and Campus Resources**

**Availability:** The best way to contact me is by email. I will return your emails as soon as possible, but if I have not responded within 24 hours, please contact me again. I usually only respond to emails during normal work hours, so it will take longer for me to respond to you if you write me during the evening or weekend. If you have a question that you expect will take a few paragraphs or more to answer, the best time to ask it will be during my office hours. I am always available to talk during office hours on a first come, first served basis. Students may also make appointments to meet one-on-one via email, although I cannot guarantee that I will always be available. If you are struggling with the readings, assignments, or with lecture, please come talk to me!

**Electronic Devices:** Your cell phones must be turned off and out of sight during class. Only use laptops or other electronic devices for course related material. I strongly recommend that you bring hard copies of all the course reading to class and takes hand-written notes, not only because studies show that both are more effective for learning, but also because you will only be able to use handwritten notes on quizzes.

**Accommodations for Students:** If you wish to request an accommodation due to a disability, please contact the Center for Accessible Education (formerly called the Office for Students with Disabilities) as soon as possible at A255 Murphy Hall, (310) 825-1501 / TDD: (310) 206-6083. Website: <http://www.cae.ucla.edu/>

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is taken seriously at UCLA and by me. The Dean of Students Office is charged with responding when students are accused of committing a violation of policy, which includes cheating, plagiarism, multiple submissions, and facilitating academic dishonesty. These violations can result in failing the assignment or even the course. If you are unsure if something goes against University policy, contact me.<http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Portals/16/Documents/Syllabus.pdf>

**The Undergraduate Writing Center** offers UCLA undergraduates one-on-one sessions on their writing. The Center is staffed by writing consultants who are trained to help at any stage in the writing process and with writing assignments from across the curriculum. PLFs tailor appointments to the concerns of each writer. To schedule an appointment, visit <http://www.wp.ucla.edu>. UCLA’s Student Writing Center is located in A61 Humanities. Telephone: 310-206-1320. Email: [wcenter@ucla.edu](mailto:wcenter@ucla.edu).

**Emergencies:** In an emergency situation, please call UCPD by dialing 911 from an on-campus phone or (310) 825-1491. Anonymous Reporting Line: (310) 794-5824.

**Title IX**: prohibits gender discrimination, sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the CARE Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, 1st Floor Wooden Center West, CAREadvocate@careprogram.ucla.edu, (310) 206-2465. You can also report sexual violence or sexual harassment directly to the University’s Title IX Coordinator, 2241 Murphy Hall, titleix@conet.ucla.edu, (310) 206-3417. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD at (310) 825-1491. Please note that under University policy, all TAs and instructors are mandated Title IX reporters. If any of the teaching team is informed of or witnesses sexual violence or harassment, we are required to report this to UCLA’s Title IX coordinator. The coordinator is committed to maintaining anonymity of victims and so are we.