

**ICS Calendar Title:** Deconstruction and Politics

**ICS Course Code:** ICS 1620/2620 F09

**Instructor:** Dr. Shannon Hoff, [shoff@icscanada.edu](mailto:shoff@icscanada.edu), 416-979-2331 ext. 232

**Term and Year:** Tuesdays, 1:30-4:30 pm, Fall 2009

**Last Updated:** October 8, 2009

## Course Description

Deconstruction, rather than appealing to a pre-established rule or method to understand situations, looks instead to the distinctive particularity of a situation so as to see how that situation, in its finite specificity, simultaneously realizes and undermines its animating principle. We find such an ambivalent finitude in the domain of the political: as Aristotle argues, the political domain is in a way natural to human beings, but on the other hand it is always contingently and historically shaped; in other words, the political domain is essential to the realization of human freedom, but it is always shaped by the very freedom that it realizes in contingent, finite and ultimately exclusionary ways. After introducing the central concerns of political philosophy as expressed in ancient and modern texts, we will explore the roots of deconstructive philosophy in Hegel and Marx, who focus on determinate situations so as to unearth their implicit contradictions. We will then study Derrida's work on law, rights, violence, justice, democracy, hospitality and philosophy, oriented by the tension between finite specificity and defining principle. We will conclude the course by reading several philosophers whose work is animated by this deconstructive tradition.

## Course Materials

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B430.A5 W4] ; *Politics* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: JC71 .A41 S5]

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: RC455 .D4213 1987]

Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law," in *Acts of Religion* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B2430 .D484 D46 2002]

or *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson, eds. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: K246 .D43 1992]

Jacques Derrida, *Ethics, Institutions, and the Right to Philosophy* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B2430 .D483 H8613 2002]

Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: JV6346 .D47 2001]

Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B2430 .D483 D6413 2000]

Jacques Derrida, *Rogues* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: JC497 .D4713 2005]

Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent," in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, Ted Humphrey, ed. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B2758 .H85 1983]

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HX21 .L25 2001]

Jay Lampert, "Locke, Fichte, and Hegel on the Right to Property," in *Hegel and the Tradition*, Michael Baur and John Russon, eds. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B2948 .H45 1997]

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: JC153 .L85]

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*: Alienated Labour, The German Ideology, Communist Manifesto, Lawrence H. Simon, ed. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HX39.5 .A224 1994]

Plato, *The Republic* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: JC71 .P37]

## Course Requirements

*Class Participation* 15%

Each course member is required to do the reading assignment and participate in class discussions. Good participation should be mindful of the participation and contributions of others.

*Presentations* 25%

Each course participant will give one presentation on course readings.

*Research paper* 60%

A 100-500 word abstract of the paper is due on December 8<sup>th</sup>. The final draft of the research paper is due on

January 29<sup>th</sup>. I encourage you to hand in earlier drafts of the paper in order to get feedback from me. Your paper must cite at least five of the recommended readings that accompany the required readings in the course schedule.

## Recommended Readings

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HM211 .A7 1998]  
Wendy Brown and Janet Halley, eds., *Left Legalism/Left Critique* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: KF380 .L44 2002]  
Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* [St. Michael's College, Kelly Library: JA71 .B88 2000]  
John D. Caputo, *Against Ethics - Contributions to a Poetics of Obligation with Constant Reference to Deconstruction* [Robarts Library: BJ1012 .C324 1993]  
John D. Caputo, ed., *Deconstruction in a Nutshell* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B809.6 .D46 1997]  
John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B809.6 .P37 1997]  
Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson, eds., *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: K246 .D43 1992]  
Gilles Deleuze, *Anti-Oedipus* [Knox College, Caven Library: RC455 .D4213 2003] ; *Difference and Repetition* [Knox College, Caven Library: B2430 .D453 D4513 1994]  
Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: PN98 .D43 D44 1992]; *Aporias* [Robarts Library: BD444 .D46513 1993] ; *Margins of Philosophy* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B53 .D4713] ; *Of Grammatology* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: P105 .D4713] ; *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: JV6346 .D47 2001] ; *Politics of Friendship* [Victoria University, Pratt Library: B2430 .D483 P6613 2005] ; *Specters of Marx* [Robarts Library: HX39.5 .D4613 1994]  
Réal Fillon, *Multicultural Dynamics and the Ends of History* [Robarts Library: D16.8 .F522 2008]  
Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* [St. Michael's College, Kelly Library: DG575 .G69 A5 1992 v.1-3]  
Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3279 .H48 S413 1996]  
Jay Lampert, *Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy of History*  
Len Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology* [Robarts Library: B829.5 .L35 2002X] ; *This Is Not Sufficient* [Robarts Library: B2430 .D484 L39 2007X]  
Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [Knox College Library: RC455 .M279 1992]  
Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction* [Robarts Library: B2430 .D454 M39 2005]  
Michael Naas, *Derrida From Now On* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B2430 .D484 N32 2008]  
Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Double Reading: Postmodernism After Deconstruction* [Robarts Library: PS228 .P7 N43 1993]  
James H. Olthuis, ed., *Towards an Ethics of Community: Negotiations of Difference in a Pluralist Society* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BD394 .T68 2000]  
John Russon, *Human Experience* [Robarts Library: BF204.5 .R87 2003X] ; *Bearing Witness to Epiphany* [Robarts Library: BD450 .R788 2009X]  
James K.A. Smith and James Olthuis, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BT40 .R35 2005]  
James K.A. Smith, *Jacques Derrida: Live Theory* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B2430 .D484 S54 2005]  
James K.A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BR115 .P74 S66 2006]  
Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BT1102 .Z58 2008]  
Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: the Absent Centre of Political Ontology* [Knox College, Caven Library: BD223 .Z59 2008]  
Lambert Zuidervaart, *Social Philosophy After Adorno* [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3199 .A34 Z84 2007]

## Tentative Course Schedule

### I. Basic Concepts in Political Philosophy

September 15 Introduction. **Aristotle**: *Nicomachean Ethics* Book II chapter 1; *Politics* Book 1, Ch.1, 2; *Politics* Book VIII, Ch.1

September 22 **Aristotle**: *Politics* Book IV, Ch. 3-11; **Plato**: *Republic* Book VIII  
Recommended: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Ch. 5: "Action"

September 29 **Locke**: *Second Treatise on Government*, Ch. 1-5, 8 (§95-99), 9

October 6 **Kant:** "On the Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective"  
Recommended: Réal Fillion, *Multicultural Dynamics and the Ends of History*, Part I

## II. Deconstruction and Politics

October 13 **Marx:** "Alienated Labour" (from *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*); *The German Ideology*, Section I; "Communist Manifesto," Part I;

**Jay Lampert:** "Locke, Fichte, and Hegel on the Right to Property"

October 20 **Derrida:** "Force of Law," Part I

Recommended: Len Lawlor: "From the Trace to the Law: Derridean Politics," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 15 (1989): 1-15

October 27 *Reading Week, No Class*

November 3 **Derrida:** *On Hospitality*

Recommended: John Russon: *Bearing Witness to Epiphany*, pp. 95-109

November 10 **Derrida:** *Rogues*, Part I, Ch. 1-3

November 17 **Derrida:** *Rogues*, Part I, Ch. 6-9

Recommended: Derrida, *Rogues*, Part II, Ch. 2; Len Lawlor, *This Is Not Sufficient*, pp. 11-24; Michael Naas, *Derrida From Now On*, Ch. 4: "A Last Call for "Europe"

November 24 **Derrida:** *Ethics, Institutions, and the Right to Philosophy; On Cosmopolitanism*

Recommended: Jeffrey T. Nealon, *Double Reading*, Ch. 7: "By Way of a Conclusion: Three Words for Derrida"

December 1 **Deleuze and Guattari:** *A Thousand Plateaus*, Ch. 9: "1933: Micropolitics and Segmentarity"

Recommended: Brian Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, pp. 10-41; Todd May, *Gilles Deleuze: an Introduction*, Ch. 4: "The Politics of Difference"

December 8 **Laclau and Mouffe:** *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Ch. 1: "Hegemony: the Genealogy of a Concept"

December 15 **Laclau and Mouffe:** *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Ch. 3: "Beyond the Positivity of the Social: Antagonisms and Hegemony"