

Western University
Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism
CSTC 9154A— The Philosophy of Hannah Arendt: Rethinking the Social and
the Political

Fall Semester 2020

MEETINGS: Wednesdays 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. (Virtual: synchronous and asynchronous components)

Instructor: Antonio Calcagno, PhD

Contact Information: King’s University College, Faculty Building, Rm 213 [Please note that this semester, all meetings will be virtual: The faculty office is too small to ensure adequate social distancing.]

acalcagn@uwo.ca

Office Hours:

By appointment: Please feel free to send me an email message so that we can arrange a time to meet.

Technical Requirements:



Stable internet connection



Laptop or computer



Working microphone



Working webcam

DESCRIPTION:

This course will cover the major texts of Hannah Arendt's philosophical corpus, starting from her earlier work on Augustine of Hippo to her later works, *The Human Condition* and *The Life of the Mind*. We shall read Arendt's texts closely in order to trace the development of her views of human nature, humanity, the political life, the social world, love and forgiveness, the public and the private spheres, and community. We shall also examine her famous claim concerning the "banality of evil" by reading parts of her famous and provocative text, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Students will not only be introduced to the works of Hannah Arendt but also to her claim that there is a profound difference between philosophy and political theory. In particular, this course will analyse whether or not the Arendtian argument for a new human social order postulated in conjunction with her concept of the political is tenable.

The objectives of the course are:

1. To familiarise students with the work and ideas of Hannah Arendt, especially her social and political philosophy;
2. To develop tighter analytical and critical skills in thinking, reading and writing.
3. To assist students in developing their own philosophical responses to the questions and problems posed by Arendt's thought in light of their own scholarly interests and/or disciplines.

METHOD:

We will have synchronous virtual meetings in which students will be able to present their own brief webinar as well as lead discussion and entertain questions from other class participants. There will be some lecture-discussion components during the class' synchronous meetings. The professor will also post various materials on the class OWL site that will assist students understand readings and major concepts. Students are expected to consult these materials as part of the asynchronous part of the course.

EVALUATION:

1 webinar presentation— (20%) : Students choose a reading from the syllabus to present. Your presentation should focus on an aspect or argument of the text that

you find intriguing and/or important. In addition to presenting the key elements of Arendt's position, you should also offer a critique of the position. Presentations should be about 20-30 minutes in length. Students will lead question and discussion period. Students not presenting are expected to come prepared to participate in the discussion on the assigned text.

1 short paper—(15%) A brief written critical response paper (3–5 pp.) to a reading other than the one chosen for your seminar presentation. Due October 21, 2020.

1 large research paper—18–25 pp. (50%). Due December 9, 2020.

Class participation—15%

TEXTS:

These texts can be easily obtained at all major online booksellers. Excerpts of texts can also be found on the class OWL site under the Resources tab.

Love and Saint Augustine, trs. J. Vecchiarelli Scott and J.C. Stark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996)

The Origins of Totalitarianism (New York: Harcourt, 1976)

The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

Eichmann in Jerusalem (New York: Penguin, 1994)

The Life of the Mind (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1978)

On Violence (New York: Mariner Books, 2001)

Useful Secondary Resources:

Benhabib, S., 1996, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, London: Sage Publications.

---, 2003, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt. New Edition with a New Preface and an Appendix*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

--- (ed.), 2010, *Politics in Dark Times: Encounters with Hannah Arendt*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Berkowitz, R., Keenan, T. and Katz, J. (eds.), 2009, *Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics*, New York: Fordham University Press.

- Bernauer, J. (ed.), 1987, *Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt*, Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Bernstein, R., 1986, *Philosophical Profiles*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- , 1996, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- , 2018, *Why Read Hannah Arendt Now?*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Birmingham, P., 2006, *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights: The Predicament of Common Responsibility*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bowen-Moore, P., 1989, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality*, London: Macmillan.
- Bradshaw, L., 1989, *Acting and Thinking: The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Calhoun, C. and McGowan, J. (eds.), 1997, *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Canovan, M., 1974, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, London: J. M. Dent.
- , 1992, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dietz, M., 2002, *Turning Operations: Feminism, Arendt, and Politics*, New York and London: Routledge.
- Dossa, S., 1988, *The Public Realm and The Public Self: The Political Theory of Hannah Arendt*, Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Gottsegen, M., 1993, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hansen, P., 1993, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, History and Citizenship*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Honig, B. (ed.), 1995, *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Kateb, G., 1984, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil*, Oxford: Martin Robertson.
- Kohn, J. and May, L. (eds.), 1996, *Hannah Arendt: Twenty Years Later*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kristeva, J., 2001, *Hannah Arendt*, New York: Columbia University Press.

McGowan, J., 1998, *Hannah Arendt: An Introduction*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Nedelsky, J., and Beiner, R. (eds.), 2001, *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Parekh, B., 1981, *Hannah Arendt and the Search for a New Political Philosophy*, London: Macmillan.

Passerin d'Entrèves, M., 1994, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, New York and London: Routledge.

Taminiaux, J., 1997, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker: Arendt and Heidegger*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Villa, D., 1996, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

---, 1999, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

--- (ed.), 2000, *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Young-Bruehl, E., 1982, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, New Haven: Yale University Press. Second edition, 2004.

---, 2006, *Why Arendt Matters*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

SYLLABUS:

9 September: Introduction and explanation of course; a philosophical biography of Hannah Arendt; organization of seminar presentations.

16 September: *Love and Saint Augustine*, part II, pp. 45–97

23 September: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, chapters 9 and 10

30 September: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, chapters 11–13

7 October: *The Human Condition*, Parts I and II:

14 October: *The Human Condition*, Parts III and IV

21 October: *The Human Condition*, Parts V and VI: small paper due

28 October: *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, chapters 1 and 2, Epilogue and Postscript

4 November: : Reading Week: **NO CLASS**

11 November: *The Life of the Mind*, first 50 pages

18 November: *The Life of the Mind*, read next 50 pages

25 November: *The Life of the Mind*, read first 50 pages from *Willing*

2 December: *On Violence* (whole text)