

Carleton University
Institute of Political Economy
Winter 2021
PECO 6000: Core Concepts
Thursdays, 2:35-5:25PM

Prof. Danielle DiNovelli-Lang
Office Hours: By appointment
Email: danielle.dinovelli@carleton.ca

Overview

This core seminar for the Collaborative PhD in Political Economy aims to provide advanced graduate students with both a working understanding of key political economic concepts and an appreciation of political economy's relevance to other fields of inquiry. To accomplish both these goals in a short 12 weeks, it is necessary to approach political economy as an intrinsically interdisciplinary field. After all, like other interdisciplinary programs of study, it exists to deal with a particular "real-world" problem, rather than for the sake of its own theoretical development. But while other interdisciplinary programs typically find their objects of study clearly delimited, political economy's object—capitalism—is characterized by its repeated transgression of the very geographic, moral, political, ecological, cultural and social boundaries upon which it seemed, just yesterday, to depend. This makes it nearly impossible (and, anyway, wrong-headed) to try to present a comprehensive picture of political economy's sphere of relevance, just as it would be impossible to circumscribe, once and for all, capitalism's sphere of influence. Choices have to be made, a perspective adopted. It is my hope that by the end of the course, you will feel confident enough in your own perspective to understand its limitations as well as its fruitful connections to the ideas and perspectives of others. The class format, which relies heavily on your engagement with your classmates, reflects this goal.

Assignments/Grading

There are three main assignments for the course: A final term paper 20-25 pages in length, worth 40% of your final grade, exploring a key political economic concept in relation to your own research program (specific topics to be discussed with me before March 4th); a pre-recorded presentation (audio or video, ten minutes in length) on the author of your choice, circulated 24 hours before the day on which we will discuss the author's work in class, worth 10%; and five (5) 1-2 page response papers, worth 25% of your final grade (or 5% each), in response to the readings assigned by your classmates (i.e. not the subject of your own presentation). The response papers are due by class time on the relevant day. The remainder of your grade (25%) comes from your informed, engaged, collegial participation in class (zoom) discussions of the assigned readings throughout the term.

Required Texts

The core readings I've chosen for the first four weeks of class are all readily available online, and we should have ample time to acquire the rest once the schedule of presentations/readings

for the last eight weeks are set. Please let me know at least a week before we are scheduled to discuss a particular text if you have been unable to secure a copy.

A note on Zoom and online learning in general

Although we've all been forced to accept the so-called "new normal" I am well-aware of the compounding stresses of trying to accomplish difficult intellectual labor at the present time. I'm also aware that the best way of easing that burden—sharing it with your peers—comes with the added stress of having to do that too online. Normally in this class we'd have no problem discussing a given text for 3 hours, but this term I will do my best to limit our meetings to under 2 hours. Please feel free to schedule 1-on-1 meetings with me to discuss issues or raise questions that you didn't feel were quite resolved in our Zoom-limited class time.

While your participation in our Zoom class meeting is required, video participation is not. We'll use the hand-raising function in the app, as well as the chat, to make sure everyone's questions and thoughts are heard, despite uneven access to smoothly functioning internet and quiet rooms. Please inform me privately if you anticipate needing further accommodation beyond the above.

Preliminary Schedule of Readings

Thursday, January 14th

Introductions. No assigned readings. Presentation schedule set.

January 21st

Marx, Karl. 1867. Part I, "Commodities and Money" in Capital vol. 1.

January 28th

Marx 1867 cont. Part II, "The Transformation of Money into Capital;" Chapters 7-9 (only) of Part III, "The Production of Absolute Surplus Value.", Part VIII, "So-called Primitive Accumulation" in Capital vol. 1.

January 27th

Polanyi, Karl. 1944. The Great Transformation.

February 4th

Césaire, Aimé. 2000 [1955]. Discourse on Colonialism.

Federici, Silvia. 2004. Caliban and the Witch.

February 11th

Presentation 1:

Allan presents Doogan, New Capitalism?

WINTER BREAK

February 25th

Presentation 2:

Federica presents Fanon, Black Skin White Masks

March 4th

Presentation 3:

Kimberley presents Wainwright and Mann, Climate Leviathan

March 11th

Presentation 4:

Stephen presents Frimpong-Ansah, The Vampire State in Africa: The Political Economy of Decline

March 18th

Presentation 5:

Sneha presents Cindi Katz, Growing Up Global

March 25th

Presentation 6:

Chike presents Robinson, Black Marxism

April 1st

Presentation 7:

Biqi presents Blyth, Great Transformations in the 20th Century

April 8th

Presentation 8:

Frankie presents Bear, Navigating Austerity

April 27th

20-25-page final, revised and complete papers due.