

AS 100:408: Theorizing the Age of Enormity: Social Theory and the History of the 20th Century

Key works of social and critical theory produced in relation to 20th and 21st century problems of state and society, nationalism, empire, totalitarianism, genocide, capitalism, political order, race, gender, sexuality, secularism and religion, authoritarianism and democracy.

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Course Requirements: This seminar stands or falls based on your reading, preparation, discussion and participation. I appreciate that each of you may have a distinctive approach to voicing views and analyses in class, but in order to make sure that everyone has a chance to fully participate, I will regularly and systematically call on students during class discussion. You must complete the reading assignments listed below a given session must be completed by the date under which they appear and potentially by 1-2 days *before* that date.

Regarding this latter point, because of the special circumstances imposed by Covid-19 and remote learning, I may experiment a bit with the structure of the class. My goal is to expand opportunities for you to make your voice heard and to work and think together with your peers. Concretely, we may experiment with dividing the class session into two unequal time slots: we will reduce the continuous 2½ hour session on Thursday to a 1½ hour discussion and institute hour-long small-group ‘break-out’ sessions that will meet one or two days *before* class and within which small groups of students – 3 or 4 – will run your own discussions of the texts so that when we all meet Thursday as a group, each of you has already had a chance to talk and think at length about the texts in a more informal student-led setting.

This is also a writing intensive class. You will be asked for two 5-page papers and one final 10 page paper, spaced evenly across the semester.

The final decision on any grade derives from my global assessment of your work and cannot be quantified exactly. Roughly speaking, however, the breakdown is as follows:

Participation: 40%

2 5-page papers: 15% each

1 10-page paper: 30%

No extensions will be granted without my *prior* permission, and late papers will be graded lower at the rate of one grade-step per day (A to A-, A- to B+, etc). Needless to say, complete honesty and probity in your work is a must. For information, see <http://ethics.jhu.edu>

The last day a student can drop a class this semester is Friday, October 11.

Accommodations and Wellness:

Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, (410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu

These are difficult times to be a student. If you are struggling with anxiety, stress, depression or other mental health related concerns, please consider using the JHU mental and emotional health resources. The resources are described and can be accessed at <https://wellness.jhu.edu/resources/mental/>

Ethics Policy: Needless to say, complete honesty and probity in your work is a must. The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of student conduct (or designee) by calling the Office of the Dean of Students at 410-516-8208 or via email at integrity@jhu.edu. For more information, see the Homewood Student Affairs site on academic ethics.

Family accommodation policy: You are welcome to bring a dependent family member to class on occasional days when your responsibilities require it (for example, if emergency child care is unavailable, or for health needs of a relative). In fact, you may see my children in class on days when their school is closed. Please be sensitive to the classroom environment, and if your family member becomes uncomfortably disruptive, you may leave the classroom and return as needed.

Classroom climate: We are committed to creating a classroom environment that values the diversity of experiences and perspectives that all students bring. Everyone here has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. I believe fostering an inclusive climate is important because research and my experience show that students who interact with peers who are different from themselves learn new things and experience tangible educational outcomes. Please join me in creating a welcoming and vibrant classroom climate. Note that you should expect to be challenged intellectually by me, the TAs, and your peers, and at times this may feel uncomfortable. Indeed, it can be helpful to be pushed sometimes in order to learn and grow. But at no time in this learning process should someone be singled out or treated unequally on the basis of any seen or unseen part of their identity. If you ever have concerns in this course about harassment, discrimination, or any unequal treatment, or if you seek accommodations or resources, I invite you to share directly with me or the TAs. I promise that we will take your communication seriously and to seek mutually acceptable resolutions and accommodations. Reporting will never impact your course grade. You may also share concerns with the department chair (Prof. Peter Jelavich, jelavich@jhu.edu) the Director of Undergraduate Studies (Prof. Erin Rowe,

erowe1@jhu.edu) the Assistant Dean for Diversity and Inclusion (Darlene Saporu, dsaporu@jhu.edu), or the Office of Institutional Equity (oie@jhu.edu). In handling reports, people will protect your privacy as much as possible, but faculty and staff are required to officially report information for some cases (e.g. sexual harassment).

Religious holidays: Religious holidays are valid reasons to be excused from class. Students who must miss a class or an examination because of a religious holiday must inform the instructor as early in the semester as possible in order to be excused from class or to make up any work that is missed. If possible, try to avoid scheduling exams for major holidays. More information may be found at the Religious and Spiritual Life website (<https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/religious-spiritual-life/religious-holy-days/>).

Textbooks (books we will be reading all or most of and which it will make sense to acquire for yourself):

Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*

Altvater and Moore, eds., *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*

Burchell and Gordon, eds. *The Foucault Effect*

W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

(edition w/ introduction by Henry Louis Gates; text also available online at

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/408/408-h/408-h.htm#chap02>

Martijn Konings, *The Emotional Logic of Capitalism*

T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class*

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto*

(try to get the Oxford University Press, ed. McLellan, ISBN: 9780199535712)

Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*

Cathy O'Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction*

Recommended but not required: For your own ease of use, you might also want to purchase several books from which a fair number of scanned essays will be drawn:

Theodor Adorno et al, *The Authoritarian Personality*

Back and Solomos, *Theories of Race and Racism*

Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*

From Max Weber, ed. C. Wright Mills

* = other readings not in the above books which have been scanned and are available on library e-Reserves

9/3: Introduction

Please read in advance and be prepared to comment on: *Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, 4-17

9/10: What shapes the (modern) social world? Marx and Weber:

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto*

*Max Weber: "The Meaning of Discipline"; "The Social Psychology of the World Religions"; "Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions"; "Science as a Vocation" all in *From Max Weber*, ed. C. Wright Mills

First paper assigned

9/17: Some other currents of modernity? Nation, 'race,' group; gender, work, domination; the strange case of America

*Max Weber, "Ethnic Groups" in Weber, *Economy and Society*, part II: 385-398 and 901-940

*Georg Simmel: "The Stranger" in Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms*, 143-50

W. E. B. Du Bois: *Souls of Black Folk*: "Forethought" and chapters 1-4, 6, 8, 13-14; *"Souls of White Folk" (from Du Bois, *Darkwater*)

*Thorsten Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, ch 1-4

9/24: Modernity seen from the other side of World War I: irrationality, technology, affect, domination

*Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, introduction and ch 1-4

*Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version" in Benjamin *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*;

*Walter Benjamin, "Capitalism as Religion" [handout]

*C. L. R. James, "Revolution and the Negro" and "Imperialism in Africa" in *C. L. R. James and Revolutionary Marxism*

First paper due to my email by 5:00 PM Friday 9/25

10/1: Fascism, Nazism, Totalitarianism, and Refugee Social Thought

Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, books 2-3 [selections]

*Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "Theses on Antisemitism" in Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

*Adorno, et al, *The Authoritarian Personality*, ch. 16

Second Paper Assigned

10/8: Theorizing postwar democratic (and capitalist) society 1: new potentials and persistent dangers

T. H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class*

*Adorno, et al, *The Authoritarian Personality*, ch. 17

*Franz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," in Back and Solomos, *Theories of Race and Racism*

10/15: Difference and Domination: some accounts of modern racial and gender formations

*Kaye Quek, "Patriarchy" in *Handbook on Gender and Violence*

*Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," *Theatre Journal*, 40:4 (Dec., 1988): 519-531

*David Theo Goldberg, "Racial Knowledge" in Back and Solomos, *Theories of Race and Racism*

*Howard Winant, "Race and Racism" in Back and Solomos, *Theories of Race and Racism*

*Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139-168.

*Eric Oberle, "Jazz, the Wound," *Modern Intellectual History* 13:2 (August 2016): 357-386

10/22: Fall Break

10/29: Governing Life, Death, and Risk: Foucault

The Foucault Effect, ed. Burchell and Gordon, essays by Foucault and other selections TBA

*Eva Illouz, "Coronavirus Reveals What Really Makes the World Go Round, and it's Not Money" *Haaretz* 03.04.2020

Second paper due to my email by 5:00 PM Friday 10/30

11/5: Theorizing postwar democratic (and capitalist) society 2: what is "capitalist society" anyway?

*Charles Lindblom, *The Market System*, ch. 1-3

*Nancy Fraser and Rahel Jaeggi, *Capitalism*, ch. 1

Martijn Konings, *The Emotional Logic of Capitalism*

*Adorno, "Veblen's Attack on Culture" in Adorno, *Prisms*

Final Paper Assigned.

11/12: 21st Century Authoritarianism(s) and its/their Sources

*Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Let Them Eat Tweets*, introduction and ch. 3

*Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism's Frankenstein" in Brown, Gordon, Pensky, *Authoritarianism*

*Banu Gökarişel, Christopher Neubert, and Sara Smith, "Demographic Fever Dreams: Fragile Masculinity and Population Politics in the Rise of the Global Right," *Signs* 44:3 (2019)

*William Connelly, *Christianity and Capitalism*, ch. 1-2

11/19: Race, Poverty, Debt, the Post-Colonial Condition and the shape of the Non-Western (or Global?) 21st Century

Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, selections TBA

*David Graeber, *Debt*: ch 1, 12

*Branko Milanovic, *Global Inequality*, ch 3-4

12/3: Big Data, Technology, Society, Democracy

Cathy O'Neil, *Weapons of Math Destruction*

*Moira Weigel, "Palantir Goes to the Frankfurt School," *boundary 2* (2020), online.

12/8 [Tues. but Thurs classes]: Environmental Questions

Anthropocene or Capitalocene? ed. Altvater and Moore, selections TBA

Final Paper due by 5:00 PM 12/15