

Carleton University  
Fall 2019  
Department of Political Science

**PSCI 4316A/PSCI5915H**  
**Contemporary Political Theory I**  
Tuesdays, 11:35 am – 2:25 pm  
Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Instructor: Sophie Marcotte Chenard  
Office: Loeb D690  
Office Hours: Mondays 2pm – 3:30pm, or by appointment  
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Email: sophie.marcottechenard@carleton.ca

**Contact Policy:** The best way to contact me is via email. You can expect a reply within 48 hours (weekends excluded). Do not forget to include the course code in the subject line of the email. If your question cannot be answered by a short email, please stop by during office hours. If you are unable to come during my regular office hours, send me an email to set up an appointment or feel free to speak with me before or after class.

### **Course Description**

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This course is an enquiry into a specific moment in the history of 20<sup>th</sup>-century European thought: the interwar period (1918-1939). This period could be described as a period of *crisis*, or rather, of *crises*: political, social, economic, philosophical, and even existential. In Germany, the end of the First World War is met with the resentment of the defeat. But it is also a moment of great changes: the beginning of the Weimar Republic, the attempt to create a new liberal regime in rupture with the old world, unprecedented innovation and creation in philosophy, literature, cinema, architecture and so on. Many thinkers have to confront the challenges of this rapidly evolving and changing world. Some, more optimistic, welcome these transformations and the uncertainty of the future; others, more pessimistic, warn against the dangers of a modern world that announce a complete break with the past. Our task in this course is to understand the diagnoses that political thinkers in France and in Germany pose with regard to the political and social situation. How can we understand the rise of Nazism? Can we even make sense of the growth of Anti-Semitism in Europe? Is there any meaning to the human tragedy that was the Second World War? How is a belief in the solidity of democracy possible after totalitarianism?

Through the study of the works of German and French political philosophers who witnessed and experienced this multi-faceted crisis and had to think in uncertain times, we will attempt to understand the political, social, and even existential challenges of the 1930s and 1940s in Europe. This course is designed to provide a substantive overview of the major themes in continental thought in the first half of the twentieth century and an introduction to the works of the most important thinkers of that period, including Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, Simone Weil, Raymond Aron, Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir.

## Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Provide an elaborate account of historical context of the interwar period in Germany and in France, including the rise and collapse of the Weimar Republic, the rise of Nazism, the events leading to the outbreak of the Second World War and its aftermath;
- Master the key concepts used by the political thinkers covered in the course and draw parallels with our present-day use of these concepts
- Expose the political theories and conceptions of totalitarianism, nihilism, liberalism, liberty and democracy that the political thinkers put forth and assess their strengths and weaknesses
- Develop analytical reading and writing skills and master interpretive tools in approaching past texts
- Formulate a clear and rigorous critical interpretation of the theories seen in class

## Required Texts (available for purchase in bookstores or online)

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- Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*, Hackett
- Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*
- Simone Weil, *On The Abolition of All Political Parties* (New York: NYRB, 2013)

\*All texts are **required readings**. Any edition (new or used) can be used, provided that they are unabridged. You can find most of these texts online (Abebooks, Amazon), in bookstores (Black Squirrel, Book Bazaar, etc.) or, in some cases, in online PDFs for free. Some of the readings will be available directly on cuLearn.

\*Many of the readings have also been placed on reserve at the CU Library.

## Course Requirements and Grading Scheme

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Attendance/Participation	25%	<b>Weekly</b>
Discussion Questions	10%	<b>Two times/Term</b>
Reaction Paper (1 page)	10%	<b>One time/Term</b>
Research Paper Question/Argument	5%	<b>Due October 8<sup>th</sup></b>
Research Paper Outline/ Annotated Bibliography	10%	<b>Due October 29<sup>th</sup></b>
Research Essay (4500-5000 words)	40%	<b>Due December 3<sup>rd</sup></b>

\*For the discussion questions and reaction paper, please sign up for dates during the first class

\*The seminar's success depends upon attendance and participation. Therefore, students are expected to attend class on a regular basis and to complete the assigned readings. Active

participation during the seminar is strongly encouraged. Participation is evaluated on the quality rather than the quantity of interventions.

**Use of cuLearn:** Course announcements, deadline reminders, course materials (syllabus, mandatory and further readings, guidelines for the assignments) will be posted on cuLearn. Please ensure that you have access to the course on cuLearn and consult it regularly.

**Technology Policy:** Computers are allowed during class, but I encourage you to turn off your electronic devices in the classroom. Several studies have demonstrated that taking notes by hand improve attention, memory and understanding. Please turn off your cell phone during class, as it cannot serve any other purpose than to distract you (you can send texts your friends about contemporary political theory after class).

## **Tests & Examinations**

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### **Research Essay**

You will be required to write one research essay (3500-4000 words footnotes excluded for 4<sup>th</sup>-year students, 4500-5000 footnotes excluded for graduate students) that should be submitted **on the due date** as a **hard copy** at the beginning of the lecture (+ **electronic copy submitted on cuLearn**). A document with detailed guidelines for the final paper will be available on cuLearn. Students will be given complete freedom with regard to the topic and authors studied, as long as it is related to the course theme. The bibliography should include between 8 and 20 sources, two of which (at least) should be books and five of which should be peer-reviewed. You are encouraged to use the Further Readings document posted on cuLearn in preparation for writing your essay.

**Research Question/Argument (500 words max):** You should submit a brief overview of the question you are planning to address, as well as the main argument or thesis of your essay and a mention of the relevance of your topic in relation to the course.

**Research Paper Outline/Annotated Bibliography (1000 words max):** In light of the feedback you receive, you should elaborate a more precise outline of your research essay (including your research question, the main argument you intend to pursue, how you will organize your essay, the criticisms you anticipate). This should be accompanied by an annotated bibliography of 6-8 sources.

**Note:** Essays submitted on the due date after the beginning of the lecture will be considered as late submissions (immediate penalty of 2% of the total for the essay).

## How to Submit Essays

Essays should be submitted **on the due date** as a **hard copy** at the beginning of the lecture. You also have to submit an **electronic copy on cuLearn**. Only physical and electronic copies submitted through cuLearn will be accepted: no email submission. The essay should include a **title page, page numbers and bibliography**.

### Late Penalties:

- **4% per day**, including weekends
- For example, a student who would have received a grade of 88%, but submitted her essay two days after the deadline will have a grade of 80%.
- Papers that have not been submitted **seven days after the deadline will not be accepted**.
- Extensions will be granted **upon presentation of medical certificate** or other appropriate document **only**. Medical certificate cannot be retroactive: if you are ill or have any other legitimate reason for not being able to submit your assignment on time, you need to come see me **before** the deadline. Since you have several weeks to complete the assignments, it is your responsibility to start early in the term.
- It is important to note that extensions **will not be granted** for computer-related problems or other personal reasons like participation in social events or holiday.
- Assignments and exams in other courses **are not sufficient grounds for an extension**. It is your responsibility as a student to respect the deadlines and plan your schedule accordingly.
- **Late submissions** should be uploaded on cuLearn; you should also leave a hard copy in the Political Science drop box (Loeb B640).

\*\*These rules are enforced to ensure fairness among the students registered in the course\*\*.

### Discussion questions (10%):

- Students are required to prepare **two (2) discussion questions for 2 class meetings during the term**. I will be circulating a sign up sheet during the first class. The students preparing the questions will be presenting them in class as a way to start off the discussion. The discussion questions should be sent by email to me at least 24 hours prior to the seminar.

### Reaction Paper (10%)

- Students are expected to submit one reaction paper during the term (max. 1 page) that will be based on the week of your choosing. The reaction paper should include a brief summary of the text that outlines the main thesis and a critical analysis of the strengths and the weaknesses of the argument. You should formulate at least one criticism that we

can address to the author. A document detailing how to write a reaction paper will be posted on cuLearn.

**Attendance/Participation (25%):**

- Attendance and participation in the seminar are **essential elements of this course**. Therefore, attendance will be taken weekly. To get the full points, you should attend class regularly, demonstrate that you have done the readings and contribute actively, positively and respectfully to the discussions.
- Participation will be evaluated according to the **following criteria**: preparation ahead of the seminar; quality of interventions, ability to engage in a constructive manner in a dialogue with your classmates; ability to engage critically with the text and to make connections with other concepts/ideas covered in the course.
- Excused absences include medical reasons, family emergencies and observance of religious holiday. Please make sure to **notify me in advance** and to provide the necessary documentation (i.e. medical note).
- Three or more unexcused absences will result in a change of one third of a letter grade (e.g. from B+ to B). Five or more unexcused absence will result in losing one full letter grade (from B to C).

**Course Schedule**

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**Week 1 (Sept 10): Introduction: Thinking in Uncertain Times: Political Philosophy in the Interwar Period**

Distribution and presentation of the syllabus

Required Readings: Gordon and McCormick, "Introduction: Weimar Thought: Continuity and Crisis", in *Weimar Thought. A Contested Legacy* (Princeton: 2013), pp. 1-11.

\*Text available on cuLearn

**Week 2 (Sept 17): The Crisis of the Weimar Republic (I)**

Required Readings: Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures*

**Week 3 (Sept 24): The Crisis of the Weimar Republic (II)**

Required Readings: Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (1932)  
Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, Chap. 1: "Definition of Sovereignty", pp. 5-15.

\*Text available on cuLearn

**Week 4 (Oct 1<sup>st</sup>): The German Émigrés (I): Leo Strauss**

Required Readings: Strauss, "The Living Issues of German Postwar Philosophy" (1940)  
Strauss, "German Nihilism" (1941)  
Strauss, "An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism" (1956)

\*Texts available on cuLearn

**Week 5 (Oct 8): The German Émigrés (II): Hannah Arendt**

Required Readings: Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Chap. 10: Section I, Chap. 11: Section I, Chap. 13.  
Arendt, "Approaches to the 'German Problem'" (1945) in *Essays in Understanding*  
Arendt, "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility" (1945) in *Essays in Understanding*  
Arendt, "Postscript" to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp. 375-388

**Week 6 (Oct 15): The German Émigrés (III): Karl Löwith**

Required Readings: Löwith, "Curriculum Vitae", in *My Life in Germany Before and After 1933*  
Löwith, "Nature, History and Existentialism"  
Löwith, "The Historical Background of European Nihilism"  
Löwith and Strauss, "Correspondence Concerning Modernity" (Selections)  
\*Texts available on cuLearn

**Week 17 (Oct 21): Fall Break**

**Week 8 (Oct 29): Research Paper Workshop/Small-Group Discussion**

**Week 9 (Nov 5): The French Intellectuals (I): Raymond Aron**

Required Readings: Aron, "The Discovery of Germany" In *Memoirs. Fifty Years of Political Reflection*.  
Aron, "Max Weber and Power-Politics" in *In Defense of Political Reason. Essays by Raymond Aron*  
Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, Chap. 5: "The Meaning of History"

**Week 10 (Nov 12): The French Intellectuals (II): Simone Weil**

Required Readings: Weil, *The Need for Roots. Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Toward Mankind*, Part I: The Needs of the Soul  
Weil, *On The Abolition of All Political Parties* (1943)  
Weil, "Meditation on Obedience and Liberty" in *Fragments (1933-1938)*

**Week 11 (Nov 19): The French Intellectuals (III): Simone de Beauvoir**

Required Readings: Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Selections)  
Beauvoir, *The Prime of Life* (Chap. 6-7: Selections)  
Beauvoir, "Moral Idealism and Political Realism" (1945)  
Beauvoir, "Existentialism and Popular Wisdom" (1945)

**Week 12 (Nov 26): The French Intellectuals (IV): Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Lefort**

Required Readings: Merleau-Ponty, "The War Has Taken Place" in *Sense and Nonsense* (1948)  
Lefort, "The Question of Democracy", in *Democracy and Political Theory*

Lefort, "Hannah Arendt and the Question of the Political", in *Democracy and Political Theory*  
Lefort, "The Image of the Body and Totalitarianism" in *The Political Forms of Modern Society*

**Week 13 (Dec 3):** Conclusion + Research Paper Due

## **Academic Accommodations**

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### **Requests for Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

#### **Pregnancy obligation**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: [carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf](https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf)

#### **Religious obligation**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: [carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf](https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf)

### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. [carleton.ca/pmc](https://carleton.ca/pmc)

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: [carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support](https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support)

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for

accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: [students.carleton.ca/course-outline](https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline)

## Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They may include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course.

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

## Submission and Return of Term Work

Papers must be submitted directly to the instructor according to the instructions in the course outline and will not be date-stamped in the departmental office. Late assignments may be submitted to the drop box in the corridor outside B640 Loeb. Assignments will be retrieved every business day at **4 p.m.**, stamped with that day’s date, and then distributed to the instructor. For essays not returned in class please attach a **stamped, self-addressed envelope** if you wish to have your assignment returned by mail. Final exams are intended solely for the purpose of evaluation and will not be returned.

## Grading

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:



Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

**Approval of final grades**

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

**Carleton E-mail Accounts**

All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via official Carleton university e-mail accounts and/or cuLearn. As important course and University information is distributed this way, it is the student’s responsibility to monitor their Carleton and cuLearn accounts.

**Carleton Political Science Society**

"The Carleton Political Science Society (CPSS) has made its mission to provide a social environment for politically inclined students and faculty. By hosting social events, including Model Parliament, debates, professional development sessions and more, CPSS aims to involve all political science students at Carleton University. Our mandate is to arrange social and academic activities in order to instill a sense of belonging within the Department and the larger University community. Members can benefit through our networking opportunities, academic engagement initiatives and numerous events which aim to complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, visit us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CarletonPoliticalScienceSociety/> and our website <https://carletonpss.com/>, or stop by our office in Loeb D688!"

**Official Course Outline**

The course outline posted to the Political Science website is the official course outline.