



Philosophy 421,
Topics in Continental
Philosophy:
State, Democracy, and
Power: Radical European
Political Thought
Fall Semester 2012, Michigan
State University
Prof. Christian Lotz

Tentative Schedule (last UPDATE: November 12, 2012)

NUMBER	DATE	TOPIC	READING	MULTIMEDIA	THESIS PAPER	ASSIGNMENTS
INTRODUCTION: CAPITAL AND ITS DISCONTENT						
1	Aug 30	Introduction	no reading			
2	Sep 4	Introduction	no reading	Zizek, Crisis of Democracy ; Zizek, Left Strategies ;		
INTRODUCTION: RANCIERE ON DEMOCRACY						
3	Sep 6	Democracy and Politics	Ranciere, The Hatred of Democracy , chapter 1-2	May, Ranciere and Radical Democracy		
4	Sep 11	True Democracy	Ranciere, The Hatred of Democracy , chapter 3-4	Ranciere: The Importance of Critical Theory for Social Movements Today		
INTRODUCTION: DEMOCRACY AND THE POLITICAL IN MARX						
5	Sep 13	Democracy as Insurgency in the Early Marx	Abensour, Democracy against the State , prefaces+forward	Ranciere, In What Times do we Live? ; Ranciere, Jacques Rancière "Final Talk On Democracy" (11.10.24) ; Ranciere, Althusser' Lesson	Adam 1	
6	Sep 18	Democracy against the State	Abensour, Democracy against the State , introduction+chapter 1	Zizek, What does it mean to be a revolutionary today?	Aturo	
7	Sep 20	True Democracy	Abensour, Democracy against the State , chapter 5	Balibar, Communism as Commitment	Adam 2	
8	Sep 25	Democracy and Modernity	Abensour, Democracy against the State , chapter 6+conclusion	Documentary, Anarchism in America	Jeff 2	
BADIOU ON THE POLITICAL						
			Badiou, Prologue to			

9	Sep 27	Politics vs. The Political	<i>Metapolitics</i> ; Badiou, Against Political Philosophy	Badiou, Political Perversion and Democracy	5	Reaction paper assignment passed out in class
10	Oct 2	Politics vs. The Political	Badiou, Politics Unbound; Badiou, A Speculative Disquisition on the Concept of Democracy	Badiou, Democracy, Politics, and Philosophy	6	
11	Oct 4	Democracy	Badiou, Politics as Truth Procedure; Badiou, Truth and Justice		7	Reaction paper due
ALTHUSSER: STATE AND IDEOLOGY						
12	Oct 9	Althusser on Lenin	Althusser, On Ideology, pp. 1-22		Jeff 1	
13	Oct 11	no class	no class	Video: Chomsky on libertarian socialism		
14	Oct 16	Material Conception of Ideology	Althusser, On Ideology, pp. 22-60	Democratic hope: Prime Minister Julia Gillard's Speech Over Opposition's Sexism, Misogyny	Fujimori	
15	Oct 18	Material Conception of Ideology	Althusser, On Ideology, pp. 22-60; Badiou, Althusser: Subjectivity without Subject		Emma	
POULANTZAS: STATE AND LAW						
16	Oct 23	State and Capitalism; Critique of Althusser	Poulantzas, Power, State, Socialism, introduction		John	
17	Oct 25	State and Institutions	Poulantzas, Power, State, Socialism, part one, 1-2		Christian	
18	Oct 30	Law and Nation	Poulantzas, Power, State, Socialism, part one, 3-4		13	Reaction paper assignment passed out in class
19	Nov 1	no class	no class			
20	Nov 6	State and Classes	Poulantzas, Power, State, Socialism, part two		14	Reaction paper due
21	Nov 8	State and Power	Poulantzas, Power, State, Socialism, part three, 1-2		Hiokei	
22	Nov 13	State and Economy	Poulantzas, Power, State, Socialism, part three, 3-4		16	
INSURGENCIES: NEGRI AND THE STATE						
23	Nov 15	Introduction, Negri	Film, Documentary on Negri I	Film, A revolte that never ends		
24	Nov 20	Constituent Power	Negri, Insurgencies, chapter 1		17	Final essay assignment passed out in class
25	Nov 22	no class	no class			
26	Nov 27	American Revolution	Negri, Insurgencies, chapter 4		18	
27	Nov 29	no class, class on Nov 30	no class, class on Nov 30		19	
	Nov 30	Meeting with guest lecturer, 1pm, 530 South Kedzie Hall	First and last essay in Badiou's <i>Metapolitics</i>			not voluntary: meeting with Prof. Antonio Calcagno, King's College, London/Ontario
	Nov 30	3pm, 134 South Kedzie Hall	Guest lecture, Prof. Calcagno			voluntary
28	Dec 4	Multitude	Negri, Insurgencies, chapter 7		20	
30	Dec 6	Wrap Up				

Dec
[day of
final
exam]

Final essay due

Class Meetings:

Days: TTH

Time: 3:00 PM - 4:50 PM

Place: A302 Wells Hall

Office:

Phone: 517.355.4490 [dept.]

Place: 501 S. Kedzie Hall (part of room 503, front office)

Hours: see homepage

Other Contact:

E-mail: lotz@msu.edu

Home Phone: please ask

Webpage: <http://christianlotz.wordpress.com>

Box

You will find my box in the front office of the philosophy department (and in front of my office)

Teaching Assistant: no teaching assistants

Course Description

In this class we will discuss important topics that emerged in 20th Century European political thought. Not only recent uprisings in the Arab world and the Occupy Wallstreet movement reminded us of the following questions: how should we think about democracy as a form of political organization beyond the state? Can democracy be understood as a movement against the state? What is the role of power, police, and law enforcement in connection with the state? In addition, we will ask whether domination in Capitalism is a form of personal domination, or whether domination is an "abstract" form of social relatedness determined by capital. We will discuss Marx's early ideas about democracy as insurgency and see how Lenin took up (and distorted) some of those ideas, before we will turn to Althusser, Poulantzas', Foucault's and Negri's ideas about the connection between state, power, class, and ideology. Finally, we will briefly look at shorter essays by Ranciere and Badiou.

Note

This is a 421 course in philosophy and, as such, contains difficult material and requires mature students. If you are not willing to study dense written material, listen to unusual lectures, and discuss ideas in an organized fashion, then you should not take this class.

Course Goals

This lecture class should students introduce to

- the idea of democracy as insurgency
- the idea of democracy as something that is in tension with the state
- the concepts of ideology and hegemony
- the idea of the political in recent French philosophy
- Marxist interpretations of the aforementioned issues

Structure

Part I: Do we live in a democracy?

Part II: Is there a tension between democracy and state?

Part III: What is the being of the political?

Part IV: What is the relation between ideology and state?

Part V: What is the relation between power and state

Part VI: What is constituent power?

Note

Students should be aware of the fact that this course is based on extremely difficult texts. Accordingly, this class requires self-responsible learners and an intense confrontation with the primary text. Accordingly, if you are not excited about the prospect of a daily confrontation with abstract and historical reflections, then you should not take this class. This class is not based on a set of fixed knowledge and, as such, is not based on a behavioral idea of education; rather, we will try to learn together and critically examine the material. The instructor of this class does not have anything to teach, but much to learn.

Note, class on Nov 29

Prof. Antonio Calcagno (King's College, London/Ontario) will speak about Italian political philosophy on Nov 30 in our department and agreed to meet with this class. Accordingly, we will meet on Friday Nov 30. Please keep this date open.

Required Texts (Bookstore)

- Abensour, *Democracy against the State*, Polity
- Negri, *Insurgencies*, Minnesota UP
- Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, Verso
- Althusser, *On Ideology*, Verso
- Ranciere, *The Hatred of Democracy*, Verso
- Badiou, *Metapolitics*, Verso

Reading assignments and preparation

The reading assignment per session is limited; however, this means that I expect you to come to class having prepared the texts carefully and thoroughly and that you are able to talk meaningfully about the text, raise questions of your own and provide answers when called upon. I will take the liberty to call on students randomly. An approximate preparation time for each class is a minimum of three hours. The reading for the next session, if not clear from the course schedule (below), will be announced at the end of the previous class. "Preparing for class" implies underlining and making excerpts from the text assigned; looking up unfamiliar vocabulary and writing them into a note book (I encourage you to keep a vocabulary booklet for all of your classes). Just reading the text won't be sufficient. You have to study the material. Some vocabulary might not be sufficiently explained in a regular dictionary (this goes especially for philosophical terms), so it is necessary to consult additional sources (e.g., the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy — online (see remark below) — is an excellent source of information, and the MSU Library Website is a great resource for nearly all questions in this regard).

Organization

The course will be organized such that, ideally, each class period will include [i] "interactive" lecture, [ii] discussion time or [iii] response time. Students will be asked to intensively prepare a certain text or part of a text for the next class period. Certain class sections will be devoted to listening to Wagner's music and will be accompanied by brief assignments

Course Requirements

- Daily reading and studying (around 5-10 pages)
- 2 shorter reaction papers
- 1 thesis paper (short assignment)
- 1 final paper
- participation

Note

The class and my lectures are solely based on the texts selected for class and require a thorough study and preparation of the material. I will primarily lecture on the readings, which will help you to more fully understand the texts. Therefore it is not sufficient for students to come to class without having prepared the texts. And indeed, in the exams you have to demonstrate whether you have appropriately prepared the readings selected for each lecture.

Reading Quizzes

There will be - from time to time - unannounced reading quizzes and group assignments. Students who do not attend class (and have no medical documentation) will lose all points. Reading quizzes and group assignments cannot be made up. I will waive this requirement if I have the impression that students come prepared to class.

Make-Up Assignments

Students who need to miss the exam(s) for excusable reasons must inform me ahead of time, and will be permitted to make up the exam and movie assignment. I will only accept official doctor notes (no faxes, no emails) or letters from other professors.

Attendance

To get a good grade in this class, regular attendance is required. I will not call roll. Hence, it is up to you to come to class or not. However, if you do not come to class on a regular basis and participate in the class discussion, it is impossible for you to achieve a good grade in this class; so coming to class is your responsibility and your call. If you choose to attend class, please come on time, turn off cell phones and other electronic devices that interfere with your (and others') concentration, have the reading prepared and be ready to participate. If you are not prepared, do not bother showing up. It is a sign of disrespect to your peers and the instructor to attend class unprepared. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain class notes from a fellow student and to catch up on reading. Nevertheless, please be aware that you should not make me responsible for a failure that results out of your decision. You should be aware that chances to master this class are minimal, if you do not show up for class or if you do not prepare the readings (=studying).

Thesis Paper (brief overview of assigned reading)

Each student has to prepare once a thesis paper for class. The thesis paper should contain [a] a list of main points and claims, [b] concepts that are unclear, [c] intelligent questions about the readings. Students who prepare the thesis paper need to send their responses by 8am per email on the due date to me, bring copies for everyone to class and be prepared to briefly present their paper. The thesis paper is limited to two pages and you must use the prepared document (download below). Note: you are not allowed to cite common internet resources, such as Wikipedia. Instead, work with the following online resources (or other resources in the library): [Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy](#) - [Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) - [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) - [Encyclopedia of Continental Philosophy \(e-book\)](#) - [The Oxford Companion to Philosophy](#)

[Click here to download thesis paper](#)

Reaction Paper

Each student has to write two 2-page (no more than 600 words) reaction papers in reaction to one of the readings. The reaction paper should contain a systematic thesis about a selected aspect of the material.

Reading Quizzes

There will be - from time to time - *unannounced* reading quizzes and group assignments. Students who do not attend class (and have no medical documentation) will lose *all* points. Reading quizzes and group assignments cannot be made up. I will waive this requirement if I have the impression that students come prepared to class.

Papers

In order to intensify and improve your understanding of the material, you will turn in one final research and academic style paper, in which you analyze a specific topic (6 pages, double spaced, no more than 1800 words). Assignments will be passed out in class.

Class Response Sheets

Every student is asked to submit up to 5 class response sheets during the semester.

[Click here to download the class response sheet](#)

(Word document, I will only accept answers that are given on this form) The response sheets have to be submitted at the end of a class session. I do not accept late turn ins.

Course Evaluation

You will be evaluated on the basis of:

1 final paper	30 points
2 reaction papers	20 points
unannounced reading quizzes and other assignments	15 points
1 thesis paper (handout, make copies)	10 points
participation	10 points
5 response sheets	15 points

	100 points

Grading:

4.0 (=A)	100 - 93
3.5	92 - 87
3 (=B)	86 - 82
2.5	81 - 77
2 (=C)	76 - 72
1.5	71 - 65
1.0 (=D)	64 - 60
0.0	< 60

GENERIC SYLLABUS (might not be applicable to each class)

Laptop/Cell Phone Policy

You are not permitted to use laptops and cell phones in class. Please do not text under the table. Cell phones should be removed from tables. Failure to follow this policy will lead to unannounced assignments in class or loss of points (at the digression of the instructor).

Class Attendance

As mentioned above, I do not employ in my classes a class attendance policy. Having said this, you should be aware that class attendance is very important. When engaging in a philosophical and humanistic dialogue it is necessary to be an active and present participant in the ongoing discussion. If you miss class please do not email me asking if you missed anything important. Every class is important. You should get a study buddy for the class; a student in class who will inform you of what you missed. If you miss a class you can come to my office hours or make an appointment to discuss the material, providing you have read the material and you simply want to see if your understanding of the material is on target. Time in office hours will not be used to repeat the class lectures.

Grading Criteria

Check out [this page for grading criteria, example of assignments, etc.](#)

Helpful information about oral presentations, paper writing and plagiarism

[Click here to find help on your presentations and your writing](#)

Online Research Sources

Unfortunately, some people think that the internet as such is a reliable source of information. If you decide to use online sources for additional information or your paper then do not just use one of the common internet search engines, such as Google; rather, use reliable academic sources, such as Britannica Online, or the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). The [Internet Eyclopedia of Philosophy](#) isn't very good, but still acceptable. Check out MSU's [library resources](#)! And, as with other sources, you must cite any online sources to which you refer in your essay.

Writing Center Information

MSU's writing center offers excellent help on all matters regarding writing and learning. Check the website at <http://writing.msu.edu> for an overview and hours. For more information, please call 517.432.3610 or send an e-mail to writing@msu.edu.

Integrity of Scholarship and Grades (Plagiarism)

The following statement of University policy addresses principles and procedures to be used in instances of academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, and falsification of academic or admission records, herein after referred to as academic misconduct. [See General Student Regulation 1.00, Protection of Scholarship and Grades.]: [download document](#) (pdf)

Academic Honesty

Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu) Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including but not limited to a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html>)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY)

Drops and Adds

The last day to add this course is the end of the first week of classes. The last day to drop this course with a 100 percent refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). The last day to drop this course with no refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). You should immediately make a copy of your amended schedule to verify you have added or dropped this course.

Note on Attendance

Students who fail to attend the first four class sessions or class by the fifth day of the semester, whichever occurs first, may be dropped from the course.

[Back to classes](#)