

POSC 348

Strangers, Foreigners, Exiles

Winter 2013

Class Hours: TTH 1:15-3:00

Classroom: Willis 204

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Office: Willis 418

Office Hours: Tuesday, 3:30-6:00 or by appointment

Course Description

As the French philosopher, Cornelius Castoriadis, argues, human societies constitute themselves through a closure of meaning, namely, through the claim they make that, any question that can be asked, can be answered within their symbolic boundaries. Those who depart from these boundaries become abnormal, marginal, and strangers. The symbolic way in which human societies constitute themselves explains why strangers were and remain, to a large extent, an unsettling presence to their existence. Even democratic societies, which are, after all, as the Italian philosopher, Giambattista Vico, points out, the most open, generous, and magnanimous, remain suspicious about the presence of strangers within their confines.

At the same time, as Vico points out, human societies start as a refuge and an asylum, as a hospitable abode for the exiles and refugees, for strangers. Christianity takes this idea to its highest expression through its notion of agape, by calling upon humans to express their solidarity and their love across social and ethnic divides in a true universal spirit. Moreover, as Charles Taylor argues in *A Secular Age*, the modern secular age did inherit the Christian idea of solidarity with strangers, if it would only find a way to redefine its culture outside the grip of materialism, consumerism, and hedonism.

In short, it seems that from the dawn of human history to the present day, there is a tension between a society's constitutive fear of strangers and the moral, religious, and philosophical call for overcoming this fear and for reaching out to strangers and foreigners. In the attempt to overcome such age old fears, it seems that the way humans think of culture and engage it in their daily endeavors is crucial.

Our class will address and explore this complex and multifaceted issue of strangers and foreigners, attempting to decipher the problems and promises for modern societies. We will take our journey with the help of different thinkers, who will open different perspectives for us – ethical, philosophical, political, legal, and cultural – on the issue of strangers, foreigners, and exiles.

First, we will explore Hannah Arendt's conception of refugees and human rights. In Arendt's view, it is the influx of refugees after World War I that undermined the idea of human rights and, at the same time, created new and difficult moral, political, and legal issues related to the status of strangers and foreigners in modern politics. While Arendt is rather skeptical about the possibility of solving these issues outside the framework of the nation state, she has, nevertheless, an interesting and challenging conception about the political and cultural role of

strangers and foreigners in a society. Arendt develops this standpoint in her view of the pariah, of those marginal characters, on the fringes of a society, that bring with them a revolutionary potential, both politically and intellectually. Himself a pariah, Franz Kafka inspired Arendt's conception of what strangers can do within and for their host societies, of how they can both unsettle them and inspire them in their struggle for justice.

Second, we will read Bonnie Honig's book on *Democracy and the Foreigner*. The book will provide us with a view of the different and complex roles that foreigners can play in American modern democracy, such as enforcing nationalist myths and prejudices, as well as positively contributing to the emergence of a global civil society, through what Honig calls democratic cosmopolitanism.

Third, we will explore Jacques Derrida's conception of foreigners, hospitality, and cosmopolitanism. The merit of Derrida's conception of hospitality is to forcefully express the tensions between the ethical obligation to welcome the other in one's own home (country) and the political restrictions and limitations that come with national politics and claims to sovereignty. At the same time, given the realities of the contemporary world, Derrida makes the strong claim that, despite such tensions, (European) politics should take ethics and philosophy as guides in its attempt to improve itself and the way it deals with strangers.

Fourth, we will explore Julia Kristeva's view of the moral, cultural, and political role of strangers. While Kristeva's own argument about such a complex role of strangers in contemporary politics draws on psychoanalysis, the merit of the book that we will be reading in this class is to provide us with a generous and informed survey of how Western culture approached the issue of strangers over time. One theme that will come out of Kristeva's book, for example, will be not only the tension between particularism and universalism, but also the more promising modern and Romantic conviction that strangers have something positive to contribute to contemporary society, to its culture and politics.

Fifth, we will wrap up the class with a brief discussion of Edward Said's conception of the cultural role of exile. A lot depends in contemporary politics on how culture is engaged in defining the public, a people or even humanity. If this is true, then it will be fascinating to see how Said argues, similar to Arendt, in favor of the positive role that exiles and marginals can play in the culture of a society in ways that bridge differences and attenuate the clash of beliefs and definitions.

Course objectives

1. The general objective is to understand the role of strangers, foreigners, and exiles in contemporary domestic and international politics. An important part of such a general objective is to understand how the political aspect connects with moral, legal, and cultural issues in the arguments that are made by different philosophers about the role of strangers and foreigners in domestic and international politics.
2. The more specific objective is to explore and understand varied arguments about the role of strangers, foreigners, and exiles in contemporary politics, as done by philosophers as different as Hannah Arendt, E. Levinas, J. Derrida, J. Kristeva, Bonnie Honig, and Edward Said.

3. To carefully read the following books about the role of strangers, foreigners, and exiles in contemporary politics:

- Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, Stanford University Press, 2000, ISBN: 100804734062
- Jacques Derrida, Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness, Routledge, 2001, ISBN: 978-0-415-22712-4
- Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Columbia University Press, 1991, ISBN: 0231071574
- Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Princeton University Press, 2001, ISBN: 0691114765
- Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, Oxford, 2009, ISBN: 9780199238286
- Sophocles, *Three Theban Plays*, Penguin, 1982, 9780140444254
- Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness and Selected Short Fiction*, Barnes and Nobles Classics, 2003, ISBN: 9781593081232.

Course Requirements:

1. **One research paper (90%)** (The paper should identify and address a puzzle related to the topic of the course - foreigners and democracy, migration, refugees, human rights, nationalism, (cosmopolitan) culture and politics. It should also engage secondary literature.)
 - (i) **A two-paragraph proposal that you will discuss in advance with me (10%), due on January 21.**
 - (ii) **First draft of the paper (8-9 pages) (20%), due on February 6.**
 - (iii) **One in-class presentation of your work-in-progress (20%) on February 14, 19, and 21. Each presentation should be no more than 15 minutes and you should be prepared to defend your argument and to answer questions from the audience for about 10 minutes.**
 - (iv) **Second draft of the paper (20 %), due on March 1.**
 - (v) **Final version of the paper (20%), due on March 11 (no later than 12 AM). Please, e-mail me a copy of your paper at mlupp@carleton.edu.**
2. **Class participation (10%).**

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, carefully read before every class the assigned reading, 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 essay 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:

January 3: Course Overview and Introduction

Reading: Hannah Arendt, *Jewish Writings: We Refugees* (e-reserve)

Note: start reading Kafka's *Castle* (if you can even before the term starts)

January 8: Arendt on foreigners and the right to have rights

Reading: Hannah Arendt, *The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man* (e-reserve)

January 10: *Strangers as pariahs*

Reading: Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah* (e-reserve)

January 15: *What can Kafka tell us about strangers and their role in society?*

Reading: Hannah Arendt, *Franz Kafka, Appreciated Anew* (e-reserve) and Kafka's *Castle*

January 17: *Democracy and the Foreigner*

Reading: Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Chapter One

January 22: *The Foreigner as Founder*

Reading: Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Chapter Two

January 24: *The Foreigner as an Immigrant*

Reading: Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Chapter Three

January 29: *The Foreigner as Citizen: democratic cosmopolitanism*

Reading: Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Chapter Four and Five

January 31: *Derrida: The foreigner question*

Reading: Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, pages 3-75

Note: Start reading *Oedipus at Colonus*

February 5: *Hospitality and Foreigners*

Reading: Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, pages 75-155 and Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*

February 7: *What can strangers do for us and what we can do for them?*

Reading: Jacques Derrida, Jacques Derrida, *Cosmopolitanism*, pages 3-25 and Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, pages 1-40.

February 12: *Foreigners, Converts, and Peregrines*

Reading: Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, pages 41-93

February 14: Presentation of student projects for papers

February 19: February 21: Presentation of student projects for papers

February 21: Presentation of student projects for papers

February 26: The Rights of Man or the Rights of the Citizen?

Reading: Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, pages 95-148

February 28: The Strangers in Us

Reading: Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 148-195

March 5: Exiles, Expatriates, and Marginals

Reading: Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile*, *Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals*, and Joseph Conrad, *Amy Foster*

March 7: Intellectual exile and the Nature of Culture

Reading: Edward Said, *The Clash of Definitions, Between Worlds*, and Joseph Conrad, *The Heart of Darkness*