Course Overview

The necessity of hope is a common theme in discussions of politics. From Thomas More’s *Utopia*, to Ernst Blochs’ *The Principle of Hope*, to Shepard Fairey’s iconic poster of Barack Obama, the idea that concrete political practice must ultimately be grounded in a sense of hope for the future is widely accepted and articulated. And yet, what happens when we find ourselves in a situation that feels hopeless? Does this necessarily mean the end of politics? Or can we imagine a politics that comes *after* hope?
In this seminar we will explore the question of what politics look like when we have abandoned - or rejected - the idea that we can or should expect the future to get better. In some cases this will be an empirical question, as we grapple with evidence around coming ecological, technological, or geopolitical catastrophe. In other cases it is more philosophical or political, as we think about what role the idea of ‘hope’ might play in sustaining, or obscuring, certain forms of oppression, or the way in which it might serve to prop up an unacceptable status quo. We might also ask what kinds of political tactics and strategies become possible once we have abandoned or rejected hope. And finally, this might lead us to think about alternative ways of thinking about politics that do not, or have never, taken hope as central or necessary.

Though this is a course in political theory, it will draw from a variety of fields and theoretical traditions, including international relations, environmental political thought, queer theory, critical race theory, and contemporary indigenous thought. Students will be expected to engage critically with a variety of texts and ideas, and develop those engagements through in-class discussion and written assignments.

Assignments
Class Participation
Students are expected to show up to all classes, having done the readings, prepared to participate in discussion. If students have any concerns about participating in class discussions, they should talk to the professor to work out alternate arrangements.

Response Papers
Students will write three response papers over the course of the semester. Each paper will be 1-2 pages long, double spaced, and focus on one week’s readings (or a portion thereof), and are due at the beginning of that week’s class. The paper will a) provide an overview of the major argument of the reading, and b) provide a critical reflection on some aspect of the reading. Note you are not expected to draw on any outside research, and I would avoid extensive quoting or paraphrasing, instead focusing on describing the argument in your own voice and developing your own response. You must write one response paper for each ‘part’ of the course (Environmental Political Theory, Queer and Feminist Theory, and Critical Race Theory). You cannot write a response paper on the week you are presenting.

In-Class Presentation
Each class, one student will be responsible for a 30-minute presentation on that day’s readings. This presentation will have two components: 1) You will provide a general description of the themes and issues raised in that week's readings. This section will take about 10-15 minutes. 2) You will be expected to foster class discussion for the rest of your time, through presenting questions or providing themes for conversation.

Research Paper
A 15-17 page paper on a subject of your choosing related to the course themes and readings. However, the professor must sign off on your choice of topic. If you wish, your research paper may incorporate elements of your in-class presentation.
Final Grade Breakdown
15% Participation
15% Response Papers
30% In-Class Presentation
40% Research Paper

Incomplete Policy
Students who do not submit a research paper, or do an in-class presentation will receive an N for the semester.

Late Policy
Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day. Extensions can only be granted in documented cases of illness, mental health concerns, or family emergency.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity
Academic integrity is intellectual honesty and responsibility for academic work that you submit individually or as a member of a group. It involves commitment to the values of honesty, trust and responsibility. It is expected that students will respect these ethical values in all activities related to learning, teaching, research and service. Therefore, plagiarism and other acts against academic integrity are serious academic offences.

The responsibility of the institution - Instructors and academic units have the responsibility to ensure that standards of academic honesty are met. By doing so, the institution recognizes students for their hard work and assures them that other students do not have an unfair advantage through cheating on essays, exams, and projects.

The responsibility of the student - Plagiarism sometimes occurs due to a misunderstanding regarding the rules of academic integrity, but it is the responsibility of the student to know them. If you are unsure about the standards for citations or for referencing your sources, ask your instructor. Depending on the severity of the case, penalties include a warning, a failing grade, a record on the student’s transcript, or a suspension. It is your responsibility to understand the University’s policy on academic integrity, which can be found on pages 32-34 of the undergraduate calendar.

Please see the (revised) academic integrity policy: https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html

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.
Texts
Thom Van Dooren *Flight Ways*
Jairus Victor Grove *Savage Ecologies*
Lee Edelman *No Future*
Heike Schotten *Queer Terror*
Ta-Nehisi Coates *Between the World and Me*

Additional readings will be available on the coursespace site.

Class Schedule

Part 1 - Annihilating Hope: Environmental Political Theory

Week 1
Jan. 10:
-Roy Scranton “Learning to die in the Anthropocene”
-Kate Marvel “We Need Courage, Not Hope, to Face Climate Change”
- “Uncivilisation: The Dark Mountain Manifesto” Parts I & II
-Robin Wall Kimmerer “Skywoman Falling” in *Braiding Sweetgrass* [10 Pages]

Week 2
Jan. 17:
-Thom Van Dooren *Flightways* pp.1-145

Week 3
Jan. 24:
-Jairus Grove *Savage Ecologies* pp 1-113

Week 4
Jan. 31:
-Jairus Grove *Savage Ecologies* pp. 191-281

*Meet the Author Session*

Week 5
Feb. 7:
-Kyle Whyte “Too late for indigenous climate justice: Ecological and relational tipping points” *WIREs Climate Change* 11:1 (January/February 2020) [7 Pages]
-Robin Wall Kimmerer “The Sacred and the Superfund” in *Braiding Sweetgrass* [30 Pages]
-Robin Wall Kimmerer “Collateral Damage” in *Braiding Sweetgrass* [11 Pages]
Part 2 - Resisting Hope: Queer and Feminist Theory

Week 6
Feb. 14:
-Lee Edelman No Future pp.1-110

Week 7
Feb. 21: Class Cancelled for Reading Break

Week 8
Feb. 28:
-Lee Edelman No Future pp. 111-155
-Baedan “The Anti-Social Turn” Journal of Queer Nihilism pp. 4-33 [29 Pages]
-Heike Schotten “Introduction” Queer Terror

Week 9
Mar. 6:
-Heike Schotten Queer Terror 1-92

Week 10
Mar. 13
-Heike Schotten Queer Terror 93-169

*Meet the Author Session*
-Sara Ahmed “Feminist Killjoys (and Other Willful Subjects)” S&F Online 8.3 (Summer, 2010) [8 Pages]

Part 3 - Rejecting Hope: Critical Race Theory and Afro-Pessimism

Week 11
Mar. 20
-Ta-Nehisi Coates Between the World and Me
-Lester Spence “’Coates Is a Realist, Not a Pessimist’: Lester Spence Responds to Melvin Rogers” Dissent August 13, 2015
-Melvin Rogers “’Coates Isn’t Hopeful’: Melvin Rogers Responds to Lester Spence” Dissent August 13, 2015
Week 12
Mar. 27
- Frank B. Wilderson III “Blacks and the Master/Slave Relation: Interviewed by C.S. Soong.” Against the Grain KPFA Radio. [Audio Recording]
- Robyn Maynard “The Black Side of the Mosaic” from Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present [30 Pages]

Week 13
Apr. 3
- Jared Sexton “Afro-Pessimism: The Unclear Word” Rhizomes 29 (2016)