

**Die politische Anatomie des Staatskörper:  
Geschlecht, Sexualität, und Verkörperung im westlichen politischen Denken**

Tuesdays, 12:15 - 13:45

**Course Description:**

Since the Renaissance, the idea of the “body politic” was used to describe European political communities, but the body politic was not simply a metaphor to speak about the state. It was also a way that monarchs would make sense of and exercise political power. With the democratic revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, political power is no longer said to cohere in the single body of the king but in the symbolic category of “The People.” What exactly happened to the body of political power? Do the democratic people have a body? And more broadly, in what ways do bodies, both metaphorically and in their lived flesh, inform how we make sense of and practice politics today? Inspired by unpredictable forms of resistance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, theorists and activists have forged new frameworks to make sense of political concepts of power, agency, and the body politic. In this seminar, students will be introduced to historical and contemporary debates on the politics of the body and the body politic in modern democracy. Students will investigate the relationship between this material substance we call the body and the metaphor of the body in the history of western political thought. We will explore how the place of the body in modernity intersects with and is made possible by categories of gender, sexuality, race, and class. Seminar readings will cover historical, radical democratic, feminist, and queer theories that seek to make sense of the political role of bodies in modern liberal democratic society.

**Texts:**

All the readings are available on Blackboard. If you would like to purchase a book that we are reading, please use the same edition as the one for class, so that we can all be on the same page.

**Class Structure:**

This class is designed to have a specific weekly rhythm, related to the nature of the material, and to the kind of inquiry involved in the field of political theory. In some classes, your readings will be designed to familiarize you with things you might not already know about the world, or with a certain body of scholarly literature, or both. In those cases, the main point of doing the reading is to learn its contents — that is, the facts or ideas or theories it lays out — and the best test of whether you’ve done this is for you to be able to report back what the readings contained. This matters in political theory, too: I hope that these readings will bring to light things you didn’t know, or hadn’t really considered, about the world. But in this class, the ability to recall the content of the readings is not the main point.

Instead, the texts we read are meant to serve as models or examples of the practice of political theory. You should think of the authors we read as people who are trying to understand some aspect of the political world whose significance is unclear or contested—and which is not necessarily easy for us to understand, either. This means two things: (1) the point of doing the readings is not just to learn what these authors said or thought, but *to think along with them* (which can, of course, also mean to think “against” them!). And (2) because these authors are writing about subjects that are difficult to grasp, their writing is not always immediately transparent, but requires the *labour of interpretation*. This is true of any text in which an author is not simply reporting

facts or communicating ideas to an audience with which they know they share a language, a set of concepts, and a universe of assumptions.

### **Course Requirements:**

**Participation (20%):** In-class participation is essential for the success of this seminar. Students are expected to complete all readings and engage actively in discussion. These discussions, and the way we conduct ourselves, will shape the learning environment in the classroom. You will not be graded on the sheer frequency of your participation, nor on whether you come across as knowledgeable or sophisticated, but rather on how well your comments and questions constructively advance the collective project of understanding a difficult text or a theoretical problem—and this can often be done very well by explaining what you don't know or understand. If you find it difficult to participate in seminar discussion, please come speak to me so that we can find an alternative.

**Short Papers (25% each):** You will write **two** papers. Papers should take about 8 hours (that is to say, an afternoon and an evening). This time estimate is suggestive of what I am looking for in terms of content. Papers must be 1200-1500 words (about 4-6 pages), double-spaced, and in 12pt font with one-inch margins. Use Chicago-style in-text citation alongside a bibliography of notes and texts, including page numbers.

**Final Paper (30%):** 6–8 pages or 1750–2000 words with the same formatting requirements as the previous papers.

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#### *Paper 1: Critical Close Reading*

One to two weeks in advance of the due date, I will provide questions from which you will choose one. You will be expected to do exploratory writing on your own and to organize your thoughts into a polished piece of writing. You will “unpack” a specific problem in a text, for example by explaining what you think an author is saying or doing in an important but unclear passage, or by drawing connections between that passage and some other aspect of the text, or by making explicit things that the author assumes without stating. These papers test your skill at close reading.

In your essay, be sure to explain what theoretical problem or question you will address. Then, put forward an argument based on your reconstruction and evaluation of positions taken by the authors we read in class. Essays should be well organized and well written. Each paragraph must have a clear topic sentence that advances the argument by one step. You should back up the points you make using both reasoning and evidence, but note that in this class, evidence will consist solely of quotations from the texts we read, properly cited. At the end of your essay, be sure to explain the significance of the arguments you have reconstructed as well as of your evaluations – that is, you should be able to answer the question: why does any of this matter?

#### *Paper 2: Ethnographic Reflection*

In trying to think critically about the body, we must attune ourselves to think corporeally. Thinking critically about bodily practices in our everyday life can sharpen our approach to interpreting the texts we will be reading. You will keep an ongoing ethnographic diary (i.e. fieldnotes) describing the practice of bodies, others and/or your own, at a particular cultural site – say the u-bahn, the park, the street, the bar, the art show, the library, the rave, the protest, etc. etc. Ethnographers engage in participant observation in order to gain insight into cultural practices and phenomena,

taking reliable notes regarding the details of what you witness. Fieldnotes should be written at the field site itself or as soon as possible after leaving the field site, immediately if possible. Even though we may not think so when we are participating and observing, we are all very likely to forget important details unless we write them down very quickly.

Based on this ethnographic diary, you will write a short paper critically analysing your notes. Much like other texts in our close, your notes will be the object that will require a close reading and critical analysis. You will employ one or two texts we have read in class to help you reflect on your ethnographic diary. For instance, your notes might provide new evidence for a specific argument made by an author, critically extending the argument in a different context. Or perhaps your notes challenge a claim that an author makes. You must use the ideas we have discussed and elaborated in the classroom to enlarge your ethnographic reflections, but how you do decide to engage with reading material alongside your own notes is up to you.

### *Final Paper 3: Critical Close Reading*

Much like the first paper, the final paper will be a close reading of one or two texts. Unlike the first paper, however, the topic of the final paper is up to you. While the essay must remain grounded in the details of the texts, it will also give you a chance to reflect on the larger theoretical significance of the work and the class in general. You must meet with me to discuss your topic. You should come with a provisional structure of the paper (an outline) in hand. This will facilitate my ability to offer advice. Improvement in your written work over the previous two papers will be taken into consideration when weighing your final grade.

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**Citations:** For essay assignments, cite by author, title and page number any ideas that are (a) not common knowledge and (b) not your own idea. Anything covered in class counts as common knowledge. Put quotations in quotation marks and, again, identify their source. Texts do not speak for themselves, so provide your interpretation and reasoning for the selected quote. For citation style, I prefer the Chicago Manual of Style in-text citation. If you are unfamiliar with this citation style, see: <https://libguides.murdoch.edu.au/Chicago/home>

**Academic Dishonesty:** Acts of plagiarism, cheating, or copying work from other students, as well as other sorts of academic dishonesty, are serious violations of university policy. Do not copy ideas, quotations, portions of papers or entire papers from friends, websites, books, articles, or term-paper mills. You will get caught, either in this course, or in a later one. The consequences of cheating for your education will last a lifetime.

**Discrimination, Intimidation & Harassment:** It is the right of all students to have equal access to course content in an environment free of prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. Learn your fellow students names and pronouns. Treat them with respect regardless of differences of perspective.

**Questions:** If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me. I will answer emails pertaining to the course, but I prefer that if you have any substantial questions, you ask me in person either before or after class. We can also schedule a time to talk – either in person or online. Please use email primarily for administrative issues, such as notifying me of an absence or requesting a meeting.

## *Schedule of Reading Assignments and Due Dates:*

### **Week I (April 19): Intro**

### **Week II (April 26): The Political Metaphor of the King's Two Bodies**

Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton University Press, 2016)

Introduction, 3-6

I: The Problem: Plowden's Reports, 7-23

II: The Shakespear: King Richard II, 24-41

VI: On continuity and Corporations, 273-275; Fictio Figura Veritatis, 291-313.

### **Week III (May 3): Metaphor: Symbolic and/or Material?**

Adriana Cavarero, "The Body Politic" in *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy, and the Question of Gender* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 99-120.

David Starkey, "Representation Through Intimacy: A Study in the Symbolism of Monarchy and court office in early-modern England," in *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-Cultural Studies in Symbolism*, ed. Ioan Lewis (London: Academic Press Incorporated, 1977), 187-224

### **Week IV (May 10): Bodily Gestures in Early Modern Europe**

Norbert Elias, "Etiquette and ceremony" in *The Court Society* (University College Dublin Press, 2006), 78-110.

Laura Gowing, "The Politics of Touch" in *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (Yale University Press, 2003), 52-81.

### **Week V (May 17): Democratic Revolutions and the Empty Space of Power**

Claude Lefort, "The Question of Democracy" in *Democracy and Political Theory* (Polity Press, 1988), 9-20.

Claude Lefort, "The Logic of Totalitarianism" and "The Image of the Body and Totalitarianism" in *The Political Forms of Modern Society* (Polity Press, 1986), 273-291, 292-306.

Recommended:

Lefort, "Human Rights and the Welfare State" in *Democracy and Political Theory*, 21-44.

### **Week VI (May 24): Gender and Abstraction**

Carole Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract," in *The Disorder of Women* (Stanford University Press, 1989), 33-53.

*The Favourite*. Yorgos Lanthimos, dr. 2018

**\*\*\* Essay 1 due at the end of class \*\*\***

## **Week VII (May 31): The Empty Place of Sexuality**

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1978).

Part 1: "We 'Other Victorians'," 3-13.

Part 2: "The Repressive Hypothesis," 17-49.

## **Week VIII (June 7): The Body Biopolitic**

Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, continued.

Part 4: "The Deployment of Sexuality," 81-132.

Part 5: "Right of Death and Power over Life," 133-159.

## **Week IX (June 14): Capitalism and the Gendered Body**

Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Autonomedia, 2004).

"Introduction," 11-17.

"The Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women," 61-75, 82-99, 103-115.

"the Great Caliban: The Struggle Against the Rebel Body," 133-155.

## **Week X (June 21): Ethnographic Writing, Presentations, and/or Feedback**

Nicholas Wolfinger, "On writing fieldnotes: collection strategies and background expectancies," *Qualitative Research* 2, 1 (2002): 85-95.

## **Week XI (June 28): Colonialism and the Racialized Body**

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Pluto Press, 1986)

Chapter 1: "The Negro and Language," 8-27.

Chapter 5: "The Fact of Blackness," 82-108.

Chapter 7: "The Negro and Recognition," 163-173.

Chapter 8: "By Way of Conclusion," 174-181.

## **Week XII (July 5): Archival Absences**

Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics*, Vol. 17, No. 2, (1987), pp. 65-80 (15)

Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts" *Small Axe* 26, 12 (2008): 1-14 (14)

Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2019): "A Note on Method," "An Intimate History of Slavery and Freedom," and "1900. The Tenderloin. 241 West 41<sup>st</sup> Street."

**\*\*\* Essay 2 due at the end of class \*\*\***

**Week XIII (July 12): Bodies Assembled in Popular Revolt**

Judith Butler, “Gender Politics and the Right to Appear” in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Harvery University Press, 2015), 24-65. [40 pages]

Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, continued:  
“Wayward: A Short Entry on the Possible” and “The Anarchy of Colored Girls Assembled in a Riotous Manner”

**Week XIV (July 19): Final Class: Feedback and Reflections**

**\*\*\* Final Essay due: August 7 @ midnight \*\*\***