PS 432.532: Political Theory: Modern and Contemporary

1. Content:
In this course we will study the distinct critiques of modernity offered by John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Simone de Beauvoir, and Frantz Fanon. Key terms explored in the class include: democracy, modernity, capitalism, liberalism, domination, alienation, ideology, morality, gender, and race. Fundamental to the class is an exploration of the idea of critique and the standpoint from which social and political theorists have critiqued modern forms of domination. What standpoint does the critical theorist occupy with respect to society? What assumptions about human nature do we make in order to criticize forms of social domination? How is domination visible to us? How do the ideals which we use to create a more just society (such as the ideals of liberty and equality) actually function to perpetuate and mask insidious forms of social oppression? And finally, how do the boundaries of the political sphere displace forms of oppression from the political to the socio-economic realm?

2. Skills:
The skills you will learn in this course are as fundamental as the course content. In this class you will focus on writing skills, reading effectiveness, summary and analysis of arguments, connecting theory with everyday experience, and left and right-brain integration. Activities we do in class and class assignments will teach and reinforce these skills.

3. Texts
Texts for purchase at the Duck Store:
Note: All readings by Marx are from this reader.

Texts available on Blackboard:
Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, New York: Grove Press.
**Important Note:** This syllabus is subject to change as the course progresses. These periodic changes will be announced in class. **Check your email regularly and note my email policy.** I will often use emails to the class to alert you to changes to the schedule or readings, extra information or public lectures, and so on. You should make sure your current email is linked to the Blackboard system and check email and Blackboard regularly for these updates.

4. **Course Requirements:**

**Undergraduate students:**

- **Assignment 1:** 15%
- **Assignment 2:** 20%
- **Assignment 3:** 20%
- **Assignment 4:** 20%
- **Class Participation**—10%: Attendance and participation in class

- **Weekly Discussion Assignment**—15%: You are responsible for completing a short weekly discussion assignment and posting it on the Blackboard discussion board by Sunday at 5 pm before our Monday class. You will receive the specific assignment during the Wednesday class. **Late posts do not receive credit and you cannot make up discussion assignments after the deadline.**

**Graduate students:**

- **Assignment 1:** Annotated bibliography: 20%
- **Assignment 2:** Paper proposal assignment: 20% [Very clear guidelines will be given in future weeks]
- **Assignment 3:** 10 page final paper [stay tuned for more details]: 40%

- **Weekly Blog Post + Class Participation**—20%: You are responsible for completing a short blog post on the reading every week, reading at least one or two other grad student blog posts, as well as for attending class and being an engaged participant in class.

5. **Class Policies:**

**Attendance:** You are expected to arrive on time, stay the full class time and participate actively in discussion every class. You will not be able to achieve a good grade in this
class without regular verbal participation. I will not take attendance, however I will keep track of participation. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to check with your classmates to find out what you have missed.

**Late paper policy:** Except in documented cases of serious illness or other emergency, late papers will be penalized one full letter grade per day late (e.g. an A paper becomes a B). No electronic submissions are accepted except in special circumstances where permission is granted in advance by me.

**Laptop and cell phone policy:** Laptops are not to be brought to class unless you have special needs that require you to use a laptop in class or when we do special assignments in class that involve laptop usage. If you have special needs, please arrange to discuss them with me in private as soon as possible. Cell phones should be kept in your bag and are not to be used in class for any reason.

**Text policy:** You must use the editions assigned on the syllabus. Please do not try to use other editions, as this will impede your ability to participate in the discussion fluidly. When electronic texts are assigned, you must print them out and bring them to class. You may not read texts off of your laptops in class.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism will result in an automatic zero on any given assignment. You must not, under any circumstances, copy or paraphrase direct quotes from the course materials or from any other sources without properly attributing the quotes to their sources.

**Sickness:** Due to the threat of the flu, students are asked to PLEASE STAY HOME if you have flu-like symptoms. Please email the instructor if you must miss a class for this reason. Participation is an important part of your course requirements, but given the potential severity of the flu, it is better to err on the side of caution.

**EMAIL CORRESPONDANCE:** Please identify yourself and the name of our course in all correspondence with the instructor and GTF. Also, when you email, please be aware that you should write grammatically. You should act professionally in this medium like in all communication. Please do not expect an immediate response to your email—it is not appropriate to ask a question about a paper the night before it is due. We will aim to respond to emails within a few days.

**Academic Misconduct**

The presentation of someone else’s words or ideas as your own is plagiarism and is a serious offense. The University of Oregon takes a very hard line in questions of academic misconduct. It is never tolerable to present someone else’s work as your own. Sources: The failure to provide proper acknowledgment of your use of outside sources constitutes plagiarism. You must name all sources you are paraphrasing or
quoting. Please consult with me if you are confused about how to make a proper citation. You can also consult Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), or the Dartmouth College’s “Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgement” (http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/sources/). Both manuals offer a full explanation of what constitutes plagiarism and how to cite sources, including documenting sources taken from the web. **In this class we will very seldom use secondary sources. Nevertheless, if you ever consult a secondary sources you must cite to it.**

**Student Resources**

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability (physical, learning or psychological) that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so that we can discuss whatever accommodation(s) may be necessary. Please request that a counselor at Disability Services send a letter verifying the disability. Disability Services is located in Oregon Hall 164; email: disabsrv@uoregon.edu

**Academic Support:** The University Teaching and Learning Center provides numerous resources to help University of Oregon students succeed. Programs, workshops, courses, tutors, and mentors are among the many resources they provide to help with educational pursuits at the University of Oregon. For the services offered by the center see http://tlc.uoregon.edu/index.html

**Student Life:** If you need help and are not sure where to go, check out the Office of Student Life, located at Oregon Hall 164; email: stl@uoregon.edu. The Office of Student Life staff is available to help you find solutions and resources to most issues and concerns on a drop-in basis Monday-Friday, 8am-noon and 1pm-5pm. In emergencies after hours, contact the Department of Public Safety at (541) 346-5444 and have an on-duty staff member paged.

**University of Oregon Crisis Center:** A student-funded organization that provides students with confidential telephone crisis intervention 24/7 at (541) 346-4488.
5. Reading Schedule (subject to changes):

**Week 1**
Mon.: Introductory Discussion

**Week 2:**
Mon: On Liberty, ch. 3-4
Wed: On Liberty, ch. 5

**Assignment 1 due**

**Week 3:**
Mon: Marx, “On the Jewish Question,”
Wed: Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts”--Estranged labor (pp. 70-86),
Needs: The history of the senses (pp. 87-93), The meaning of human requirements (pp. 93-98)

**Week 4:**
Mon: Marx, The German Ideology, (pp. 149-163, 172-174), Theses on Feuerbach (pp. 143-145)
Wed: Marx, Capital, Vol. I, Two-fold nature of commodities and labor (pp. 302 -312);
Fetishism of Commodities (pp. 319-329),

**Week 5:**

**Assignment 2 due**

**Week 6:**
Wed: Foucault, pages TBD

**Week 7:**
Mon: Foucault, pages TBD
Wed: Foucault, pages TBD

**Assignment 3 due**
Week 8:
Mon: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction (xix-xxxvi), Chapter II
Wed: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Chapters XXV, Conclusion

Week 9:
Mon: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*, Ch 1
Wed: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks*, Ch 4, 5

Week 10:
Mon: Fanon, Ch. 7, 8

Wed: Final revision, NO NEW READING

**Assignment 4 due**