Course Description

How does language affect how we think about political possibilities? How have writers and activists sought to change society through changing how we use language? How is rhetoric used politically, in essays, law, oratory, propaganda, and poetry? We read arguments about the interplay of language and the political, think about political theory, examine political rhetoric, and study literary works. We write about the power of rhetoric to form and criticize political practices: movements for civil rights, human rights, rights for women, workers’ rights, and animal rights. We investigate in detail how language participates in our ideas about rights, ethics, political action, and social justice.

After familiarizing ourselves with various approaches to thinking political and social relations, you can then explore in depth an issue of social justice that animates you. This means that we will use the reading to focus your critical thinking capacities, expand your horizons, and communicate the results of these processes in writing that is persuasive, coherent, exhilarating, meaningful.

Required Texts


Plato, and Marx and Engels, are available online at www.gutenberg.org.

Marx and Engels are also available at www.marxists.org.
Writing Practices: Formal and Informal Writing and Workshops

You will write three formal essays for the seminar: two 4-page papers and one longer project, a 7–10-page critical research paper on a topic that you develop. You will shepherd each of these formal essays through a process of peer-workshopping and drafting.

In addition to these three formal essays you will write a two-page thinking paper on each of the readings. A thinking paper is a short analytical paper in which you take up an issue of interest to you and develop a pithy argument. I may, especially at the beginning, ask you to work on a specific topic. As the semester progresses I want you to develop your own topics, based on your own interests and passions.

We draft, and drafts of your essays in progress form an essential component of our workshops. I will give specific instructions on workshopping as each of our workshop dates approach.

The research essay should explore a topic or problem that is thematically related to the course. It should be about a topic you care about. In it you will present a strong, well-supported argument in eight to ten pages. In our student conferences at the end of the term, you will present a distilled version (approximately 2 pages) of your research. We’ll discuss specifics of the presentation format as we proceed.

Final versions of all essays must be formatted as follows: double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, 12-point type. You must carefully proofread and edit your final drafts. Each of your essays must have a title. Final versions are due on the dates indicated on the syllabus.

Course Requirements

Our seminar relies on discussing and analyzing the readings together and on a regular series of writing workshops. This method will not succeed without your regular and timely attendance. You must attend class on a regular basis and arrive on time. If you fall ill or experience an emergency, please call Gallatin or e-mail me so that you can be prepared for the next class. Excessive absences (more than two) can jeopardize your course grade.

Grading

Grades are based on your ongoing class participation, your responses to your colleagues’ writing, and the quality of your written work. Participation consists in regular attendance, punctuality, in-class work and contributions to discussions. The development you experience as you write improves the quality of your writing, so I will consider it when reckoning final grades. I am happy to read and evaluate any revisions of papers, provided they are submitted not later than one week after I have returned the final essay to you.

The anticipated numerical breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework and in-class writing</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thinking papers</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First essay</td>
<td>roughly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second essay</td>
<td>roughly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third essay (research project)</td>
<td>roughly</td>
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More than two absences will jeopardize your grade. Do not miss a workshop day; it is impossible to benefit from that experience if you are not there.
Doing Honest Work

I follow the Gallatin policies on academic integrity.

Plagiarism is the use of work done by someone else and presented as one’s own work, without acknowledging the source. Examples include but are not limited to using material from books, articles, blogs, websites, reference works (including wikipedia), student or faculty papers, etc., that one did not write oneself without properly attributing the source of the material. This also includes purchasing or outsourcing written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism may be found in Hacker. Gallatin’s policies and procedures for handling such academic dishonesty are published in the Gallatin student handbook: http://www.nyu.edu/gallatin/pdf/GallatinBulletin.pdf.

I will go over proper documentation style in the course of the semester in conjunction with Hacker’s *A Pocket Style Manual*.

Office Hours and Connectivity

My office is room 613 in 715 Broadway. E-mail is the best way to reach me: al260@nyu.edu. The phone is 87340.

My office hours for the spring term are:

- Tuesdays, 3–4:30 and by appointment

I may need to adjust this syllabus and course schedule to accommodate pedagogical needs as they arise. If I do, I will.

Schedule

**Week 1**

**January 24**
- Introduction.
- Writing assignment: Occupy or GNH?

**January 26**
- One-page paper due.
- Reading for discussion: Le Guin and Genesis 1–2:22.
- Writing assignment: Write two pages analyzing how Le Guin’s protagonist uses language to make her point.

**Week 2**

**January 31**
- Two-page essay on Le Guin due.
- Reading for discussion: Plato, *Apology*.

**February 2**
- Reading for discussion: Plato, *Apology* and *Crito*.
- Writing assignment: Thinking paper on Plato.

**Week 3**

**February 7**
- Thinking paper on Plato due.
- Plato, conclusion.

**February 9**
- Reading for discussion: Orwell, “Politics and the English Language” and Arendt, “Ideology and Terror.”
- Discussion of topics for analytical essay (four pages).
- Writing assignment: Thinking paper on Orwell or Arendt.
Week 4

February 14
- Thinking paper on Orwell or Arendt due.
- Viewing for discussion: Pariser, “Beware the Online ‘Filter Bubbles’” and Zuckerman, “Listening to Global Voices.”
- Writing assignment: Analytical essay (four pages).

February 16
- Workshop for analytical essay.

Week 5

February 21
- Workshop for analytical essay.

February 23
- Analytical essay (four pages) due.
- Reading for discussion: Marx and Engels, “Alienated Labor.”
- Writing assignment: Personal reflection on work.

Week 6

February 28
- Personal reflection on work due.

March 1
- Discussion of close-reading essay (four pages).
- Writing assignment: Thinking paper on *The Communist Manifesto*.

Week 7

March 6
- Thinking paper on *The Communist Manifesto* due.
- Reading for discussion: Arendt, pp. 7–11 and pp. 79–135 (“Labor”).
- Writing assignment: Thinking essay on Arendt.

March 8
- Thinking essay on Arendt due.
- Reading for discussion: Arendt, pp. 7–11 and pp. 79–135 (“Labor”).
- Writing assignment: Close-reading essay (four pages).

Week 8

Spring Recess: March 12 (Monday) through March 17 (Saturday)

March 20
- Writing workshop for close-reading essay.

March 22
- Writing workshop for close-reading essay.
- Discussion of research essay and proposal.

Week 9

March 27
- Close-reading essay (4 pages) due.
- Reading for discussion: Gandhi.
- Writing assignment: A research-essay proposal (one paragraph) with 8 sources.
March 29
- Reading for discussion: Gandhi.
- Each student brings to class a research-essay proposal (one paragraph) with 8 sources.

Week 10
April 3
- Writing assignment: Complete Final research-essay proposals with annotated bibliography (8 sources).

April 5
- Final research-essay proposals with annotated bibliography (8 sources) due.
- Discussion of source materials for research essay.
- Writing assignment: Thinking essay on *Meridian*.

Week 11
April 10
- Thinking essay on *Meridian* due.
- Reading for discussion: Sedgwick.

April 12
- Reading for discussion: Sedgwick; Butler.
- Writing assignment: Thinking essay on Sedgwick or Butler.

Week 12
April 17
- Thinking essay on Sedgwick or Butler due.
- Discussion of proper citation and documentation.
- Workshop research projects, first version.

April 19
- Workshop research projects, second version.

Week 13
April 24
- Student research conference: Presentations of research projects.
- You should have a two-page distillation of your research project to work from.

April 26
- Student research conference: Presentations of research projects.
- You should have a two-page distillation of your research project to work from.

Week 14
May 1
- Research projects due.
- Reading for discussion: Schmidt and Walker, *Grandmother Spirit*.
- Writing assignment: Reflective essay.

May 3
- Reflective essay due.
- Song and dance.