SOC 6110 – Political Sociology II: Political Economy - Fall 2020
Dr. Kristin Plys (kristin.plys@utoronto.ca) Room 326, 725 Spadina)
Room 240 and Zoom/10am-noon/Tuesdays
Course Website

Course Description

Before departments of economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology were established in the early 20th century, there was political economy. Political economy viewed politics and economics as inseparable forces that shaped each other and in turn shaped social life. After the formation of the different social science disciplines we have today, various elements of this more holistic view were divided into distinct disciplines. Economics, political science and sociology became nomothetic disciplines that endeavoured to know “the economic”, “the political” and “the social”, respectively. History and anthropology became ideographic disciplines that narrated and described the past, in the case of history, and the present and non-Western in the case of anthropology. Political economy remains today as an important subfield in all five of these separate disciplines. In this course, we will read and discuss ten important works of political economy and we will write our own essay-length contributions to the field of political economy.

While it would be disingenuous to deny my knowledge and expertise in political economy, I don’t care to perpetuate the hierarchical model of graduate education in which graduate students are the recipients of knowledge as transmitted through the professor, but one in which students are equal and active participants. This “student as producer” approach is grounded in anarchist pedagogy; the theories epitomized in 19th century Catalan educationist, Francisco Ferrer’s Escuela Moderna, in which classes were organized around the principles of solidarity and equity; the founding philosophy of Université Paris-8 where small group discussion and debate of ideas is the pedagogical priority; and is informed by the work of Walter Benjamin, particularly his 1934 essay, “Author as Producer,” which focuses on how radical intellectuals can best respond to moments of crisis. As Jaques Rancière contends, democracy cannot emerge from hierarchy. One must begin from the presupposition of equality.

Because this course takes places within the structure of the university, one cannot dismantle all aspects of professorial authority. After all, the Graduate Office holds me accountable to meet certain administrative and pedagogical goals, and the registrar requires me to submit marks for each course participant at the end of term. But within these confines, I see my role as course facilitator to create a space in which we as course participants can establish and reach our own collective learning goals through both collective and individual decision making about the learning process. A facilitator is often necessary to ensure timely decision-making and
coordination, but a facilitator is not “in charge”, does not give orders, does not make decisions, but instead helps guide participants to reach collective goals. In that sense, a facilitator is more akin to a “team captain”.

In my role as course facilitator I propose that this course be run similar to a reading group. We can collectively decide on a reading list on the first day of the course and each week we can take turns leading the discussion of that week’s chosen book. By the end of the course, we can each write something of article length within the subfield of political economy — either a draft of a publishable article, a mock political sociology comp exam, a literature review for a dissertation, or some other option that will help course participants to reach their intellectual and career goals — and then we will share it with each other to solicit critical feedback that will help us towards our goals of publication, submission for degree requirements, or some other goal.

The goal in having a collectively chosen reading list is to provide participants with:
(1) A chance to read for the first time, or to revisit, works of political economy that you suspect will be helpful for your intellectual work and/or political praxis
(2) and you believe that you would benefit from discussing this book with others, because, of course, you are free to read whatever you like on your own!

The goal of the writing assignment is to work collectively towards our individual writing goals and/or to produce an intellectual statement within the field of political economy. Perhaps you think your writing time is best spent writing an article that will help better position you for the job market, or perhaps you would like to begin writing your literature review for your dissertation, maybe you want to create your own sample comp question and write a practice comp exam, or perhaps you’re not interested in writing something more academic and would instead prefer to write a manifesto or an essay written for a more popular audience. However you think your writing time is best used is up to you. We will then use our final class as a time to read each others’ work in advance and give critical, supportive, and helpful, feedback.

The course will be delivered by dual delivery. In the beginning of the term when the weather is nice, we will meet outside on the U of T campus for those of us who are able or willing. The course facilitator will send an announcement about meeting places for those interested in attending in-person sessions. The course facilitator will have a laptop available to allow for zoom participation for students who are not able to attend in person. Once it becomes too cold to meet outside, or if it rains during our scheduled course time, we will all meet over zoom at that time.

Session Topics & Readings


And other readings TBD

Proposed responsibilities of class participants
1. Facilitating a discussion (or discussions, depending on enrolment) of a book or three or four articles of your choosing. On the first day of the course, each course participant will
choose one book or three to four articles to add to the reading list. You will then be responsible for introducing the reading for the week you have chosen the book or articles. Please come to the first day of class with your chosen readings in mind or a topic so that the course facilitator can help you choose readings. You may choose your selections from the list below but you are also free to choose articles or books not included in the list. [worth 30% of your final mark]

2. Memos, attendance, and participation— a seminar cannot function unless we all show up and are prepared to discuss the book! In order to better facilitate class discussion, I recommend that each of us write up a paragraph to a page long summary of the book, prepare one discussion question, and write a sentence or two connecting the book’s themes to current events. I have found that in writing literature reviews or theory sections of books/articles I often revisit the reading memos I wrote during my grad school coursework and find them incredibly useful in remembering key texts quickly. [worth 20% of your final mark]

3. Breakout writing group participation — at the beginning of the term, you and one or two other classmates will form a writing group. You will have an initial meeting to discuss your writing goals for the term and how you will work towards them over the course of the semester. Your group will meet periodically to check in on each other and discuss your progress. In the final session of the course you will have read a first draft of each others’ essays and will give comments and feedback for revision. [worth 10% of your final mark]

4. Writing something of article-length (8,000 words) within the subfield of political economy [worth 40% of your final mark]

General Guidelines for Papers:
• 12 point font, double spaced.
• At least 1” margins on all sides.
• Check spelling and read your work before turning it in.
• Use proper citation conventions.
• Avoid totalizing terms such as “always,” “never,” “totally,” and “completely,” or phrases like “since the beginning of time…”, which lead to weak theorizing because they oversimplify the human condition.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memos</td>
<td>Summary, application, and discussion question for the week’s readings</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion facilitator</td>
<td>Choose the week’s reading and facilitate the discussion for that day’s class</td>
<td>Dates will be assigned in class</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakout writing group participation</td>
<td>With one or two of your classmates, form a writing group and check in on each others’ progress towards the final writing goal throughout the semester, read and comment on a draft of your group’s papers.</td>
<td>8th December</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article-length writing assignment</td>
<td>8,000 word essay on political economy</td>
<td>15th December 10am</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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**Evaluation (including Penalty for Lateness Clause)**

Late assignments will be deducted a third of a letter grade for each day (24-hours) that the assignment is late. So for example, if you hand in an assignment after 10am on the date due, and it would have been marked ‘A+’ it will be deducted to an ‘A’. If you submit an assignment at 5pm the day after it is due, and it would have been marked an ‘A+’ it will be deducted by two-thirds of a letter grade to an ‘A-’. Late assignments will not be accepted after 7 days.

**Academic Integrity Clause**

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean’s office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well: (http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize).
According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters it is an offence "to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters) and Code of Student Conduct (http://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/publicationsandpolicies/codeofstudentconduct.htm) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

**Accessibility Services**

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council “Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities” at http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppnov012004.pdf.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca. The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at
Equity and Diversity Statement

Equity and Diversity

The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated.

Additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto is available at http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca.

Course Schedule and Class Lecture Details

Week 1 15th September:
(1) Collectively decide on a reading list
   Each course participant will choose one book or three to four articles to add to the reading list. They will then be responsible for introducing the reading for the week they have chosen the book or articles. Please come to class with readings in mind. You may choose your selections from the list below but you can also choose articles or books not included in the list.
(2) Form writing groups and set up first meeting date and time
   Each course participant will form a reading group of at least 2 but no more than 4 course participants and meet periodically with their group to discuss progress made toward writing goals for the term
(3) Make any other collectively desired changes to the syllabus

Week 2 22nd September:
   Discussion of Marx’s Capital Vol. 1 led by Kristin

Week 3 29th September: TBD

Week 4 6th October: TBD

Week 5 13th October: TBD

Week 6 20th October: TBD
Week 7 27th October: TBD

Week 8 3rd November: TBD

Week 9 17th November: TBD

Week 10 24th November: TBD

Week 11 1st December: TBD

Week 12 8th December: Peer review of article-length essay drafts

Article-length essay due: **15th December 2020**

For those of you who might not have ideas of what to propose for our course reading list, I’ve compiled my own list of what I see as some of the most important works of political economy from which you may choose. You are certainly not relegated to this list and may choose any book or grouping of articles as long as they are within the subfield of political economy.

**Possible reading selections:**


Fanon, Frantz (1963 [2004]). *Wretched of the Earth* New York: Grove Press.


Hobson, John A. (1902). Imperialism: A Study


Meinhof, Ulrike (2008). *Everybody Talks about the Weather... We Don’t: The Writings of Ulrike Meinhoff* New York: Seven Stories Press


Skocpol, Theda (1979). *States & Social Revolutions* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


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