I. Course identity, teaching staff, and logistics

PS 199: Ethics, Identity, Society (Online version)

1) Teaching Staff and instructor info:
Professor Anita Chari
Department of Political Science
anitac@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: TBD
Pattern of weekly class times: Class lasts for 4 weeks during summer, this class is completely asynchronous and requires no in person attendance).

(Requesting consideration for group-satisfying course in the Social Sciences, Multicultural Requirement)

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites needed for this class

Texts

All assigned readings are in the course reader, which is available for purchase at the Duck Store, with the exception of texts marked otherwise. Ta Nehesi Coates, Between the World and Me is the one additional book you must purchase, you can buy it at the Duck Store. You must purchase the course reader in order to complete the class readings. It is possible that occasionally an extra reading will be assigned, in which case I will give you instructions on how to access any additional readings on Canvas. You must also rent or purchase the film “13th” which is available on Netflix.

II. Course description
In this gateway course to the “Ethics, Identity and Society” pathway for the Political Science major, we will interrogate the relationship between ethics, identity, and political agency by surveying a series of concepts in political theory relevant to these themes: capitalism, gender, race and incarceration. By exploring these concepts in both experimental and traditional ways, through readings, discussion, self-inquiry, experiential activities, film, media, and writing, we will as a group come to a new understanding of how these concepts inform our experience of contemporary society, both at an individual and societal level. Along the way we will explore what it means to do political theory and why philosophical concepts are fundamental to the study of politics.

III. Expected learning outcomes

Skills
In this class you will learn:
• Analytical writing, including how to perform exposition and analysis of philosophical arguments
• How to effectively read philosophical/theoretical texts
• How to connect theory with everyday experience
• How to integrate analytical and experiential learning.
• How to collaborate with peers in learning and writing activities. Activities we do online will teach and reinforce these skills.

Content
• You will learn about a significant literature in the field of Political Theory exploring the following concepts: capitalism, class, race, gender, sexuality, and incarceration.
• You will learn how to use the theories studied in class to perform analyses of media and artworks, as well as of contemporary political events.
• You will learn how to participate in discussion boards in a way that is theoretically informed and personally relevant.

IV. Estimated Student Workload

You are expected to spend about 6-10 hours per week outside of online lectures on your coursework, including reading and writing assignments. In this class, you will write four 5-page papers. You will also submit an online weekly discussion assignment based on your response to online lectures and discussions. The breakdown of weekly hours of work on average is as follows:

Per week one can expect:
1. Online lecture contact hours: 4 hours/week (40 total for the quarter)
2. Course reading: about 4 hours/week (40 hours total for quarter)
3) Writing Assignments: about 3 hours/week (30 hours total for quarter)
4) Discussion boards online: about 1 hour per week (10 hours total)

V. How Grades Will Be Determined

Assignment of final grades: Students will receive grades based on their grades for each assignment, the percentage weights given in the table above, and the following criteria:
• A+: if given at all, given to 1 or 2 students whose performance stands out as significantly stronger than all other students in the course
• A: all assignments completed in ways that demonstrate a strong and nuanced understanding of almost all course concepts and the ability to clearly connect theories from the course to empirical evidence
• B: all assignments completed in ways that demonstrate a solid understanding of most course concepts and the ability to adequately connect theories from the course to empirical evidence
• C: completed assignments demonstrate only a basic understanding of course concepts and/or one or more assignments missing
• D: missing many assignments and completed assignments demonstrate little understanding of material covered
Course Requirements:

1) Assignment 1: 20% -- Assignment 1 due Friday, Jan. 26 prompt posted on Canvas, submit on Canvas

This is a writing assignment that examines your knowledge of the Module 1 and 2 readings. It focuses on the themes of alienation, exploitation, and labor. The assignment is as follows:

Part 1: Write 3 paragraphs addressing the following question:

Define the concept of alienation as used by Marx in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. In your response, address the following questions:

a) What is being alienated according to Marx?

b) Why is alienation a problem for individuals living in capitalist society?

c) How does Marx describe human activity, human nature, and human society when it is not alienated?

A paragraph includes at least 4 sentences. Please make sure to cite from the text when quotes are used or when you are taking information from the text. Do not use long quotes. Using textual evidence is important, but you should keep these quotes short for this assignment. Whenever you use a quote from the text, make sure to interpret it. Quotes do not speak for themselves. Please keep your responses confined to an analysis of Marx’s concept of alienation. Do not use other sources, and do not speculate or use information that is not backed up by evidence in the text.

Part 2: Relate the Greenhouse reading to the concept of alienation (2 paragraphs)

How does the Marx reading on alienation illuminate some of the issues and phenomena that Greenhouse describes, regarding labor conditions, economic transformation, outsourcing, or corporate practices, for example?

Part 3. Personal Reflection: Write 3 paragraphs total on the following questions:

1) Pick one theme from the texts we’ve read so far that interested you the most. What about this aspect of the course materials interests you? [Write 1 paragraph on this question].

F: assignments completed account for less than 80% of total grade.
2) What is something that you see now about capitalist society that you did not notice before doing these readings or having class discussions? This could be something from your everyday life, something from the media, something from politics, or something from another area entirely. The choice is yours. Explain how the readings helped you to notice this phenomenon. [Write 2 paragraph on this question].

2) Assignment 2: 20%--Assignment 2 due Friday, Feb. 9 prompt posted on Canvas, submit on Canvas
   This is a writing assignment that examines your knowledge of the Module 3, 4, and 5 readings. It asks you to select two readings from the readings on race, do an exposition of those readings, and compare and contrast their arguments, as well as to take your own position on the arguments presented.

3) Assignment 3: 20%-- Assignment 3 due Friday, March 2, prompt posted on Canvas, submit on Canvas
   In this assignment you will choose a concept from the gender readings (Module 6 and 7). For example, you could choose: othering, gender, transcendence, objectification, masculinity, homosocial enactment, etc. You will write a 2 paragraph exposition of this concept. Secondly, you will select a political event, art object, piece of media, or piece of music that exemplifies or illuminates this concept for you. You will write 2 paragraphs describing this experience/event/object and how it exemplifies the concept. You must cite to a source here, and also provide a link if possible and applicable. Finally, you will write about possible interventions that could challenge, resist, or unsettle (or realize, if you are using a positive concept like transcendence) the forms of domination or freedom exemplified by the concept you chose. Write 2 paragraphs on this part.

4) Assignment 4: 20%-- Assignment 4 (Final Assignment) due Monday, March 19. Prompt posted on Canvas, submit on Canvas
   This assignment will allow you to synthesize your perspective on readings from throughout the quarter by writing a letter to someone about your learning in the course (with a focus on readings from Module 8, 9, 10). Some of the most interesting documents in the history of ideas have been letters. Just think of Marx’s letters to Friedrich Engels, Theodor Adorno’s letters to Walter Benjamin, Rilke’s letters to an anonymous young writer, Ta-Nehesi Coates’s letter to his son, and so on. Your assignment is to write a letter to someone you know, it could be a friend, parent, teacher, or anyone else you feel like writing to that you know. In this letter, you will describe to them something specific that shifted your perspective in the course of our final module on incarceration.

   You will be graded based on your adherence to the following guidelines:
a) In the letter, you should refer to at least 2 readings from the module on “Incarceration”. Make sure to explain and contextualize your references to these readings in a way that would make sense to someone who has not taken the course. You must make reference to either Foucault or Guenther as one of the 2 referenced readings. For the second reading you may refer to any of the readings from the unit on incarceration. You may additionally refer to the film “13th”, but this would be in addition to referencing 2 readings.

b) Feel free to be slightly colloquial, as you would in a letter, but stay on topic and observe norms of academic writing. The idea is to write a letter that communicates complicated ideas in a more personal way. Describe 2 specific concepts or themes that exemplify how your thinking or perspective has shifted as a result of readings, discussions, or concepts you learned in the class as relates to incarceration. What specifically was it that produced a shift in your perspective? Was it a concept? Something you observed in your life or in the news that the connected up with a class reading? We want you to be specific here, do not just talk in generalities about your shift in perspective. We want to understand how it happened and what the implications are for you.

5). Discussion boards 20%
This grade will be based upon your satisfactory completion of weekly discussion assignments on Canvas discussion boards. You will be asked to post on a question about the readings of the week as well as to respond to two other students’ posts in your group.

VI. Course schedule and assignments

Reading Schedule:

Module 1: Introductory Discussion: Democracy in the Current Day

Introductory videoconference on Canvas (attendance advised, but not required, you may watch it later on Canvas as it is recorded).

Ta Nehesi Coates, “The First White President”
No page numbers available (published from online source).

Module 2: Capitalism, Labor, and Society


Module 3: Race and Society

Ta Nehesi Coates, Between the World and Me. pp. 5-45.

Ta Nehesi Coates, Between the World and Me. pp. 46-71.  
Note: Excerpt on Canvas not in reader.

Assignment 1 due end of week 1

Module 4: Racial alienation, Double consciousness, Whiteness


Module 5: Reflecting on Race in context

For homework watch OPB documentary, “Local Color”, to be discussed in class http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/shows/list/local-color/

Matt Novak, “White Utopia: Oregon’s Racist History,” (online reading, no page numbers available) http://gizmodo.com/oregon-was-founded-as-a-racist-utopia-1539567040


Assignment 2 due end of week 2

Module 6: Decentering Gender


Bell Hooks, Ain’t I a Woman, ch. 5, pp. 133-153
Module 7: Gender and Culture


Module 8: Incarceration


Assignment 3 due end of week 3

Module 9: Ethics of Incarceration

Documentary: “13th”—you must rent or purchase as indicated earlier in syllabus.

Michele Alexander, The New Jim Crow, Ch. 5, 178-220.

Module 10: Phenomenology of Incarceration

Lisa Guenther, Solitary Confinement, Intro and Ch. 5 pp. 249-272

Mon. March 14: Final video conference discussion, no new reading. We will use this videoconference to have a broad discussion of the entirety of the course themes and readings as well as to reflect upon your learning throughout the quarter. While you are advised to attend, attendance is not required. You may also access this videoconference as a recording on Canvas for up to two weeks after recording.

Assignment 4 (Final Assignment) due end of week 4

VII. Course Policies
Safe Space: My intention is to create an online environment that is inclusive and safe for diverse voices. This means that we will create parameters as a class together for the norms of our discourse in discussion boards. I address this topic in the “Getting started module” so you are aware of your responsibilities for helping to create that space.

Late paper policy: Please note that I will not accept late papers. Late papers receive a 0. Papers must be dropped off in hardcopy form into my mailbox as well as electronically via Vericite. More specific directions will follow. Only cases of documented family or personal injury (death in the family or extreme personal accident/illness) will be accepted as exceptions to this rule and only in very very rare cases. Please do not use computer failure as an excuse, you should use an application like dropbox to backup your files at all times. Do not attempt to get in touch with me to receive an excuse unless you have documented proof of your situation in hand.

Text policy: You must use the editions assigned on the syllabus. Please do not use other editions.

Email correspondence: Please identify yourself and the name of our course in all correspondence with the instructor and GE. 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 1 day.

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 source you must cite to it.

Student Resources

Accessible Education: The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@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](http://tlc.uoregon.edu/index.html)

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

**Title IX Information:**

All faculty and staff share in the responsibility to create a safe learning environment for all students and for the campus as a whole. As members of the campus community, all faculty and staff (other than those designated as confidential reporters) are designated as *responsible employees* and therefore have the duty to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If a student would prefer to share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, a list of those individuals can be found [here](http://tlc.uoregon.edu/index.html). Each resource is clearly labeled as either “required reporter,” “confidential UO employee,” or “off-campus,” to allow you to select your desired level of confidentiality.

**Resources:**

- [SAFE website](http://tlc.uoregon.edu/index.html)
- [Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity](http://tlc.uoregon.edu/index.html)
- [Office of the Dean of Students](http://tlc.uoregon.edu/index.html)
- [University Counseling and Testing Center](http://tlc.uoregon.edu/index.html)
- [University Health Center](http://tlc.uoregon.edu/index.html)
- [University of Oregon Police Department](http://tlc.uoregon.edu/index.html)