UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

CSPT 501/601 A01 (CRN 13479/13498)     Peyman Vahabzadeh
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This is the required Core Course for all incoming CSPT students and it offers an in-
depth survey of the major tenets of contemporary cultural, social, and political thought.
The purpose of this course is to cover a breadth of key literature in contemporary theory
in relative depth. As the wide range of readings and topics in this course indicates, the
intention is to train the student in the “foundational” approaches in cultural, social, and
political theory.

We will start the class by the instructor’s lecture (about an hour) followed by the
(assigned) student reflections on the week’s readings (10-15 minutes) and class
discussion (30 minutes). Then there will be the instructor’s lecture (over an hour). The
students will then engage in group and class discussions with the purpose of
clarification of the readings. As such, the students are required to have read the week’s
assigned readings and be prepared to fully engage with the material and instructor.
Participation is an important component of the course. Equally important is the student
presentation and leading class discussion.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
Please note that the excerpts and articles for this course are placed on online Library
Reserves, available to students registered in the course. However, in case of larger
excerpts from a book, some sources are only available as hard copy on Reserve.

Antonio Gramsci, “The Intellectuals” (3-23), “Notes on Italian History” (52-59, 104-114,
118-120), “Political Struggle and Military War” (229-238), “The Transition from
the War of Manoeuvre to the War of Position” (238-239), “Some Problems in the
Study of the Philosophy of Praxis” (323-343), “Structure and Superstructure”
ISBN: 0-7178-0397

Georg Lukacs, “Class Consciousness” & “Reification and the Consciousness of the
Proletariat,” in History and Class Consciousness (Boston: MIT Press, 1968). 46-82,
83-222. ISBN: 9-780262-620208

Louis Althusser, “Contradiction and Overdetermination,” in For Marx (London/New

Herbert Marcuse, “Repressive Tolerance.” Available at: http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/60spubs/65repressivetolerance.htm


**EVALUATION:**

*NOTE: Differential evaluation will be used for grading MA and PhD students in terms of the depth of analysis and engagement with the readings.*

- Presentation on the week’s readings 10%
- Participation 10%
- Analytical Response paper, 8-10 pages (December 3, 2014) 25%
- Paper abstract, 1 page (March 4, 2015) 5%
- Term paper, 20 pages (MAs) or 25 pages (PhDs) (April 15, 2015) 50%

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Student presentation involves a 15-20 minute **critical** engagement with the reading(s) of the week. The student(s) is (are) expected to show theoretical understanding and deep reading. The presenter(s) will then lead the 30-minute class discussion. The depth of your engagement and criticism will earn you the grade for this assignment.

2. Participation (10%) is not attendance!

3. The Reflection Paper involves a purely conceptual reflection with a set of readings of the your choice in that they present a common thread. The reflection paper should show how a certain theme or concern is conceptually constructed or pursued by an author or a number of authors. Conceptual clarity and the depth of reflection will determine your grade.

4. The paper abstract is a one-pager that will explain to me what your term paper topic will be. You will receive the grade for it for submitting it, but you do need to come and see me as follow up and discuss your topic with me (mandatory!).
5. The Term Paper will offer a theoretical topic with a topic of your choice. The term paper will be graded based on the presentation of the theoretical problem, a journey into the various aspects of the theoretical problem, proper discussion, and an attempt at a solution. Proper citation and academic writing are also taken into account.

6. All assignments should include proper referencing style for any information borrowed from another source in any form or shape (paraphrase or direct quotes).

A Note on Late Assignments
Assignment due dates are firm. Late assignments will not be accepted. Late assignments due to medical or extenuating circumstances are to be delivered along with proper documentation. In such cases, advance notification to the instructor is required. Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor if they anticipate late assignments due to other reasons.

Course Experience Survey (CES)
I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

CSPT 501/601 Reading List
Please read in the order described.

Week 1 (September 3)
Introduction to CSPT 501/601
No readings for this week

Week 2 (September 17)
Early Twentieth Century Hegelian Marxism
Gramsci, sections from the Prison Notebooks
Lukacs, “Class Consciousness” & “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat”

Week 3 (October 1)
Structuralist Marxism & the Frankfurt School
Althusser “Contradiction and Overdetermination” & “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”
Marcuse, Ch. 5-6 of One Dimensional Man & “Repressive Tolerance”
Debray, “Socialism: A Life-Cycle”
Week 4 (October 15)
Rights and Exceptionalism
Arendt, “Decline of Nation-State”
Agamben, State of Exception

Week 5 (October 29)
Humanity, Animality
Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”
Shiva, “Mad Cow, Sacred Cow”
Agamben, The Open

Week 6 (November 19)
Epoch and Technology

Week 7 (December 3)
The Ontological Difference
Heidegger, Identity and Difference

Week 8 (January 7)
Post-Heideggerian Thought
Vattimo, chapters from Nihilism and Emancipation
Arendt, On Violence

Week 9 (January 21)
Deconstruction
Derrida, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” in Writing and Difference and “Difference” and “Signature Event Context” in Margins of Philosophy
Derrida, On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness

Week 10 (February 4)
Postmarxism
Laclau and Mouffe, chapters from Hegemony and Socialist Strategy
Laclau, “Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?”

Week 11 (February 18)
Aboriginal Thought
Guest Lecture by Dr. Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark (Department of Political Science)
READINGS: TBA

Week 12 (March 4)
African Liberation Theory
Wise, Chs. 3-4

**Week 13 (March 18)**

*Postcolonial Theory*
Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”
Ranajit Guha, “Dominance without Hegemony”
Homi Bhabha, “The Third Space”
Vahabzadeh, “The Conditions of Subalternity”

**Week 14 (April 1)**

*Summary and Conclusions*
Vahabzadeh, “Ultimate Referentiality: Radical Phenomenology and New Interpretive Sociology”