Politics and Time

RPOS 306 – 0001
(9234)

Tuesdays, Thursdays 8:45 a.m. – 10:05 a.m.
Room: AS 014
Lecturer: Mykolas Gudelis
Political Science Department
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:35 p.m. – 3:35 p.m.
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Course Description

The contemporary sociopolitical and cultural life of Western societies is marked by a rapidly advancing technology, proliferating social media, and the ever-increasing speed of communications. Time seems to be an important facet of the political life as well as an object of contestation, and a site of struggle. Can time be perceived as a political concept? To answer this question, we will focus on the following questions such as how time plays into the notions of freedom, political participation, oppression, control and exploitation? Does politics require a specific form of time? Is there one or many different times? How does the tendency of acceleration in modernity affects political life? How does the notion of the present is significant in political action? Drawing on interdisciplinary texts from Anthropology, Philosophy, History, Political Theory and Sociology the course will investigate the ways time is embedded in social and power relations. We will read a selection of texts, from thinkers that examined the notion of time through philosophical and religious interpretations in the past to modern and contemporary thinkers who investigate links between time and modern political ideas such as the state, class, social movements, capitalism, colonialism, citizenship and identity.

This course consists of intensive, seminar type sessions, which will require your active participation and contribution to discussions based on a close reading and analysis of assigned texts. The course does not have a traditional format exams instead, for your mid-term and final exams you will be required to write papers. In addition, there will be short written homework assignments as well as in-class presentations. Overall, you should be ready to dedicate a substantial amount of time and effort for this course.

Learning Objectives

✓ To deepen the understanding of time and its links to various political concepts.
✓ To understand and interpret arguments in relation to the meaning of the concept of time and develop a critical perspective of their impact on the larger social and political contexts.
✓ To engage with specific issues, trends, concepts and identities of a modern Western political life through the lens of the notions of time and temporality.
✓ To develop an exploratory and interdisciplinary approach to areas of inquiry which are new or unfamiliar.

Course Requirements

As a student registered for this class and receiving course credit, your responsibilities are:
✓ Attend all lectures.
✓ Arrive to lectures on time.
✓ Complete all readings by the assigned date, and come to class prepared.
✓ Contribute to a respectful academic environment, refraining from unrelated conversations or use of technology (cell phones, laptops and other devices)
✓ Bring assigned readings to class with you.
✓ Be an active listener during the lectures: take notes, ask questions, raise points of critique.
Required Readings

Reading and writing are essential tools and of crucial importance in theoretical academic work. Through reading, we engage with ideas of different thinkers each of whom interpret different subjects of their studies in their own way, using specific methodologies and constructing particular arguments. Through close reading of assigned texts, you should be able to deconstruct these arguments, compare them and, importantly – formulate your own ideas. There is a list of required books for this course. We will not read all of them in their entirety, but most of their content or selected key chapters and sections. Additional readings will be placed on Blackboard for your convenience. (These are marked “online” in a class schedule) When assignments include reading material placed online on a Blackboard, you should print them out, read them carefully and bring them to class with you. The required books have been ordered and are available for you in University’s bookstore. If you decide to acquire books from other sources, make sure you have the same exact editions as a bookstore as well as time your orders appropriately so books arrive on time when you need them for the class and not later.

Required Books:


Written Assignments

This course does not have a standard midterm or final exam. Instead, there is a *midterm paper* and a *final paper*. Both papers carry the same academic grade values as a midterm and final exams. In addition, there will be three short, three-page length homework assignments, each in the form of responding to a question that will be emailed posited and emailed to your SUNY e-mail address. You will print out your answers, and bring the hard copy to the class on the day the homework is due, and submit it to me at the end of the lecture before you leave the room. Remember, this is a theory class. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. What is required is your own critical and analytical thinking and strong familiarity with the arguments, ideas and concepts of the assigned readings which will also discuss in class.

Presentations

Each of you will require to prepare a short, 10 – 15 min. presentation on the topic and a set of readings assigned for a particular date of the course week. Your presentations should be followed by two or three questions that you will posit to your fellow students which, hopefully, will precipitate an open discussion. These short presentations will help you to practice to present arguments developed in the texts you read in a concise manner as well as engage in a meaningful discussion with your peers. Feel free to comment on each other’s’ questions and responses, or to share relevant additional readings and ideas.

Office Hours:

You should not feel any hesitation to come see me to talk about the course material and lectures during my office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. in the Humanities B16 office. In addition, I will be ready to meet you outside of these hours at a time more convenient for you if you schedule an appointment with me by e-mail at least three days in advance. You are also very welcome to approach me for a conversation after class if you have time.
**Blackboard and online readings**

Some readings are placed on Blackboard for your convenience. Find the course, RPOS 306 and click on it. There you will find folders marked by dates when the readings are due. Each folder contains required readings for that day. You must download and print the readings or the appropriate, assigned sections of them, read them carefully at home and bring them with you to class.

**Attendance**

You are responsible for all material covered in the class. Attendance will be taken within the first five minutes of the class. Do not be late. You should make arrangements with other students to share notes if you miss the class. If you have an excused absence, make sure you do assigned readings first, then come to me during office hours to discuss the material.

**Missing more than two classes, repeated lateness, or arriving unprepared will lower your final grade by one letter grade. Missing more than four classes will result in two letter grades lower on the final course grade.**

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism means to pass off someone else’s work as your own. Please be warned that if found guilty of plagiarism, you will automatically fail the course and receive an E grade. Further actions will be taken, including sending your case before a university committee. Remember, taking text off internet sites such as Sparknotes, Wikipedia or any other source and “reworking them” without citing or indicating the source will also earn you an E along with further actions. The whole idea of this course is for you to engage in active, critical thinking of your own and to demonstrate that you have did the readings, understood them and have something meaningful to say in response to them.

**Course Grade Breakdown**

Midterm paper: 25%
Presentations: 15%
Three short response papers: 20%
Final paper: 30%
Class participation and attendance: 10%

**Overall Course Grade Requirements:**

- **Class Participation and attendance (10%)**: This portion of the grade is based on evaluation of your participation in class discussions, your preparedness for each class, attendance and lateness. Having an individual grasp of the reading at hand prior to classroom sessions means that you will be able to understand the relevant concepts and ideas, and will be able to apply them to the discussions with your fellow students during each session in a critical, respectful and meaningful way. Your ability to participate in the class discussion will depend on the effort you put in reading assigned materials at home. The texts are engaging and exciting but also complicated and time consuming. Spent time wrestling with ideas of each thinker and you will be rewarded by gaining a deeper understanding of their arguments which will enrich your knowledge as a political thinker.

- **Presentation (15%)** Each of you will have a short 10 – 15 min. presentation and a lead of a discussion on 2 – 3 questions that you will propose to the class to discuss after the presentation.

- **Three short response papers (20%)** These are short 3-page answers to the questions pertaining to certain sections of the course. These questions will be announced seven days prior to the due date which will give you a week to complete your homework assignment. **No late submissions or submissions by e-mail will be accepted.**

- **Midterm paper (25%)** A 4 - page paper on a topic based on the material covered in the first half of the semester. A set of questions will be distributed one week prior to the due date. **No late submissions, or submissions by e-mail will be accepted.** You must to hand in a physical hard copy of your paper on the due date at the beginning of the class.

- **Final Paper (30%)** 6 - page paper. Depending on the question, you may have to do some additional research to gain the proper level of knowledge on the thinker or the problem you have chosen to investigate. **Late
submissions, or submissions by e-mail will not be accepted. You must to hand in a physical hard copy of your final paper to me in class on the due date and time which are the date and time of the final exam as stated in SUNY’s academic schedule.

Midterm and Final Papers

Your ability to understand and critically analyze the course material will be assessed through a midterm and final papers. **No late submission of mid-term or final papers will be accepted.**

**Late mid-term or final paper submission will be accepted or incomplete grades will be given only in the event of serious personal or family illness or other unusual circumstances approved by the dean of undergraduate studies.**

For more information on the University's Standards of Academic Integrity see:
http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml

Lectures

Lecture is a time for a professor to present the readings and unpack the arguments presented in texts at hand. However, there are strong benefits to a seminar type lectures. The form of intellectual dialogue is the most rewarding academic practice. You are strongly encouraged to participate in a dialogue and the academic discussion based on the assigned readings. Feel free to interrupt me by raising your hand, asking questions, making comments, providing points of critique. Do not shy from respectfully responding to your fellow student arguments and contributing to a class discussion in general. Your participation will boost your overall course grade as well as allow you for a better grasp and critical assessment of the material. I encourage you to be an active participant in lectures, rather than a passive listener.

Grade Appeals

In order to appeal a grade on a particular assignment, you should contact your professor during office hours within 2 weeks of receiving the assignment back and submit a written explanation of your reasons for believing that the grade should be changed, not to exceed 2 pages. A grade appeal may result in the grade being raised, or left as is, depending on the results of the review. After two weeks, grade complaints will not be considered unless there are mitigating circumstances like a serious illness.

What do I do if I am sick or need alternate arrangements to fulfill course requirements?

Any mitigating circumstances should be brought to the attention of the professor as soon as possible. Any foreseeable circumstances (athletic event, religious holiday, e.g.) must be raised at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible.

Excused Absences

If you must miss the mid-term or final paper deadline or more than two normal classes, you must have documentation from the dean of undergraduate studies (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950) or your grade will be adversely affected. For more on University's Medical Excuse Policy see: http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml

Reasonable accommodation

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations (http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html).

If you wish to discuss academic accommodations, for the above reasons or other cases including religious holidays, inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. Reasonable accommodations are generally established well in advance and rarely granted retroactively.
What can I do to succeed academically in this course?

The Basics: Show up, read, listen, take notes, ask questions
The most important indicator for success is completing assigned readings, regular attendance and active participation in a class.

Visit Office Hours
I will hold office hours two hours each week. You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to discuss material or other questions on political theory, or if you are seeking an advice on academic success in the field in general. If you are unable to attend the scheduled office hours due to a conflict with another class, email me to request an alternate time.

Writing Center Services (Humanities 140)

Academic Support Services (Library Room 94)
Arrange individual and group tutorial as well as study skills workshops on time management, how to improve your concentration, essay exam skills, listening skills, and overcoming procrastination. Visit their website: http://www.albany.edu/oass/support_services.htm or contact them at 442-5180.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part I

What is Time?

1. Tuesday, August 29: General introduction

2. Thursday, August 31:

3. Tuesday, September 5:

4. Thursday, September 7:

5. Tuesday, September 12:

6. Thursday, September 14:

7. Tuesday, September 19:
   First homework assignment announced

8. Thursday, September 21
   No Class – Rosh Hashanah
Part II
Time – Material and Social

9. Tuesday, September 26
First homework assignment due in class.

10. Thursday, September 28
“A Necromantic Device, or How Clocks Think,” pp. 35 – 70.

11. Tuesday, October 3
“Calendrical Uniformity versus Planned Uncanniness.” pp. 35 – 70.

12. Thursday, October 5

13. Tuesday, October 10
Second homework assignment announced

Part III
Politics and Time
Time - Social and Political

14. Thursday, October 12

15. Tuesday, October 17
Second homework assignment due in class

Historical View: Time and Capitalism

16. Thursday, October 19

17. Tuesday, October 24

18. Thursday, October 26

19. Tuesday, October 31
Midterm assignment announced

Time, History, Class

20. Thursday, November 2

21. Tuesday, November 7
Politics - Time, Modernity, Speed

22. Thursday, November 9
Midterm paper due

23. Tuesday, November 14

Politics of Time

24. Thursday, November 16
Third homework assignment announced

25. Tuesday, November 21

Thursday, November 23
No Class. Thanksgiving Break

Time and Political Action

26. Tuesday, November 28
Third homework due

27. Thursday, November, 30

28. Tuesday, December 5
Final exam paper assignment announced.

29. Thursday, December 7
Last class. Course wrap up

**Final Exam: Friday, December 15th. From 3:30pm to 5:30pm in the same room: AS 014**