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**POLS 219 Specialized Studies in Political Theory**

Tuesdays, 6:00 p.m. - 8:50 p.m., Amador Hall 252

Fall 2023

# Course Description

This is a graduate seminar on contemporary political theory, with a focus on recent political controversies. The goal is to better understand the implicit concepts, theories, and normative assumptions that shape recent public policy issues and debates. We will devote about two weeks each to a selection of controversial issues: identity politics, reparations, patriotism, civil disobedience, free speech, and climate change. Assigned texts will include both accessible scholarly works and popular essays. Students in this course will improve their understanding of contemporary political theory, as well as their ability to develop and articulate their own ideas about some of the key political challenges of our time.

# Learning objectives

* Knowledge: You know and remember basic facts about the course authors and ideas.
* Understanding: You can read, interpret, and explain the course texts.
* Analysis: You can differentiate and compare course ideas and authors.
* Application: You can link the course ideas and authors to contemporary political issues.
* Evaluation and Critique: You can critically assess the course ideas and authors, and you can formulate an argument of your own about them.

**Course Texts**

The below required texts are available at the campus bookstore or your favorite bookseller. You can search by ISBN number at <https://isbn.nu> or <https://www.biblio.com> or (for local booksellers) <https://bookshop.org>.

1. James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time.*New York: Vintage International, [1963] 1993. ISBN: 9780679744726
2. Janna Thompson, *Should Current Generations Make Reparations for Slavery?* London, UK: Polity, 2018. ISBN: ISBN: 9781509516421
3. Charles Jones and Richard Vernon, *Patriotism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2018. ISBN: 9781509518333
4. William Scheuerman, *Civil Disobedience*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2018. ISBN: 9781509518630
5. Matteo Bonotti and Jonathan Seglow, *Free Speech*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2021. ISBN: 9781509526482

Additional required readings are available on the course Canvas Page under the Modules tab. I strongly encourage you to print out all the readings posted on Canvas.

Links to recommended films, podcasts, and videos are in the module for each week on Canvas. I also recommend the podcasts [Philosophy Bites](https://nigelwarburton.typepad.com/philosophy_bites/) and [The Political Theory Review](https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/thepoliticaltheoryreview), as well as the [School of Life](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwxNMb28XmpeuwUhM0OT338_T5XTtJJok) political theory videos on YouTube.

# How to Contact Me

I’m happy to talk with you outside of class. Please see me after class or come to my office hours listed at the top of the syllabus. You can just stop by my office, no appointment needed. If you cannot make it during my scheduled office hours, email me with a few time slots (day and time) that would fit your schedule. If you’d like to meet on Zoom, click on this link for my appointment page: <https://calendly.com/mark-brown-sac-state/student-hours>. You can also email me with the Canvas messaging system or at mark.brown@csus.edu. I will usually reply to emails on the same day, but generally not before 9:00 AM or after 5:00 PM. I may not reply during the weekend.

Most importantly, if you are ever having trouble with any aspect of the course, or if you would just like to talk over the material, please let me know. Don't wait until the end of the semester!

# Course Modality and Late Assignments

This is an in-person course. Our course meetings will not be recorded, and your grade will depend in part on regular in-person attendance and participation (see below). I will post reading assignments and announcements on Canvas, which you can find on your [My Sac State](https://my.csus.edu/) page.

If you cannot attend class, please let me know as early as possible. If there are serious factors beyond your control, I will be glad to arrange alternative deadlines for you. Late assignments will usually receive a grade penalty of 1/3 letter grade per day, up to a maximum of two letter grades. It’s much better to submit work late than not at all. Unless approved by me in advanced, any assignments not submitted by the last day of regular classes (before finals week) will receive a failing grade.

**Requirements and Grading**

Attendance and participation (10%): The more actively engaged you are in this course, the more you’ll learn, and the more fun it will be for everyone. To ensure that everyone feels welcome, we will strive to create an inclusive classroom environment that facilitates robust discussion in a supportive context of mutual respect. Your participation grade will be based on the extent to which you complete the assigned reading each week, raise thoughtful questions about the reading, and engage in productive class discussion. You will receive two participation grades during the semester; the average will be your final participation grade. You may miss one class without penalty. Each additional absence, unless excused, will reduce your participation grade by one letter grade. If you feel ill, please don’t come to class. I will excuse absences for serious and non-work-related reasons (e.g., illness, family emergency, military duty, jury duty, religious holiday). When you return to class, please give me the following information on a piece of paper: name, date, date(s) of absence, reason for absence.

Ten critical summaries (20%): On any ten weeks you choose, prepare for class by writing a critical summary of the assigned readings. Critical summaries should be 1-2 pages, double-spaced (300-450 words). Submit your critical summary on Canvas by 11:59 p.m. on the day before class, and also bring a copy to class. At the beginning of each class, students will exchange critical summaries with a classmate and discuss them. Critical summaries should include two paragraphs: 1) concisely summarize two or three main points from the assigned reading, and provide at least two short quotes that capture those points; 2) present and briefly discuss one or two interesting questions of your own about the reading. Since the purpose is to stimulate class discussion, late critical summaries will not be accepted. Critical summaries will be graded pass/fail.

Two short presentations (2.5% each): Each week two students will kick off our discussion by presenting a critical summary of part of the reading assignment for that week. Presentations should be about 10 minutes. First summarize two or three main points from the assigned reading, and then briefly discuss your own thoughts or questions about the reading. Bring printed handouts for the class with: 1) a visual representation of one or more key points from the reading (e.g., concept map, graph, chart, diagram, or image); 2) two short quotes that capture key points from the reading; 3) two discussion questions about a controversial issue addressed in the reading. The quotes and discussion questions may be taken from your critical summary for that week. If you email me your handout in advance, I will print copies for you. Short presentations will be graded pass/fail.

Two short essays (15% each): Choose two of the general course topics and write an analytical essay of 5 double-spaced pages (approx. 1,250 words) on each topic. Suggested essay questions, writing tips, grading criteria, and due dates will be posted on Canvas.

Research paper (30%): Write a research paper of about 15 double-spaced pages (3,500 words) in which you critically analyze a specific question or issue addressed in the course readings. You may expand upon one of your short essays or you may choose a different topic area from the syllabus. Make careful use of both required and recommended readings for your topic. A rough draft will be due in Week 13. Suggested research topics, writing tips, grading criteria, and due dates will be posted on Canvas.

Research presentation (5%): During the last two weeks of the semester, students will present their draft research papers to the class. Presentations should be about 15 minutes, followed by 5-10 minutes for questions and discussion. Presentation guidelines will be posted on Canvas.

# Course Grades

Final letter grades for the course will be calculated as follows: A (100% to 94.0%), A- (<94.0% to 90.0%), B+ (< 90.0% to 87.0%), B (< 87.0% to 84.0%), B- (< 84.0 % to 80.0%), C+ (< 80.0% to 77.0%), C (< 77.0% to 74.0%), C- (<74.0% to 70.0%), D+ (<70.0% to 67.0%), D (<67.0% to 64.0%), D- (64.0% to 60.0%), F (<60.0%).

# Academic Honesty, Plagiarism, Recordings

Please review the University’s [Academic Honesty Policy](https://www.csus.edu/umanual/student/stu-100.htm). Plagiarism may be defined simply as presenting someone else's work as though it were your own. This includes presenting some *thing’s* work as your own, in the case of ChatGPT and other AI tools. Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity and university policy. Plagiarism will be punished in proportion to the severity of the case, but it is likely to result in a failing grade for the course. It may also lead to additional penalties, including expulsion from the University. If you are not sure what plagiarism is, please ask me or consult the [library plagiarism website.](http://csus.libguides.com/plagiarism)

Audio or video recordings of lectures or class discussions are not allowed without the instructor’s permission. Distribution of recorded course lectures to anyone not enrolled in the course is not allowed without the instructor's permission.

# Course Drops

Students can drop the course online during the first two weeks. The last day to drop with approval of both the instructor and department chair is the census date of September 25. Further information on drops and withdrawals is [available here.](https://catalog.csus.edu/financial-registration-information/registration/#text)

# Student Advising

To meet with a faculty or peer advisor, see the [political science department's advising page.](https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/political-science/advising.html) To review political science major requirements, see the [Political Science Major Advising Form.](https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/political-science/_internal/_documents/advising-form-and-degree-requirements-pols-revised-4-2019.pdf) For GE advising and any questions that go beyond the political science major, see the [SSIS Student Success Center.](https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/student-success-center/)

# Student Health & Support Services

[Services to Students with Disability (SSWD)](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/services-students-disabilities/): Sacramento State is committed to ensuring an accessible learning environment where course or instructional content are usable by all students and faculty. If you believe that you require disability-related academic adjustments for this class, please immediately contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) to discuss eligibility. A current accommodation letter from SSWD is required before any modifications, above and beyond what is otherwise available for all other students in this class will be provided.

[Student Health and Counseling Services](https://www.csus.edu/student-life/health-counseling/): Your physical and mental health are important to your success as a college student. Student Health and Counseling Services (SHCS) in The WELL offers medical, counseling, and wellness services to help you get and stay healthy during your time at Sac State. SHCS offers: Primary Care medical services, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, transgender care, and immunizations; urgent care for acute illness, injuries, and urgent counseling needs; pharmacy for prescriptions and over-the-counter products; mental health counseling, including individual sessions, group counseling, support groups, mindfulness training, and peer counseling; athletic training for sports injury rehabilitation; wellness services, including nutrition counseling, peer-led health education and wellness workshops, and free safer sex supplies; violence and sexual assault support services. Most services are covered by the Health Services fee and available at no additional cost.

[Crisis Assistance & Resource Education Support (CARES)](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/crisis-assistance-resource-education-support/): If you are experiencing challenges with food, housing, financial or other unique circumstances that are impacting your education, help is just a phone call or email away. The CARES office provides case management support for any enrolled student.

[Title IX](https://www.csus.edu/title-ix/): The University requires faculty and staff to report any personal disclosures of sexual misconduct including rape, dating/domestic violence and stalking to the Title IX Coordinator. Students who do not wish to report their experience to me or the Title IX Coordinator may speak to someone confidentially by contacting Student Health and Counseling Services.

# University Information and Policies

* [Drop and Withdrawal Policy](https://www.csus.edu/academic-affairs/internal/_internal/_documents/drop-and-withdrawal-policy.pdf)
* [Grading Policy](https://www.csus.edu/umanual/acad/umg05150.htm)
* [Sacramento State Academic calendar](https://catalog.csus.edu/academic-calendar/#spring2022text)
* [Hornet Honor Code](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/_internal/_documents/hornet-honor-code.pdf)
* [Student Rights and Responsibilities](https://www.csus.edu/umanual/student/stu-0119.htm)

**Campus Resources**

* [Odyssey Mentoring Program](https://www.csus.edu/college/social-sciences-interdisciplinary-studies/spotlights/odyssey-mentorship.html)
* [Peer and Academic Resource Center](http://www.csus.edu/parc/index.html)
* [Academic Advising](https://www.csus.edu/student-life/academic-advising/)
* [Support Centers and Programs](https://www.csus.edu/student-affairs/centers-programs/)
* [Reading & Writing Center](https://www.csus.edu/undergraduate-studies/writing-program/reading-writing-center.html)
* [University Library](http://library.csus.edu/)

# Technical Assistance

* [Information Resources and Technology (IRT)](https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/)
* [Laptop Checkout](https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/teaching-learning/laptop-checkout.html)
* [Zoom for Students](https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/zoom/student-resources.html#zoom)
* [Canvas for Students](https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/canvas/canvas-for-students.html)
* [Schedule a Consultation](https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/get-support-consultation/consultation.html) for assistance with Canvas and other academic technologies
* [Submit a Ticket](https://csus.service-now.com/service/?id=help" \t "_blank) to report a problem to Information Resources and Technology (IRT)

**Course Schedule**

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| Week 1Aug. 29 | **What is Political Theory?**John S. Dryzek, Bonnie Honig, and Anne Phillips, “Overview of Political Theory,” in The Oxford Handbook of Political Science, ed. Robert E. Goodin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), excerpt.Wendy Martineau and Judith Squires, "Addressing the 'Dismal Disconnection': Normative Theory, Empirical Inquiry and Dialogic Research," Political Studies 60 (2012): 523-538. |
| Week 2Sept. 5 | **Identity Politics**James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time.*New York: Vintage International, [1963] 1993. James Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village,” “The American Dream and the American Negro,” and “The White Man’s Guilt,” in *Collected Essays*. ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Modern Library), pp. 117-129, 714-719, 722-727.James Baldwin, "Go the Way Your Blood Beats," interview by Richard Goldstein, The Village Voice, June 26, 1984, in James Baldwin: The Last Interview and Other Conversations (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Publishing, 2014), pp. 57-74. |
| Week 3Sept. 12 | [Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” (1977), *Monthly Review*70:8 (2019): 29-36.](https://monthlyreview.org/2019/01/01/a-black-feminist-statement) Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990/1999), pp. 3-13.Adolf Reed, “Antiracism: A Neoliberal Alternative to a Left,” Dialectical Anthropology 42 (2018): 105–115.Mark Lilla, "The End of Identity Liberalism," *The New York Times,* Nov. 18, 2016. Suzanna Danuta Walters, “In Defense of Identity Politics,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 43, no. 2 (Winter 2018): 473–88. |
| Week 4Sept. 19 | Mark B. Brown, "White Identity Politics in the United States," in Racializing Humankind: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Practices of ‘Race’ and Racism, ed. Julian T. D. Gärtner amd Malin S. Wilckens (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2022), 135-155.Emma Green, "Are Jews White?" The Atlantic, December 5, 2016. [Hadas Thier, "We Need Solidarity, Not White Guilt, to Fight Racism," *Jacobin*. June 17, 2020.](http://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/06/racism-george-floyd-racial-justice-protests-privilege)  |
| Week 5Sept. 28 | **Reparations**Janna Thompson, *Should Current Generations Make Reparations for Slavery?* London, UK: Polity, 2018, pp. 1-117. |
| Week 6Oct. 3 | Adolf Reed, Jr., “The Case Against Reparations,” *The Progressive* (December 2000), pp. 15-17. Available online: <https://nonsite.org/the-case-against-reparations>Alfred L. Brophy, “Against Reparations,” in *Reparations: Pro and Con* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 75-94.[Wendy Fry, Erica Yee, and Rya Jetha, "California is the first state to tackle reparations for Black residents. What that really means,” *CalMatters*, June 29, 2023.](https://calmatters.org/explainers/reparations-california/)[California Reparations Task Force, *Final Report* (2023), Executive Summary, pp. 2-21.](https://oag.ca.gov/ab3121/report) |
| Week 7Oct. 10 | **Patriotism**Charles Jones and Richard Vernon, *Patriotism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2018, pp. 1-100. |
| Week 8Oct. 17 | Jan-Werner Müller, “On the Origins of Constitutional Patriotism,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 5 (2006): 278–296.Clarissa Rile Hayward, “Democracy's Identity Problem: Is ‘Constitutional Patriotism’ the Answer?” *Constellations* 14 (2007): 182-196. |
| Week 9Oct. 24 | **Civil Disobedience** William Scheuerman, *Civil Disobedience*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2018, pp. 1-100.  |
| Week 10Oct. 31 | William Scheuerman, *Civil Disobedience*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2018, pp. 101-159. Çıdam Çiğdem, William E. Scheuerman, Candice Delmas, Erin R. Pineda, Robin Celikates, and Alexander Livingston, “Theorizing the Politics of Protest: Contemporary Debates on Civil Disobedience,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 19:3 (2020): 513-546.  |
| Week 11Nov. 7 | **Free Speech** Matteo Bonotti and Jonathan Seglow, *Free Speech*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2021, pp. 1-91. |
| Week 12Nov. 14 | Matteo Bonotti and Jonathan Seglow, *Free Speech*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2021, pp. 92-141. |
| Week 13Nov. 21 | **Climate Change**Reading TBA |
| Week 14Nov. 30 | Reading TBAStudent Presentations |
| Week 15Dec. 5 | Student Presentations |