

POLI 4090: Theories of Ideology

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TR: 12-1:15, via Zoom



“But I am already eating from this trashcan all the time.

The name of this trashcan is ideology.”

-Slavoj Žižek, *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*

Overview

This course serves as a survey regarding the topic of “ideology.” Usually cosigned to “subrational” or merely “political” political theory, this course seeks to retrieve the notion of “ideological” thought, practices, and traditions as they develop in Europe, America, and beyond and investigate how they interact and, indeed, inform much of what we consider important and valuable regarding notions of “the political.” As a result, we will read texts both on ideology and from thinkers not often considered “ideological.” These readings will hopefully help us appreciate the concept of ideology from multiple angles and disciplines: history, philosophy, social theory, social science, film, and even music all contribute to a better understanding of the three primary “families” of ideology: liberalism, socialism, and fascism (as well as the “new” ideological family, neoliberalism).

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the basis of a number of essays regarding various topics encountered throughout the semester. The final, however, will be slightly different and relate to a different set of texts shown throughout the semester. Information follows.

Essay 1: What is ideology? What does it mean to be “ideological?” Is to say an idea is “ideological” a slight or that someone is an “ideologue” an affront? Why or why not? (10%; 1-2 pgs).

Essay 2: What is liberalism? Is liberalism natural? Is it the logical endpoint of humanity’s ideological development? Using at least two authors we have encountered, argue for or against the aforementioned questions (15%; 2-3 pgs).

Essay 3: How does socialism develop theoretically? What does it mean to ascribe to “scientific socialism” as opposed to “utopian socialism?” Given these questions, how can socialism come into existence, if at all? (20%; 2-3 pgs).

Essay 4: Fascism and socialism are oppositional notions. Yet, fascism emerges out of Marxism’s search for a “scientific socialism.” What does fascism see as lacking in socialism? In liberalism? Can either of these traditions combat it? Which one and how? (25%; 2-3 pgs).

Final: We have watched several films throughout the semester (see section “Screenings”): pick one of them and describe how they relate to an ideology **that it does not explicitly endorse or depict**. For instance, how does *The Battle of Algiers* relate to fascism; or how does *Mishima* relate to liberalism? (30%; 4-5 pgs).

DUE April 21st, 9 PM

NB: I will **NOT** accept essays uploaded to Moodle in .pdf or .pages format. I **only** accept papers in Word format. If you do not have access to Microsoft Word, please access Tigerware for a copy of the Microsoft Office Suite, compliments of your university technology fee.

Readings

This course's reading list follows. Do note, however, that many of these texts are available at the LSU Bookstore, on Moodle, or online. I send out emails weekly detailing which work we will read, what chapters therein, on what day. Check your email early and often for specific information for each text.

Prelude

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, esp. 4th Movement - Chorale (Ode to Joy; *An die Freude*)

Various clips from Slavoj Žižek's *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*

Benedict Anderson – *Imagined Communities* (*)

Friedrich Nietzsche – *On the Genealogy of Morals*

Liberalism

John Locke – *The Second Treatise of Government*

John Stuart Mill – *On Liberty*

José Ortega y Gasset – *The Revolt of the Masses* (*)

Socialism

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon – *What is Property?*

Karl Marx – *The German Ideology*

Friedrich Engels – *Socialism, Scientific and Utopian*

V.I. Lenin – *What is to be Done?*

Fascism

Umberto Eco – *Ur-Fascism*

Georges Sorel – *Reflections on Violence*

Carl Schmitt – *The Concept of the Political* (*)

Gentile & Mussolini – *The Doctrine of Fascism*

Neoliberalism

David Harvey – *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (*)

Mark Fisher – *Capitalist Realism* (*)

Angela Davis – *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (*)

*May require purchase; Available at LSU Bookstore and online.

Screenings

In addition to the readings, I will host four screenings throughout the semester. Attendance is optional but encouraged – and those who attend will be awarded bonus points on essays. They will be held on **certain Saturdays at Noon over Zoom**. As usual, check your email for more up-to-date information. The following films will be screened:

Liberalism: *Network* by Sidney Lumet

Socialism: *The Battle of Algiers* by Gillo Pontecorvo

Fascism: *Mishima – A Life in Four Chapters* by Paul Schraeder

Neoliberalism: *Children of Men* by Alfonso Cuarón

Rules and Stipulations

This is a senior-level course. Therefore, I expect senior-level work. I do not issue “outlines” or “study guides.” However, I do act as a resource for this course – I make

myself available outside of the classroom via Zoom and am more than willing to answer any question about the material. I also recognize that we live in highly unusual times and that many of you will experience great hardships throughout the semester.

While I am very amenable about deadlines and sympathetic to situations that emerge beyond the grasp of any individual, I **do not** need your “life story,” nor do I desire a great deal of information about your personal life. Instead, I suggest in the event that you need to turn in a paper late, that you **briefly** inform me of your difficulties **ahead of its due date** and we can arrange an alternative due date. **However, failure to meet this alternative time will result in a drastic reduction of credit, especially near the end of the course.**

Furthermore, this course is *highly* discussion oriented. The small size works wonderfully for such an intimate academic setting. As a result, when you come into class, I expect you to have read and be ready to discuss that day’s text. If you are unable to access a text either on Moodle or in the bookstore, please contact me and we can find a way to procure it together.

I expect this semester to be an interesting and engaging one. This course is one of my own design and I am, subsequently, *very* excited about teaching it. However, only your participation can make it exciting – I exist merely to instruct your learning and provide context to your reading. It is ultimately you who must practice reading the text in order to gain a greater understanding of the material and, therefore, insight into the notion of “ideology.” I look forward to working with all of you this semester and wish you the very best of luck from this point. Moreover, I hope that through this course, you can gain something more valuable than mere “information.” That is – I hope you can attain wisdom and freedom through education. –ADC

ADA Compliance

The University is committed to making reasonable efforts to assist individuals with disabilities in their efforts to avail themselves of services and programs offered by the University. To this end, Louisiana State University will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with documented qualifying disabilities. If you have a disability and feel you need accommodations in this course, you must present a letter to me from Disability Services in 115 Johnston Hall, indicating the existence of a disability and the suggested accommodations.