

## PHIL 6150: HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY (HANNAH ARENDT)

Course Director: A. MacLachlan  
Office: S418 Ross  
Email: [amacla@yorku.ca](mailto:amacla@yorku.ca)  
Phone: (416) 736 2100 x77587

Class Location: S421 Ross Bldg.  
Class Time: Th 2.30-5.30pm  
Office Hours: Th 11-1pm or by appt.

\*\* Email is the best way to reach me. I check email daily, and will respond within 24 hours.\*\*

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course, we will consider the political thought of Hannah Arendt. Our focus will be on the relationship(s) between her writings on political theory and on moral philosophy, and the role she saw – if any – for political morality. Arendt was profoundly and painfully aware of the horrors of political evil. In fact, she is almost unparalleled in early 20<sup>th</sup> century thought in her concern for the consequences of mass political violence and terror, the victims of political atrocities, and the most vulnerable in political society – the stateless, the pariahs, the outcasts. Yet, in her political theorizing, she continues to argue that the *political* realm (unfettered) ultimately redeems human existence, and that politics should remain distinct and autonomous from moral (and perhaps any ethical) evaluation. Political action must be evaluated according to “greatness”, not goodness – or any other explicitly moral standard. In this course, we will read Arendt on politics and on morality, and we will explore strategies for reconciling these profound and puzzling aspects of her philosophical thought, if indeed reconciliation is required.

### COURSE READINGS:

The readings for this course are drawn from a number of texts by Hannah Arendt. As you can see from the schedule, in some cases (*The Human Condition*, *Responsibility and Judgment*) we will read most the book. In others, we will read shorter excerpts or a couple of selected essays. All texts have been put on reserve at the Scott library (and are available for purchase online). Those with an asterisk are available at the York Bookstore. Purchase, borrow or share as you see fit!

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| <i>Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought</i> . Penguin, 1954.*  | (BPF) |
| <i>The Human Condition</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. University of Chicago Press, 1998.*    | (HC)  |
| <i>Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy</i> . University of Chicago Press, 1989.*    | (LKP) |
| <i>The Promise of Politics</i> . Schocken, 2007.*                                       | (PP)  |
| <i>Responsibility and Judgment</i> . Schocken Books, 2003.*                             | (RJ)  |
| <i>Crises of the Republic</i> . Harcourt Brace, 1972.                                   | (CR)  |
| <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i> . Penguin, 1977.   | (EJ)  |
| <i>Essays in Understanding: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism</i> . Schocken, 2005. | (EU)  |
| <i>On Revolution</i> . Penguin, 1990.   | (OR)  |

### FURTHER READINGS:

As extensive as the reading for this class may seem, a single course cannot possibly do justice to the breadth and diversity of Arendt's writings on ethics and politics. I encourage you to explore both the other essays in the texts I've selected and her other books, especially *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *The Life of the Mind*, and to bring your insights into our class conversation. Also, I have not assigned secondary texts on Arendt as required material for this course. For a thoughtful and advanced introduction to Arendt's life, thinking and writing, this intellectual biography is by far your best source – it's also a wonderful read:

Young-Bruehl, E. *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (Yale UP, 1982).

### FURTHER READINGS, CONTD:

## PHIL 6150: HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY (HANNAH ARENDT)

I particularly recommend the following pieces of Arendt scholarship (all available in the York library holdings) and I will be happy to make more suggestions regarding your individual seminar or essay topics:

- Benhabib, S. *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Sage, 1996).  
Berkowitz, R. et al. *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics* (Fordham UP, 2010).  
Calhoun, C. & J. McGowan, *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics* (Minnesota UP, 1997).  
Disch, L. *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cornell UP, 1994).  
Honig, B. *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt* (Pennsylvania State UP, 1995).  
Parekh, S. *Hannah Arendt and the Challenge of Modernity* (Routledge, 2008).  
Villa, D. *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (CUP, 2000).  
Young-Bruehl, E. 2006. *Why Arendt Matters* (Yale, 2006).

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

#### 1. Seminar Presentation (20%)

A sign-up sheet for class presentations will be passed around on the first day of class. You are expected to prepare a 1-2 paged handout to accompany your presentation, and to email it to me by 9am on the day you present, so I can make copies. Please consult the guide to seminar presentations given out on the first day of class, as you prepare.

Regular attendance & thoughtful, informed participation can improve your seminar grade.

#### 2a. OPTION A

##### Short Paper and Abstract, due Oct 28 (30%)

A shorter paper (2500-3500 words) on a topic of your choice, discussed and approved by me no later than October 18. This paper should be suitable for a 25-30-minute presentation to an academic audience, and an abstract (150-250 words) must be included. If you choose this option, you will receive extensive comments from me within a week, designed to assist you revise, so that you have plenty of time to revise and submit it to the 2011 Arendt Circle, or another academic conference (CPA, APA, SPEP, or the York PGSA conference).

#### 2b. OPTION B

##### 6 Weekly Critical Response Papers (30%)

6 thoughtful, critical response of 2-3 pages, offering (i) philosophical analysis (not exposition) and (ii) critical reflections on some aspect of the week's readings. You may only submit one critical response per week.

#### 3. Long Paper and Abstract, due December 9th (50%)

One longer paper (5000-8000 words) on a topic of your choice, which has been discussed with and approved by me no later than November 21. This paper should be suitable for submission to an academic philosophy journal, and an abstract (150-250 words) must be included. Please indicate if you intend to submit your paper to a journal, and I will gear my comments to potential revisions. I will also read and comment on a revised version of your paper.

Note: if you choose Option A, your short and long paper must be on different topics or themes.

Please submit electronic and *not* paper copies of all your work (in .doc or .docx format).

Late work will only be accepted without penalty if you have prior approval from me, or in the event of a documented emergency. All other work will be penalized at a rate of 3% per day. After 5 days it will not be accepted.

York students are required to maintain high standards of academic integrity and are subject to the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty: <http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/legislation/senate/acadhone.htm>  
Students are also expected to review the materials on the Academic Integrity website.

### SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, TOPICS AND READINGS FOR PHIL 6150

**PHIL 6150: HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY (HANNAH ARENDT)**

(Note: many of the suggested further readings are taken from sources other than your required texts. I will make sure they are available to you at least one week in advance. If you are preparing your seminar presentation and wish to locate them earlier than this, you should be able to access them fairly easily through the York library – or contact me by email.)

Date:	Topic:	Required Readings:	Suggested Further Readings:
16/9	Introduction	<i>No Required Readings</i>	“The Human Condition”, <i>HC</i> p.1-78  S. Benhabib, “The Missing Normative Foundations of Arendtian Politics,” <i>The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt</i> 193-98.
23/9	What is Political?	“Introduction <i>Into</i> Politics” <i>PP</i> pp. 93-200	W. Kymlicka, “Introduction” <i>Contemporary Political Philosophy</i> .
30/9	The Public and the Private	“The Human Condition” and “The Public and the Private Realm” <i>HC</i> pp. 1-78	Excerpts from Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> (TBA)  N. Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: a Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy” <i>Habermas and the Public Sphere</i> (ed. C Calhoun) 109-142. (also – if curious – S. Benhabib’s contribution to the same volume)
7/10	Political Speech and Action	“Action”, <i>HC</i> pp. 175-247	Selections from “Labor”, “Work” in <i>THC</i> (TBA).
14/10	Reading Week	<i>No Class</i>	<i>No Class</i>
21/10	Freedom and Authority	“What is Freedom?” and “What is Authority?” <i>BPF</i> pp. 91-172	Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty” <i>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> entries on “Political Authority” “Positive and Negative Liberty” and “Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy” (especially if you are unfamiliar with the relevant debates)
28/10	Violence (I)	“On Violence” <i>CR</i> pp. 105-184	F. Fanon, “On Violence,” Ch 1, <i>The Wretched of the Earth</i>  N. De Warren, “The Apocalypse of Hope: Political Violence in the Writings of Sartre and Fanon” <i>New School of Social Research Graduate Faculty Journal</i> 27 (1) 1-35.

PHIL 6150: HISTORY OF CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY (HANNAH ARENDT)

4/11	Violence (II)	“The Social Question” <i>OR</i> , pp. 49-105	S. Benhabib, “The Social and the Political: An Untenable Divide”, <i>The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt</i> , 138-171.
11/11	Thinking, Ethics and Politics (I)	“Thinking and Moral Considerations” <i>RJ</i> pp. 159-192 “Duties of a Law-Abiding Citizen” <i>EJ</i> pp. 135-150	<i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i> S. Parekh, “Conscience, Morality and Judgment” <i>Philosophy and Social Criticism</i> 34 (1-2) 177-95
18/11	Judgment (I)	“Truth and Politics” and “The Crisis in Culture” <i>BPF</i> pp. 197-264	Lectures 6-12, “Imagination”, LKP pp. 33-85
25/11	Judgment (II)	“Understanding and Politics” <i>EU</i> pp. 307-327 “Reflections on Little Rock” <i>RJ</i> pp. 193-213	R. Beiner, “Interpretive Essay”, LKP pp. 89-156
2/12	Thinking, Ethics and Politics (II)	“Some Questions of Moral Philosophy” <i>RJ</i> pp. 49-146	W. Brown, “Moralism as Anti-Politics,” <i>Politics out of History</i> S. Jacobitti, “The Public, the Private and the Moral: Hannah Arendt and Political Morality” <i>International Political Science Review</i> 12 281-93
9/12	Responsibility and Forgiveness	“Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship”, “Collective Responsibility” <i>RJ</i> pp. 17-48,147-158 “Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility” <i>EU</i> pp. 121-132	Review Selections from “Action” ( <i>HC</i> ) Piece on Arendt and forgiveness TBA