

## INTERPRETATIVE METHODS FOR POLITICAL THOUGHT AND CULTURE PLPT 7500, Spring 2022

Tuesday 4:30-7:00pm in Gibson Hall 296

Professor Kevin Duong

Office Hours: Tues, 3:00-4:15pm and by appointment

This class pursues three distinct pedagogical goals for graduate students in and beyond political theory. First, it surveys interpretative approaches used to study the objects that comprise political theory's purview: theoretical treatises, historical events, cultural practices, and archival materials. Students will read canonical methodological statements, like those of "contextualism" and ethnographic "thick description," together with examples of such approaches. Second, this class is designed to prepare graduate students for their comprehensive exams in political thought. To that end, our survey of interpretative approaches will be paired with the reading of major figures from Plato to Marx. Finally, the class is designed to enhance the teaching experience of enrolled graduate student-workers currently serving as Teaching Assistants to PLPT 1010. No class can exhaustively cover any one of these goals, nevermind all three at once. However, students can expect to earn familiarity with major texts and interpretative approaches and to discuss how these methods can be translated into teaching and research.

### Required Materials

The following textbooks will be made available at the bookstore:

- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett); isbn 978-0-915144-86-0
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (Hackett); isbn 978-0-87220-150-7
- Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (W. W. Norton); isbn 978-0-393-61709-2
- C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (Vintage); isbn 9780679724674
- Aimé Césaire, *The Tragedy of King Christophe* (Northwestern); isbn 9780810130586
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Cambridge); isbn 9781316602591
- Karl Marx, *The Political Writings*, ed. David Fernbach (Verso); isbn 9781788736862
- Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe* (MIT); isbn 9780262523318
- Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books); isbn 9780465093557
- Banu Bargu, *Starve and Immolate* (Columbia); isbn 9780231163415

Other readings are posted online at Collab:

<https://collab.its.virginia.edu/portal/site/219f2149-ea30-40b7-a721-ea88dc78c235>

### Course Objectives and Expectations

#### Course Evaluation:

Class Participation	20%
First Class Presentations	15%
Second Class Presentation	15%
Final Paper	60%

Assignments: Students will be expected to complete readings for each class and be ready to discuss them. Each student will also give a presentation on the day's material twice during the semester. A seminar paper will complete the class; more details on that will be forthcoming.

Attendance: Attendance each week is expected. A student's grade will be in jeopardy if they have more than 2 unexcused absences.

Class Participation: Please note that participation is a substantial component of the course's overall evaluation. Students can ensure that they maximally receive participation points by attending class, participating in discussions, and by showing general attentiveness towards, including thoughtful responses to, their fellow classmates. If for any reason a student is concerned about their ability to do the above listed, please feel free to discuss the matter with me early in the semester.

**Other Matters:**

Plagiarism: Each student is expected to abide by the code of academic integrity. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with college policies regarding plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity, which will be strictly observed in this class. If work is found to be plagiarized, the student will receive an automatic failing grade in the class, and depending on the situation additional sanctions may be imposed by the college.

Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability that may require assistance or accommodations, or if you have any questions related to any accommodation for testing, note taking, reading, etc., please speak with me as soon as possible. You may also contact the Student Disability Access Center at <https://studenthealth.virginia.edu/sdac-contactus>

## Schedule of Readings

Readings and assignments are to be completed by their corresponding date. Readings marked with an asterisk are available on Collab. 'Optional' readings are additional selections that may improve your mastery of the material but aren't required. [Optional readings in blue are strongly suggested if you are a political theory major preparing for your comprehensive exams.](#) Please read the assigned texts in the order they are listed.

### Week 1-2: Methods of "Close Reading"

- Jan 25: bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice"\*  
Leo Strauss, "Persecution and the Art of Writing"\*  
Barry Brummett, "Transformations in Text: Seeing Beneath the Surface"\*  
Jane Gallop, "The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading"\*
- Feb 1: Plato, *The Republic* (excerpt)\*  
Jill Frank, *Poetic Justice: Rereading Plato's Republic*, pp. 1-80\*  
Tae-Yeoun Keum, *Plato and the Mythic Tradition in Political Thought*, pp. 37-69\*

- Optional: [Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man"](#)  
[Andrew DuBois, "Close Reading: An Introduction"](#)  
Kenneth Burke, "Symbolic Action in a Poem by Keats"

### Week 3-4: Contextualist Methods: Critics, Defenders, Innovators

- Feb 8: John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (excerpt)  
C. B. Macpherson, "Locke on Capitalist Appropriation"\*
- Feb 15: Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas"\*  
Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defense of English Colonialism*, pp. 132-167  
Mauro José Caraccioli, *Writing the New World: The Politics of Natural History in the Early Spanish Empire*, preface, chp. 2 and 3

- Optional: [Emile Perreau-Saussine, "Quentin Skinner in Context"](#)  
Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*  
Melissa Lane, "Doing Our Own Thinking for Ourselves: On Quentin Skinner's Genealogical Turn"  
[Peter Laslett, "The English Revolution and Locke's 'Two Treatises of Government'"](#)\*  
[Pierre Charbonnier, \*Affluence and Freedom: An Environmental History of Ideas\*, pp. 30-49\\*](#)

### Week 5-6: Rhetorical and Psychoanalytic Approaches

- Feb 22: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality"  
Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*
- Mar 1: Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, pp. 22-45\*  
Linda Zerilli, *Signifying Woman: Culture and Chaos in Rousseau, Burke, and Mill*, pp. 1-59\*  
Elizabeth Wingrove, "Republican Romance"\*

- Optional: [Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through"](#)  
M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*  
M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*

Nancy Luxon, "Inside/Outside Clinical and Colonial Encounters"  
Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative*  
Amy Allen, *Critique on the Couch: Why Critical Theory Needs Psychoanalysis*

Week 7-8: Decolonial and "Creolized" Reading Strategies

Mar 15: C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, pp. 95-162, 224-288

Aimé Césaire, *The Tragedy of King Christophe*

Mar 22: Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti"\*

Jane Anna Gordon, *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau Through Fanon*, pp. 1-17\*

David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, pp. 132-208\*

Optional: Adom Getachew and Karuna Mantena, "Anticolonialism and the Decolonization of Political Theory"

Robert Nichols, "Context, Violence, and Methodological Drift in the Study of Empire"

Jimmy Klausen, *Fugitive Rousseau: Slavery, Primitivism, and Political Freedom*

Week 9-10: Genealogy versus "History from Below"

Mar 29: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*

Apr 5: Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency"\*

Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"\*

Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, pp. 1-21\*

Ladelle McWhorter, "Sex, Race, and Biopower: A Foucauldian Genealogy" \*

Optional: Mark Bevir, "What is Genealogy?"

Raymond Geuss, "Nietzsche and Genealogy"

Jennie Ikuta, *Contesting Conformity: Democracy and the Paradox of Political Belonging*

Week 11-12: Something Like Critical Theory

Apr 12: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto"

Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire"

Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, pp. 47-71\*

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"\*

Apr 19: Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*

Massimiliano Tomba, *Insurgent Universality: An Alternative Legacy of Modernity*, pp. 120-185\*

Optional: Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*

Andrew Sartori, *Bengal in Global Concept History*

Andrew Sartori, *Liberalism in Empire: An Alternative History*

Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*

Week 13-14: Culture and Ethnographic Approaches

Apr 26: Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament"\*

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretative Theory of Culture"

Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cock Fight"

Matthew Longo and Bernardo Zacka, "Political Theory in an Ethnographic Key"\*

May 3: Banu Bargu, *Starve and Immolate: The Politics of Human Weapons*

Optional: Brooke Ackerly, "Reflexivity in Practice: Power and Ethics in Feminist Research on International Relations"

[Michel de Certeau, "On the Oppositional Practices of Everyday Life"](#)

Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*