Course Description

This seminar will introduce students to key figures and texts addressing the intersections between psychoanalysis, political philosophy and social action from the mid-nineteenth century to the late 1990s. The course will reconstruct the history of political consciousness as developed in different discourses including political theory, philosophy, psychoanalysis and political anthropology. Readings and seminar discussions will focus on the evolution of the idea and practice of consciousness in relation to movements of social resistance. The course is divided in two parts: a first part (sessions I-VII), which examines the interaction between individual and collective consciousness from Marx to Sartre and a second part (sessions VIII-XIV), which illustrates the critical reinterpretation of traditional definitions of consciousness in relation to political action and the pursuit for new
forms of militancy. During the second part, students will study the central reinterpretations of Marxist and Freudian theories of collective action and psychological behavior that took place during the sixties and seventies and redefined the culture and identity of radical politics. Students will explore the critical responses and legacies of Marx and Freud in the work of philosophers that influenced and were influenced by the radical militancy of the 1960s including Herbert Marcuse, Louis Althusser, Cornelius Castoriadis, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze and Jacques Lacan, among others.

**Course Objectives**

1. Students will be able to identify key concepts and ideas present in philosophical, psychoanalytical and anthropological discourses. Close reading of the assigned texts will train students to think critically and to understand the central arguments in each text.

2. Students will learn to summarize the central arguments in each of the week's readings. The selected texts and authors are a challenging opportunity for students to dissect the central aspects in each reading. Students will submit a weekly response providing a 1-2 page summary of the author's argument. Each student will choose a key passage and show how the passage connects to the central argument in the reading and to the key ideas in the assigned text.

3. Students will establish insightful and critical connections between philosophy and psychoanalysis' critique of the state and society's pursuit for liberation. Seminar discussions will emphasize the connections between the construction and application of collective consciousness to actual social mobilization as in best illustrated in the anti-authoritarian discourses of the 1960s and 1970s. Legacies of these interactions will be discussed in the context of more recent social movements including the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street.

4. Students will produce two essays: a mid-term essay critically interpreting one of the texts from sessions I-VII and a final essay comparatively analyzing two of the assigned texts from sessions VIII-XIV. The written projects will allow students to develop a lucid discussion that reflects their own understanding of the seminar's central themes, reconstructing the intellectual genealogy of key concepts in political theory. Students will prepare a bibliography and engage in serious secondary research for their final essays.

**Course Rationale**

This course is designed as a two-hour seminar discussion. Each session will be devoted to a close analysis and reading of the assigned text(s) and author(s). I will offer a 10-15 minute introduction to each session, offering context to the life and times of the author(s) in question. Discussion will require attentive reading of the
assigned material and active participation. The course syllabus (pp.3-6) outlines the themes, central ideas and reading assignments for each session. Students are required to reflect on the three listed topics underneath each session’s title. I will email discussion questions and general comments related to the assigned material two days before the seminar for students to prepare for the upcoming meeting. Suggested readings and other sources will also be posted in the course’s website.

There will be three film screenings and discussions related to the seminar’s readings. Screenings will be followed by discussion where students will connect the film to the pertinent texts of the seminar.

Peter Whitehead, *The Fall* (1968)

Course Requirements

Active Class Participation 20%
Weekly Reading Responses 20%
Mid-Term Essay 30% (Due Date: Session VII)
Final Essay 30% (Due Date: Session XIV)
Required Texts


Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human* (Dover Philosophical Classics, 2006)


Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (Vintage, 1994)


Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Beacon Press, 1991)


Miguel Abensour, *Democracy against the State* (Polity, 2011)
Part I: The Ethics of Action and the Theory of Consciousness from Marx to Sartre

Session I: Consciousness, Oppression, Revolution
   The early Marx and the idea of Alienation
   Philosophers and the World of Action
   Consciousness and the Call for Revolution

Readings

Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscript* (1844)
Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845)
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848)

Session II: The Rejection of Tradition and the Empowerment of the Self
   Nihilism and the Birth of the New Man
   Nietzsche’s Concept of Will and Power
   Morality: The Beginnings of a Critical Deconstruction

Readings

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human* (1878)
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (1888)

Session III: Drives, Unconsciousness, Repression
   The Rise of Psychoanalysis
   Politicizing the Unconscious
   The Society of Subliminal Repression

Readings

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)
Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920)
Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930)

Session IV: The Conflict of Discipline and Spontaneity
   Political Action: Theory and Practice
   The Organization of Social Movements
   Revolution or Reform

Readings

Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution* (1900)
Rosa Luxemburg, *Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy* (1904)
Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions* (1906)
Film Discussion: Margarethe von Trotta, *Rosa Luxemburg* (1986)

Session V: The Intellectual and the People
  The Protagonists of the Revolution
  Revolution as Dialectics
  The Task of Revolutionaries

Readings

Antonio Gramsci, *Men or machines?* (1916)
Antonio Gramsci, *Workers and peasants* (1919)
Antonio Gramsci, *The development of the revolution* (1919)
Antonio Gramsci, *The Problem of Power* (1919)

Session VI: The Power of Consciousness and its Impact on Collective Organization
  Lukács’ Reading of Marx
  The Revival of Rosa Luxemburg
  The Problem of Organization

Readings

Gyorgy Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (1923)

Session VII: The Political Implications of *Being*
  Phenomenology and Existentialism
  International Warfare and the Question of Existence
  From Total Destruction to Total Solidarity

Readings

Martin Heidegger, “The ontological priority of the question of Being”, *Being and Time* (1927)
Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (1943)
Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946)
Mid-Term Essay Due at the Beginning of Class

Part II: The Activation of Consciousness:
  Philosophy, Social Militancy and the Pursuit of Freedom

Session VIII: New Ideas for Revolutionary Practice
  Political Philosophy reacts to Authoritarian Society
Self-Criticism and the Quest for Autonomy
Marx beyond Marx

Readings

Claude Lefort, *The Contradiction of Trotsky* (1948)
Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Critique of Bureaucracy* (1955)
Cornelius Castoriadis, *Recommencing the Revolution* (1964)

Session IX: The Anti-Psychiatric Movement of the 1960s (I)
Against the Idea of Normality
Institutions and Social Repression
Foucault’s Critique of the State

Readings

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963)

Session X: The Discourse on Repressive Society
The Frankfurt School and its Reception by Militant Circles
State Repression and Psychological Conditioning
Marcuse’s Synthesis of Freud and Marx

Readings

Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (1964)

Session XI: The Sixties Re-reads Marx
The Critique of State Ideology and Ideological Production
Structuralism’s Battle against Political Dogmatism
Being a Revolutionary beyond Marx and Lenin

Readings

Louis Althusser, *Reading Capital* (1968)
Louis Althusser, “Philosophy as a Revolutionary Weapon” (1968)
Submission of Bibliography and Abstract of Final Paper
Session XII: The Anti-Psychiatric Movement of the 1960s (II)
   Making and Reception of Anti-Oedipus
   The Collaboration of Deleuze and Guattari
   Structuralism and the Deconstruction of Social Conventions

Readings

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Anti-Œdipus. Excerpts from Capitalism and Schizophrenia (1972)

Session XIII: The Creativity of Collective Mobilization
   The Return to Self-Organized Society
   Castoriadis’ Anti-Institutional Critique
   Imagination, Collective Consciousness and Struggle for Liberation

Readings

Cornelius Castoriadis, Excerpts from The Imaginary Institution of Society (1975)
Film Discussion: Peter Whitehead, The Fall (1969)

Session XIV: Alternative Projects for a New Society
   Ways of Living Together: Clastres’ Tribal Proposal
   Philosophy’s Critique of Institutionalized Democracy
   Is Radical Change Possible?

Readings

Cornelius Castoriadis, “Recommencing the Revolution” (1964)
Pierre Clastres, Society against the State (1974)
Miguel Abensour, Democracy against the State (1997)

Submission of Final Essays