

POSC 261

Power, Freedom, and Resistance

Fall 2012

Class Hours: MW 1:50PM- 3:00PM, F 2:20PM-3:20PM

Classroom: Willis 203

Professor: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp

Office: Willis 418

Office Hours: MW: 3:00 PM-5:00 PM or by appointment

Course Description

Politics can be defined as struggle for power. However, what power means is neither self-evident nor a non-controversial issue. In this course we will explore the conceptions that Michel Foucault, a French thinker, and Hannah Arendt, a Jewish American thinker, entertained on the issue of power. We will address questions such as: Is the grip of power total or are resistance and freedom intrinsic components of power? What distinguishes power from violence and force? What is the relationship between critique, reason, and philosophy, on the one hand, and power, on the other hand? What is the relationship between power and revolution? What are revolutions and in what sense are they entirely modern phenomena?

Course objectives

To understand the conceptions that Arendt and Foucault entertained on the meaning of power;
To understand the cultural assumptions on which the Western notion of power relies;
To understand the differences between power, violence, and strength;
To grasp the connections between power and freedom;
To explore and understand the notion of revolution and its role in politics;
To become better readers, thinkers, speakers, and writers

Achieving the Course Objectives:

We will learn about the specific nature of power, freedom, and revolution by carefully and closely reading the following books:

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, 1998

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, Penguin Books, 1990

Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010

Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

The Foucault Reader, editor Paul Rabinow, Vintage Books, 2010.

Course Requirements:

Two short (three-page) papers (20% each): one paper on Foucault (**due on October 12**) and one on Arendt

- (i) For the paper on Foucault you can choose one of the following topics:
- Provide two reasons for which you think Foucault's late conception of power grants more to individual agency and freedom than his view from *Discipline and Punishment*
 - Many see Foucault as a critic of reason and philosophy. Drawing on Foucault's late work, reject or rather critically refine such a statement.
 - Present the main tenets of what Foucault calls "an aesthetics of existence" and explain the ways in which this impacts on his late conception of politics and ethics
- (ii) For the paper on Arendt (**due on November 8**) you can choose one of the following topics:
- Arendt states that freedom is not sovereignty. She also argues that action has frustrating features that might tempt individuals to give up altogether life in the public realm. Explain the ways in which her conception of freedom and action underlies her view of power.
 - Arendt distinguishes between violence, force, and power, as well as between liberation and freedom. Explain how she applies these distinctions to her critical discussion of the French and the American Revolution. Do you agree with her view?
 - Arendt seems to positively value what she calls "the revolutionary spirit." Define this notion, explain the reasons Arendt has to positively value the revolutionary spirit, and compare her view of the revolutionary spirit with Foucault's conception of life as revolutionary militancy.

Final Take-Home Exam(35%)

Active and informed class participation: This includes: (i) attending classes; (ii) doing the readings for the day; (iii) in class quizzes; and (iv) in class assignments that will test your degree of familiarization with and understanding of the readings that you were requested to prepare for the current day **(10%)**

Class presentations: You will be required to prepare 10-15 minutes presentations of different revolutions throughout human history, ranging from the French Revolution to the Arab Spring. These will be group presentations (2-3 people). However, the expectation is that you will come up with an exact division of labor in your group, which should be clearly reflected in your class performance **(15%)**.

What is Expected from the Students?

Students will be expected to read, think, form arguments and counter-arguments, understand the fundamental concepts, and participate (in a critical and creative manner) in class discussion. That means that students must keep up in their reading assignments and attend class regularly. Students must be fully prepared *at all times* to discuss the arguments and concepts from the previous readings. The best students will be knowledgeable, critical but balanced in their critical assessments, and will develop coherent and sound arguments that they can defend in their essays, in their exams, and in class discussion.

Academic dishonesty:

"All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be done on your own. Note that academic dishonesty includes not only cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, but also includes helping other students commit acts of academic dishonesty by allowing them to obtain copies of your work. You are allowed to use the Web for reference purposes, but you may not copy material from any website or any other source without proper citations. In short, all submitted work must be your own.

Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly. Each such case will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. A formal finding of responsibility can result in disciplinary sanctions ranging from a censure and a warning to permanent dismissal in the case of repeated and serious offenses.

The academic penalty for a finding of responsibility can range from a grade of zero in the specific assignment to an F in this course."

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS:

September 10: *Introduction: Power, freedom, resistance, and revolution: Why Foucault and Arendt?*

September 12: *Foucault: the productive nature of power, discipline, and the carceral society*
Reading: Foucault Reader, pages 170-213

September 14: *Is there a way out of carceral society?*
Reading: Foucault Reader, What is Enlightenment?

September 17: *Rethinking the notion of power: governmentality*
Reading: Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, Lectures One and Two

September 19: *Parrhēsia: the culture of political courage*

Reading: Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, Lectures Three and Nine

September 21: *Parrhēsia between law and politics*

Reading: Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, Lectures Ten and Eleven

September 24: *Politics and Philosophy*

Reading: Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, Lectures Twelve, Thirteenth, and Sixteen

September 26: *Parrhēsia and rhetoric*

Reading: Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, Lectures Seventeen and Eighteen

September 28: *Truth, power, and subject: forms of truth-telling*

Reading: Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Lectures One, Two, and Three

October 1: *Parrhēsia and ethics*

Reading: Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Lectures Four, Five, and Six

October 3: *The object of Socratic parrhēsia*

Reading: Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Lectures Seven, Eight, and Nine

October 5: *Life as revolutionary activity*

Reading: Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Lectures Ten, Eleven, and Twelve

October 8: *The lessons of Cynic courage: politics, ethics, and aesthetic performance*

Reading: Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Lectures Thirteen, Fourteen, and Fifteen

October 10: *Rethinking the Christian foundations of power*

Reading: Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Lectures Sixteen, Seventeen, and Eighteen

October 12: **No Class** (I will attend the Annual Conference of the Association of Political Theory, where I will present a paper on Vico and Arendt)

October 15: **Mid-term break**

October 17: *Arendt: the human condition and the public realm*

Reading: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pages 7-12 and 50-58 and *Labor, Work, Action* (copies to be provided)

October 19: *Action and freedom*

Reading: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pages 175-212

October 22: *Power, forgiveness, and promise*

Reading: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 220-247

October 24: *World alienation and the loss of common sense*
Reading: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 248-268 and 273-289

October 26: *Life as the highest good*
Reading: Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 289-325

October 29: *The meaning of revolution*
Reading: Arendt, *On Revolution*, pages 11-59

October 31: *The Social Question*
Reading: Arendt, *On Revolution*, 59-114

November 2: *The pursuit of happiness*
Reading: Arendt, *On Revolution*, 115-140

November 5: *The difference between liberation and freedom*
Reading: Arendt, *On Revolution*, 141-178

November 7: *The difference between power and force*
Reading: Arendt, *On Revolution*, 179-214

November 9: *The revolutionary tradition and its lost treasure*
Reading: Arendt, *On Revolution*, 215-248

November 12: *The revolutionary tradition and its lost treasure*
Reading: Arendt, *On Revolution*, 248-281

November 14: Final review and discussion: revolutions today