SYLLABUS — POLI 363: Contemporary Political Theory

FALL 2024. W/F 2:35pm-3:55pm.
ENGMD 276

Instructor: Michael Denigris (michael.denigris@mail.mcgill.ca)
Office hours TBA. Preliminarily: Monday 1:00pm-2:00pm at Ferrier 415.

Teaching Assistant: TBA
Office hours: TBA
(Conferences will begin the week of Sept. 29)

Classes begin August 28th.

Course Description:
This course provides a survey of various strands in contemporary political theory. We will focus our study on three areas in particular: egalitarianism, ideology theory, neorepublicanism, and epistocracy.

Course Objectives:
The aims of the course include:
1. To advance students' training in political theory by familiarizing them with contemporary scholarly work on various topics;
2. To offer students the opportunity to learn to interpret and understand theoretical and philosophical texts about politics, and to adjudicate among rival understandings or interpretations of those texts;
3. To exercise students' ability to critically evaluate those texts, both with respect to the quality of their arguments and with respect to their normative or explanatory claims;
4. To offer students the opportunity to practice making normative and explanatory arguments about politics and society, and to improve students' skills at communicating such arguments in discussion and in written work.
5. To develop and cultivate students' analytical and technical writing skills.

Course texts:
The primary course texts are available at The Word Bookstore, at 469 Milton St. (cash/cheque only). All other texts for the course will be provided on myCourses.

Primary course texts (not provided on myCourses):
- Philip Pettit, *Republicanism*

- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*
- Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*
- Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*
- William Clare Roberts, *Marx's Inferno*

The best way to get an understanding of the texts is to read them carefully and repeatedly. Every bit of time that you might spend reading a commentary or secondary work is time you could better spend studying the original text in greater depth.

Schedule (lectures, readings, assignments, and IMPORTANT DATES):
Readings should be done before class on the dates indicated, since lectures will assume that the associated readings have already been done.

Lecture 1. Intro to contemporary egalitarianism
Bernard Williams, "The Idea of Equality"(1962),inProblems of the Self (1973), pp. 230-49.
Isaiah Berlin, "Equality." Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 56(1956), pp. 301-26.

Lecture 2. Rawlsian egalitarianism
John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Revised Edition, §§11-12, 14-17, 20-26, 29,41-3, 48, 77, 80-81 (pp. 47-93, 102-160, 228-51, 441-9, 464-74) (109pages)
Note: If you have never read Rawls before, you should also readChapter 1, sections 1-4.

Lecture 3. Responses to Rawls
Richard J. Arneson, "Against Rawlsian Equality of Opportunity." Philosophical Studies 93(1999): 77-112 (36 pages).
Debra Satz, "Equality, Adequacy and Education for Citizenship." Ethics 117 (2007): 623-48 (26 pages).
George Sher, "Qualifications, Fairness and Desert," in Equal Opportunity, ed. N. Bowie (1988), pp. 113-27 (15 pages).

Lecture 4. Is equality incompatible with liberty?
Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State,and Utopia(1974), chap.7 (skip "Sen's Argument"); chap. 8, only "Voluntary Exchange" (pp. 149-64, 167-231, 262-65) (85 pages)

Lecture 5. Equality of resources
Ronald Dworkin, "What Is Equality? Part 1: Equality of Welfare." Philosophy & Public Affairs 10 (1981): 185-246 (62 pages)

Ronald Dworkin, “Equality of What? Part2: Equality of Resources,” Philosophy & Public Affairs 10 (1981): 283-345 (63 pages)

Lecture 6.
G.A. Cohen, “On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice.” Ethics 99 (1989): 906-44 (39 pages)
Amartya Sen, “Equality of What?” in Choice, Welfare and Measurement(1982), pp. 353-72 (20 pages)
Norman Daniels, “Equality of What? Resources, Welfare or Capabilities?” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 50 (1990): 273-96 (24 pages)

Lecture 7. Priority and sufficiency
Derek Parfit, “Equality or Priority?” in Clayton and Williams,eds. The Ideal of Equality (2000), pp. 81-125 (45 pages)
Harry Frankfurt, “Equality as a Moral Ideal.” Ethics 98(1997): 21-43 (23 pages)
Paula Casal, “Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough.” Ethics 117 (2007): 296-326. (30 pages)

Lecture 8. What’s the point of equality?
T.M. Scanlon, “The Diversity of Objections to Inequality” (1996), in *The Difficulty of Tolerance* (2003), pp. 202-18 (17 pages)
Elizabeth Anderson, “What is The Point of Equality?” Ethics 109 (1999): 287-337 (51 pages)
Samuel Scheffler, “What is Egalitarianism?” Philosophy & Public Affairs 31 (2003): 5-39 (35 pages)

Lecture 9. Equality and property
MartinO’Neill (2012), “Free (and Fair) Markets without Capitalism,” in M. O’Neill and T. Williamson, eds., Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond (2012), pp. 75-100 (26 pages)
Paul Weithman, “Review of Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond.” Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews Aug. 7, 2013, available at:
http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/property-owning-democracy-rawls-and-beyond/
Samuel Freeman (2013) “Property-Owning Democracy and the Difference Principle,” Analyse & Kritik, 35/1, pp. 9-36 (28 pages)
Kevin Vallier (2014), “A Moral and Economic Critique of the New Property-Owning Democrats: On Behalf of a Rawlsian Welfare State.” Philosophical Studies 172 (2015): 283-304 (22 pages)

Lecture 10. Equality and (analytical) socialism
G.A. Cohen, Why Not Socialism? (2009) (roughly equivalent to 23 pages)
Miriam Ronzoni, “Life Is Not a Camping Trip – On the Desirability of Cohenite Socialism,” Politics, Philosophy & Economics 11 (2012): 171-85(15 pages)

Richard J. Arneson, “Why Not Capitalism?” in A. Kaufman (ed.) Distributive Justice and Access to Advantage: G.A. Cohen’s Egalitarianism (2015), pp. 207-234 (28 pages)

Lecture 11. Foundations of ideology theory
La Boétie, *Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* (1576)
De Tracy, “Abstract, or Analytical Table,” “Supplement to the First Section of the Elements of Ideology,” and “Second Section of the Elements ofIdeology,” from *A Treatise on Political Economy* (1818)
(Read Marx’s *The German Ideology* if you are not familiar with its basic claims.)

Lecture 12.
FALL BREAK, NO CLASSES

Lecture 13.
FALL BREAK, NO CLASSES

Lecture 14. The social construction of everything
Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Introduction, II.1.a-b& d, II.2.a & c, III.1.a-b,III.2-4, Conclusion, (1967)

!!!First paper opportunity due date!!!

Lecture 15. Critical theory and ideology critique
Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas & the Frankfurt School* (1981)
Habermas, “Between Philosophy and Science:Marxism as Critique (1963)
Jaeggi, “Rethinking Ideology” (2009)

Lecture 16. Ideology and power
Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)” (1970)
Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (1980)

Lecture 17. New currents in ideology theory
Mills, “‘Ideology’ in Marx and Engels: Revisited and Revised” (1992)
Shelby, “Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory” (2003)
Mills,“Ideal Theory as Ideology” (2005)
Haslanger, “Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements” (2017)

Lecture 18. Jason Stanley et al.
Stanley, “5. Ideology” & “6. Political Ideologies,” from *How PropagandaWorks* (2016)
Gooding-Williams, “Jason Stanley's Theory of Propaganda and Ideology” (2017)

Srinivasan, “Philosophy and Ideology” (2016)

Lecture 19. Pettit’s theory of neorepublicanism
Philip Pettit, *Republicanism*, excerpts TBA

Lecture 20. Pettit’s theory of neorepublicanism cont’d
Philip Pettit, *Republicanism*, excerpts TBA
Philip Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, excerpts TBA

Lecture 21. Receptions of Pettit’s theory
List and Valentini, “Freedom as Independence”
Gadeke, “Does a Mugger Dominate? Episodic Power and the Structural Dimension of Domination”

!!!Second paper opportunity due date!!!

Lecture 22. Receptions of Pettit’s theory cont’d
Markell, “The Insufficiency of Non-Domination”
Roberts, *Marx’s Inferno*, excerpts TBA

Lecture 23. Labor republicanism
Roberts cont’d
Gourevich, “Labor Republicanism and the Transformation of Work”

Lecture 24. Is Hayek a neorepublican?
Irving, *Hayek’s Market Republicanism,* excerpts TBA

Lecture 25. Epistocracy
Brennan, *Against Democracy*, excerpts TBA
Hedoin, “The ‘Epistemic Critique’ of Epistocracy and Its Inadequacy”
Schwartzberg, “Epistemic Democracy and Its Challenges”

Lecture 26. Critics of Epistocracy
Bagg, “Reply to Cyril Hedoin’s “The ‘Epistemic Critique’ of Epistocracy and Its Inadequacy”
Bagg, “The Power of the Multitude: Answering Epistemic Challenges to Democracy”
Reiss, “Expertise, Agreement, and the Nature of Social Scientific Facts or: Against Epistocracy”

Lecture 27. Makeup day

!!!Third paper opportunity due date!!!

Course requirements and rules:
The marks for this course will be distributed as follows:

Paper 1 (1000-1200 words): 35%
Paper 2 (1000-1200 words): 35%
Conference attendance: 10%
Conference participation: 10%
Self-evaluation and course plan: 10%

Papers:
You have three opportunities to write two papers of 1000-1200 words each. I will post assignments for the individual paper opportunities on myCourses. You are not expected to consult secondary sources beyond the assigned readings. Your papers should focus on the primary materials from the syllabus. I do not care which reference citation system you use for modern works, so long as your citations are consistent and complete. Papers that fail to meet these criteria will be penalized by dropping to the next possible letter grade (e.g., from A to A-).

Your paper must fall exactly between 1000-1200 words (including footnotes); anything below this length will be deemed insufficient; anything beyond this length will not be read past 1200 words. If you are writing in French, you may add 10% to these word count totals to accommodate the inherent prolixity of the language (i.e., 1100-1320 words).

Conference attendance & participation: Conferences will be structured to permit a high level of discussion and the close analysis of texts. You are expected to come to conferences prepared to discuss each assigned text; you may wish to prepare talking points for yourself. Your participation mark will reflect both the regularity of your participation and your preparedness . You get one free conference absence, no questions asked. Use it wisely. (Please note that if you are absent from the first conference, you are absent from the first conference.) For each conference that you miss after the one freebie, your absence will be reflected in the attendance component of your conference mark dropping by one letter grade.

Self-evaluation & course plan: I will place a short questionnaire on myCourses for you to fill out near the beginning of the term, and another one at the end of the term. The purpose of the questions is to compel you to reflect on what you want to get out of the course, what you want to work on, what you think you can achieve, etc. I find that such explicit reflection and planning helps me to attain greater satisfaction and greater self-knowledge. The end of term questions will ask you to reflect on your progress towards your goals. Each questionnaire is worth 5% of the course grade. They will not be evaluated – <u>you will get full credit for completing them</u> – but I will read through them in order to get to know each of you a bit.

Mobile Computing or Communications Devices: This is a manual note-taking lecture course. Mobile computing or communications devices (including laptops, recording devices, phones, or tablets) may not be used or displayed in class (unless a student has received explicit permission from the instructor). If you bring such devices to class, they must be off and out of view.

There are three basic reasons for this policy:
1. A growing body of scientific evidence indicates that mobile computing and other devices pose a significant distraction for both users and fellow students during class, inhibiting the ability to focus on and digest classroom material.
2. A growing body of scientific evidence suggests that the use of such devices in class leads to poorer overall course performance and poorer learning and retention.
3. Taking notes by hand is, for most students, slower than typing them. You may be able to transcribe a lecture almost verbatim when typing, but this is impossible if you are writing by hand. To take effective notes manually, therefore, you must both digest and synthesize the main points of a lecture. Not only is this process of digesting and synthesizing on the fly an important skill worth mastering, but it may also itself play a crucial role in learning the material.

Exceptions: I will grant permission to use an electronic device in particular circumstances for students for whom its use is justified to facilitate in-class notet aking or learning. If you think your circumstances require the use of a laptop, tablet, etc., during lectures, please speak to me.

Late Work: Since you have three opportunities to write two papers, late papers will be penalized. A paper is late if it is submitted more than **6 minutes** after the submission deadline.

Unexcused late papers will be marked down one grade delineation per day that the paper is late (A papers become A- papers; A- papers become B+ papers; etc.). For example, if an assignment is due on October 13th at 11:59pm, papers submitted after 12:05am on October 14th, but at or before 12:05am on October 15th, are considered one day late. Papers submitted after 12:05am on October 15th, but before 12:05am on October 15th, are considered two days late. Etc.

I strongly recommend that you not frivolously use up your bonus paper opportunity in the first round, since no exceptions will be made for late papers under any circumstances. If circumstances in the first round have led you to miss that paper assignment, I strongly suggest that you plan to submit your next papers at least two days before they are due to avoid any unforeseeable circumstances, such as an illness, that may prevent you from being able to hand in your paper on its due date.

To pass this course, you must receive a passing grade on each component of the course that is worth at least 20%. In other words, to pass you must submit two passing papers. If a paper is plagiarized and as a result ineligible for passing credit, you will fail the course.

By remaining in this class, you agree to these terms.

Process for appealing a grade: You must submit your paper (along with the TA's comments) to me in person, with a one-page note explaining why, according to the posted grading criteria, your paper was significantly misevaluated. I will then reassess your paper. This reassessment may raise or lower the grade. Papers for which I was the initial grader may be submitted to the Department of Political Science for appeal.

This class is graded on a 4.0 scale not a 100-point scale (as per p. 92 of McGill's Undergraduate Programs, Courses and University Regulations, 2021-2022). Example: You receive a B+ on a paper, which is worth 30% of the course grade. Therefore, this assignment contributes .999 (3.33 x 30%) grade points towards your final course grade.

McGill Statement on Academic Integrity: McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/plagiarism for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site https://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/plagiarism).

Obviously, downloading or purchasing whole papers is plagiarism, but you can be guilty of plagiarism for much less than that. Any time you copy someone else's words and paste them into your paper without quotation marks, a full citation, and due credit, you have committed academic dishonesty; one sentence from Wikipedia is enough to count. Other people's ideas usually warrant a footnote, other people's words always demand quotation marks and a full citation. In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

ChatGPT: ChatGPT (3.5 and 4.0) is a generative large-language model that functions as a chatbot. Despite its present limitations, it is an incredibly sophisticated and capable technology that I recommend everyone try exploring for themselves, if only for the fun of it (note: you will have to create an account, though): https://chat.openai.com/

That being said, I want to establish clear boundaries as to what constitutes legitimate as opposed to illegitimate use of ChatGPT in this course.

It is perfectly legitimate to talk to ChatGPT about the course material, the readings, and so on. However, you should be aware that generative language models like ChatGPT 3.5 (and to a lesser extent, ChatGPT 4.0) have a known problem with 'hallucination', i.e. making things up but passing them off as fact. As such, you should ***not*** blindly trust the information that ChatGPT provides you. Although you can try to get around this by asking ChatGPT to give you direct citations for its claims, in my experience either (1) the citations provided are themselves wrong or hallucinated, or (2) the citations do not actually provide any support for what ChatGPT claims they do.

It is perfectly legitimate to ask ChatGPT to copy-edit your writing, up to and including having it rephrase some of your sentences. There's plenty of other software dedicated to grammatical corrections, copyediting, rephrasing, and so on, none of which, to my knowledge, are prohibited by McGill. You are also free to seek assistance with revising and editing your papers through, for example, McGill's student services. As such, I do not see any reason why ChatGPT cannot be legitimately used as a copyeditor. That being said: use your common sense. Do not write up a sloppy draft, run it through ChatGPT wholesale, and then turn it in. Use ChatGPT as a tool to assist you, not as a replacement for cultivating your own skills.

Finally, please note that it is ***plagiarism*** to copy-paste, even with slight modifications, ChatGPT's responses to your queries into your essays and claim those responses as your own writing (with the single exception of copyediting, as mentioned above). It is plagiarism to pass off the arguments and ideas that ChatGPT spits out as your own arguments and ideas, especially considering the fact that ChatGPT's outputs are patched together from other people's writings. **Do not do this!** The instructor and TA will both be familiar with ChatGPT's typical outputs when prompted with the essay topics for the course. Students suspected of plagiarism will be referred to the McGill administration for investigation.

Academic freedom: Academic freedom in a university setting differs from freedom of speech in society at large; it is not the right to say just anything you want to say. It guarantees scholars – including both faculty and students – protection for their scholarly inquiries regardless of the conclusions that they reach, while also demanding respect for scholarly methods. One element of this protection is that scholars will not be sanctioned within the classroom for what happens

outside of it. The other major element is that scholars will be evaluated based on their use of scholarly methods, not based on the conclusions that they reach. What this means in a class like this is: your grade will not be affected by your speech in nonacademic settings, and it will not be affected by such things as whether the political conclusion you argue for is popular among fellow students, is shared by the TA, or is shared by the professor. We are studying controversial and complicated questions, and you will be evaluated based on considerations such as the quality of your arguments, the quality of your writing, and the careful use of sources, *not* based on the political orientation of your conclusions.

Land acknowledgment: McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

L'Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d'échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissons et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont les pas ont marqué ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.