Hannah Arendt: Winter, 2014

NOTE: THIS SYLLABUS IS NOT FINALIZED, EXCEPT FOR THE FIRST 3 WEEKS, A FINAL COPY WILL BE PROVIDED EITHER IN CLASS OR ON BLACKBOARD.

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12-1:50 T/Th  234 Susan Campbell Hall
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Purpose
This course is designed to familiarize students with the early work of the political philosopher Hannah Arendt. Arendt has become one of the most read figures in contemporary political philosophy. The number of books and articles published on her work, both in philosophy and political science, has increased astronomically in the last two decades. She remains an extremely controversial figure, one who is read as an arch conservative or even proto-nazi, on the one hand, and a liberatory political thinker whose work is a precursor to contemporary deconstructive and postmodernist political thought on the other. Our goal will be to gain a strong foundational understanding of her early philosophical work, starting with her doctoral dissertation on the Augustinian conception of love (written in 1929, revised in the early 60s), working through The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951) which is still understood to be one of the definitive works on totalitarianism, and finishing with The Human Condition (1958), Arendt’s loved and hated early philosophical treatise.

Description
The course will focus on primary texts, and involves a heavy reading load. Graduate students are required to do secondary readings in addition to reading the primary texts. I use a variety of teaching methods, including small group work, peer-teaching, in class writing and seminar style readings of particular passages.

Course Requirements
Because of the heavy reading load, I have tried to keep other requirements to a minimum. Undergrads: Vigorous class participation that shows evidence of careful preparation: 25%; mid-term take home exam 25%; final paper proposal 20%; final paper 30%. Grads: Vigorous class participation that shows evidence of careful preparation; a formal seminar presentation on an aspect of Arendt’s work; final paper proposal; final paper.

Texts
Texts are: Love and St. Augustine, The Origins of Totalitarianism, and The Human Condition. These are available in the University book store. The course packet for graduate students (undergrads are strongly encouraged but not required to do this extra reading) is on reserve at the copyshop on 13th and is also available electronically on the Blackboard Site for this course.
Course Calendar
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**Love and St. Augustine**

Week 1

T 1/7  “Preface: Rediscovering Love and St. Augustine” pp. vii-xvii (10)

TH 1/9  Introduction and Part I, pp. 3-18 (15)

Grads (Recommended):

“Introduction: New Beginnings” pp. 115-141 (26)
“Thought Trains” pp. 142-172 (30)

Week 2

T 1/14  Part I, pp. 18-44

TH 1/16  Part I, pp. 45-76


Week 3

T 1/21  Part II, pp. 77-97

TH 1/23  Part III, pp. 98-112

Tsao, “Arendt’s Augustine,” in Politics in Dark Times (2010)

*The Origins of Totalitarianism*

Week 4  Part I: Antisemitism

T 1/28  “Preface to the First Edition” “Preface to Part I” Chapter 1: pp. pp. 3-10;
Chapter 2: pp. 11-28

TH 1/30  Chapters 3: pp. 54-79; Chapter 4: 89-95; pp. 106-120

Canovan, “The Origins of Totalitarianism” in Canovan, 1992

Week 5  Part II: Imperialism

T 2/ 4  Chapter 5: pp. 123-134, pp. 147-157; Chapter 6: pp. 165-170

TH 2/6  Chapter 7: pp. 207-221; Chapter 8: 222-243, Chapter 9: pp. 267-302

Week 6  Part III: Totalitarianism
T 2/11  Chapter 10: pp. 305-326; Chapter 11: pp. 364-388
TH 2/13  Chapter 12: pp. 437-459; Chapter 13: pp. 460-479

Grads add:  Conovan, “Arendt’s Theory of Totalitarianism: A Reassessment”
Benhabib, “Hannah Arendt and the Redemptive Power of Narrative”
Halberstam, “Hannah Arendt on the Totalitarian Sublime…”
Villa, “Totalitarianism, Modernity and the Tradition”
Benhabib, “International Law and Human Plurality in the Shadow of Totalitarianism: Hannah Arendt and Raphael Lemkin,” in Politics in Dark Times

The Human Condition
Week 7  I. The Human Condition; II. The Public and the Private Realm
T 2/18  pp. 1-21
TH 2/20  pp. 22-78
Grads Add:  Canovan, “Introduction”
Vatter: “Natality and Biopolitics in Hannah Arendt”
Benhabib, “The Art of Making and Subverting Distinctions”

Week 8  III. Labor; IV. Work
T 2/25  pp. 79-135
TH 2/27  pp. 136-167
Bakan, “HA’s Concepts of Labor and Work”

Week 9  V. Action
T 3/4  pp. 175-211
TH 3/6  pp. 212-247
Grads:  D’Entreve, “Hannah Arendt’s Theory of Action”
Kateb, “Political Action: It’s Nature and Advantages”

Week 10  VI. The Vita Activa and the Modern Age
T 3/11  pp. 248-293
Grads: Conovan, “Hannah Arendt as a Conservative Thinker”
Heller, “Hannah Arendt on Tradition and New Beginnings”
Honig, “Toward an Agonistic Feminism”
Dietz, “Feminist Receptions of Hannah Arendt”