

COURSE SYLLABUS

POLI 4440 The Politics of Affect: Theories of Emotion and Political Life

Department of Political Science
Dalhousie University

Instructor: Dr. Margaret Denike
Office: 362 Henry Hicks Administration Building
Office Hours: Monday 1-2:30 and Thursday 11-12:30, or by appointment
Telephone: (902) 494-6298
Email: m.denike@dal.ca (for any correspondence, and/or submission of papers, please use this address, and **not** the one set up in the BLS/OWL system)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

As an exploration in contemporary political theory, this course draws on recent developments in the burgeoning field of affect studies to address the relation of both conscious and non-conscious emotive experience to public and political life. Drawing on the insights and scholarship from different disciplines, we will examine the social, political and cultural theories of affect, and, more generally, emotion, to explore their role in the formation of social groups, political decision-making and cultural practice.

One focus of this course will be the relation between affect and social movements (i.e., the affective and emotional politics of collective identity and mobilization. Topics will include the affective logic of public threat, the cultural politics of emotion such as fear and shame; sensorial responses to moralistic rhetoric; and visceral responses to social groups and/or cultural practices. We will also look at how sensibility, feeling, and affect have operated in social and political movements, including considering how emotions such as fear, disgust, disdain, and compassion function in social conflict, and in the formative approaches to retribution and reconciliation.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND READINGS:

- Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Course Reading Package, including supplementary readings, available through the Dalhousie print shop (Basement of Henry Hicks/Life Sciences Building).

- Articles in peer-reviewed journals that are accessible through the library (students are asked to download, through access to the library via their Dal account, articles that are neither from the reading package nor from the required textbook, but that are listed on syllabus with the reference to the journal in which they appear)

EVALUATION PROFILE:

Class Participation	10%
Essay 1	30%
Essay2	30%
In-class Test	30%

ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignment 1: Elucidating and Relating Authors

Maximum 2000 words, excluding bibliography

Select an author or two that are listed on the course syllabus. In a carefully organized (structured and developed) essay, demonstrate your understanding of the significance of his/her/their work to the development of affect studies or affect theory within cultural and political thought. You are welcome to relate different authors and their work to each other (say, for example, on a given issue or problem), but it will be important for you to mark and distinguish the differences between them.

Whether or not you choose to focus on one author alone, and whether there is only one article by that author on our syllabus, you are required to draw on a wide variety (a minimum of 4) of the readings listed on the syllabus in developing your discussion of his/her/their work.

You are always encouraged to supplement the course resources with additional research materials or scholarly journals, etc., **but you are expected to engage with the course materials, and/or show your mastery of them** in your discussion of the author you choose.

You are required to properly document your essays according to either APA, Chicago, or MLA guidelines (which are available on line and at the writing centre). This means, among other things, that all quotations and direct summaries from a text or article must include a properly formatted citation, **with a precise page number**) and proper corresponding bibliographic reference. Perhaps because it is among the most simple and clear formats, I recommend using the Chicago author/date system.

See below for additional essay objectives.

Assignment 2: Issues in Affect Studies and Why they Might Matter

Maximum 2000 words, excluding bibliography

Choose a very specific issue or question in affect studies that is addressed in one or more of the readings for this course. You are asked to demonstrate your understanding of this issue (eg., a leading question or central debate on any topic of your choice, or a passing question flagged by one of the authors); clarify the debates around it and/or the analyses or critiques that have been or could be brought to the subject and/or clarify the differences between authors or disciplines or fields on it; and conclude with a consideration of the implications for contemporary political theory or public policy.

Additional Essay Objectives:

- a) Concerning comprehension, breadth of the materials that you cover, and accuracy of content. One objective of these assignments is for you to demonstrate your understanding and thoughtful application of a wide selection of the readings covered during the course and listed on the syllabus *for this course* and /or in the text used for this course.
- b) Concerning format. It is also designed to assist you in developing and/or demonstrating the skills and practices of clearly and accurately representing, documenting, contextualizing, and contrasting the ideas and arguments of other writers on a given topic, while organizing and developing them into a coherent scholarly argument, analysis.
- c) Concerning focus. It is designed to address theories and/or approaches to violence in a given context. It also is designed for you to show your consideration and understanding of the implications for public policy for your selected issue.

Essays that do not meet the assignment requirements will not accepted/graded.

Test - Oct. 17

This test will be held in-class and will be comprised of up to 12 short-answer questions that will evaluate your understanding (and ability to apply) the work of the authors listed among required readings for this course and those discussed in class. It will cover the readings up to the end of October (i.e., two weeks beyond the date of the test, so you are asked to read ahead for two weeks to be able to integrate their arguments into your answers).

At the very outset of the course, you are encouraged to begin to review (and to begin taking notes on) all the materials covered as requirements for the course, both to ensure that your

essays are informed by what is covered within them, and to prepare for the test, which will grant you an opportunity to demonstrate to summarize and apply them.

Schedule of Weekly Topics and Readings

Weeks and Topics

1. Sept. 5

Introduction and Overview

- Greg and Seigworth, “An Inventory of Shimmers,” *The Affect Theory Reader*. Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 1-25

2. Sept 12

Affect Theory Across the Disciplines: The Politics of Intensities and Feelings

- Ben Anderson, “Becoming and Being Hopeful: Towards a Theory of Affect,” *Environment and Planning D* 24 (2006), pp. 733-52. (read only pages 733-41 for a general definition of ‘affect’; significant contributors to the debates, and the wealth of interdisciplinary work on the subject)
- Deborah B. Gould, “Why Emotion,” in *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act-Up’s Fight Against Aids*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, pp. 1-48
- Michael Hardt, “What Affects are Good For,” ed., Patricia Ticineto Clough with Jean Halley, eds. *The Affective Turn*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. ix-xii.
- Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, eds., “Introduction” (segment: pp. 1-11), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Nigel Thrift, “Intensities of Feeling: Toward a Spatial Politics of Affect,” *Geografiska Annaler* 86B (2004), pp. 57-78.

Additional recommended resources

- Rei Terada. Introduction: Emotion After the ‘Death of the Subject,’ in *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the ‘Death of the Subject’*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 1-15.

Discussion questions:

- *What is Affect? Affect theory? And what’s it good for?*
- *What is ‘the body’? and how might we understand its appearance in political thought?*
- *What accounts for the “turn” to affect? And what else should be taken into account?*

3. Sept. 19

Foundational Themes in Affect Studies

Framing questions about Bodies, Intensities, Non-Cognitive responses

- Brian Massumi, “The Autonomy of Affect,” *Cultural Critique* 31 (Fall 1995), pp. 83-109.
- Ruth Leys, The Turn to Affect: A Critique, *Critical Inquiry*, 37:3, pp. ?? (this is a great accompaniment to Massumi, as she critically engages with the insistent separation of

cognition and affect that is presumed by Massumi). Tomkins, Damasio are also discussed

- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Sylvan Tomkins,” *Critical Inquiry* 21: 2 (Winter 1995), pp. 496-522.
- Gilles Deleuze [1970]. “On the Difference between the *Ethics* and a Morality,” (pp. 17-29) and “Index of the Main Concepts of the *Ethics*” (pp. 44-60) in *Spinoza: A Practical Philosophy*,” San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988.

Recommended resources

- Sylvan Tomkins. 1962. *Affect, Imagery Consciousness*. London: Tavistock.
- Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics* (selections)
- Brian Massumi, “Introduction: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts,” in *Semblance and Event*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011, pp. 1-28.

Discussion questions:

- *What is ‘autonomous’ about affect?*
- *Why would Gregg and Seigworth mark Massumi’s essay as foundational?*
- *How does Spinoza’s Ethics ‘fit’ into the canon of western philosophy? What strikes you as particularly unique.*
- *Against the grain of contemporary political theory, what themes and terms stand out in Sedgwick and Frank’s essay?*
- *What do you make of the attention to the brain/mind?*

4. Sept 26

Spinoza and Deleuze: Configuring the Material and Ideal in Contemporary Theory

- Hasana Sharp, “The Force of Ideas in Spinoza,” *Political Theory*, Vol. 35, No. 6 (Dec., 2007), pp. 732-755 *a wonderfully succinct and well written summary of Spinoza on ‘ideas’, which reflects his view of humans in the greater materials / ideational world (in Ethics).*
- Susan Ruddick, “Politics of Affect: Spinoza and the Work of Negri and Deleuze,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 27:4 (2010), pp. 21-45
- Robert Seyfert, “Beyond Personal Feelings and Collective Emotions: Toward a Theory of Social Affect,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 29:6, pp. 27-46. *A fine account/ theory, drawing on Spinoza, of how affect is transmitted ‘socially’. It gives a good sense of the work of those like Brennan in explain collective emotion)*

Additional resources:

- Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*)
- Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*.... (selections)
- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, Chapter 9: 1933: Micropolitics and Segmentarity, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1987 (1980), pp. 208-231.

5. Oct 3

The Affected Body: Bodies without Images

- Patricia T. Clough, “*The Affective Turn: Political Economy, Biomedicine, and Bodies.*” In Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 206-228.
- Mike Featherstone, “Body, Image, Affect in Consumer Culture,” *Body Society* 16:1 (March 2010), pp. 193-221. (*this is a very nicely written, clear and sophisticated discussion of what Patricia Clough has called the ‘biomediated body’ ... looking at the emergence of new frames of thinking of the body and the difference that new media (via Hansen) makes.*)

Additional recommendations:

- Mark B.N. Hansen, “Affect as Interface: Confronting the ‘Digital Facial Image,’” in *New Philosophy for New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006, pp. 127-159.
- N. Katherine Hayles, “Toward Embodied Virtuality” ; “Narratives of Artificial Life” and “The Semiotics of Virtuality,” in *How We Became Post-human: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Athina Karatzogianni, “WikiLeaks Affects: Ideology, Conflict, and the Revolutionary Virtual” in Athina Karatzogianni and Adi Kuntsman, eds., *Digital Cultures and the Politics of Emotion: Feelings, Affect and Technological Change*. Macmillan: Palgrave, 2012, pp. 52-76

6. Oct 10

The Materialist Context:

Embodied Minds, Emergent Properties, and the Post-Human

- Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter comes to Matter,” *Signs: A Journal of Women, Culture and Society* 28:3 (2003), pp. 801-831.
- Dianna Coole and Samantha Frost “Introducing the New Materialisms,” *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 1-43.
- Bruce Braun and Sarah J. Whatmore, “The Stuff of Politics,” in Bruce Braun and Sarah J. Whatmore, eds. *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, pp. ix-xxxiii.

Additional Readings (with a technological focus)

- Jane Bennett, “Thing-Power,” in Bruce Braun and Sarah J. Whatmore, eds. *Political Matter: Technoscience, Democracy, and Public Life*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, pp. 35-62.

- Emanuel DeLanda, “Emergence, Causality, and Realism”, in Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman, eds. *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*.
- Athina Karatzogianni, “WikiLeaks Affects: Ideology, Conflict, and the Revolutionary Virtual” in Athina Karatzogianni and Adi Kuntsman, eds., *Digital Cultures and the Politics of Emotion: Feelings, Affect and Technological change*. Macmillan: Palgrave, 2012, pp. 52-76
- N. Katherine Hayles, “Toward Embodied Virtuality” ; “Narratives of Artificial Life” and “The Semiotics of Virtuality,” in *How We Became Post-human: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. University of Chicago Press, 1999.

7. Oct 17: In Class Assignment/Test

8. Oct. 24

Affect and Power: Biopolitics and the Cultural Politics of Emotion

- Ben Anderson, “Modulating the Excess of Affect: Morale in a State of ‘Total War,’” in *The Affect Theory Reader*. Pp. 161-185.
- Ben Anderson, “Affect and Biopower” Towards a Politics of Life,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37 (2012), pp. 28-43.
- Sara Ahmed, “Happy Objects,” in *The Affect Theory Reader*, pp. 29-51.

Discussion questions:

- *How might we understand the relations between affect and power?*
- *What does Anderson refer to when he speaks of ‘power’? How about for Ahmed?*
- *Provide/consider examples in which affect is ‘modulated’ today, in what contexts and how?*
- *What are ‘cultural politics’?*
- *How does happiness ‘function’ for Ahmed.*
- *How might what Ahmed does with ‘happiness’ be extended or applied elsewhere? Examples?*

9. Oct. 31

Subliminal Influence and Moral Psychology

- Charles R. Acland. 2012. “Subliminal Communication as Vernacular Media Critique,” chapter 1 of *Swift Viewing: The Popular Life of Subliminal Influence*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 14-42.
- Jonathan Haidt, “Elephants Rule,” chapter 3 of “The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion,” NY: Vintage, 2012, pp. 61-83. (*on the role of intuition over reason*)
- Jonathan Haidt, “The Conservative Advantage” chapter 8 of “The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion,” NY: Vintage, 2012, pp. 180-216. (*how republicans excel at the social intuition model. Perhaps best fit with Lakoff*)

10. Nov. 7

Micropolitics, Moralism, Public Life

- George Lakoff, “The Hard Issues,” in *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002 (1996), pp. 179-209.
- Jane Bennett and Michael J. Shapiro, “Introduction” *The Politics of Moralizing*, NY: Routledge, 2002, pp. 1-9.
- Arlene Stein, “Revenge of the Shamed: The Christian Right’s Emotional Culture War,” in Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, eds. *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, pp. 115-131.

Additional resources:

- Jane Bennett, “The Moraline Drift,” in Jane Bennett and Michael J. Shapiro, eds, *The Politics of Moralizing*. NY: Routledge, 2002, pp. 11-26.

Discussion Questions

- *Who is George Lakoff, and what previous work informs this analysis of ‘moral politics’?*
- *What do you make of Lakoff’s distinction between the underlying structures of liberal vs conservative frames of thought?*
- *How might we characterize the (non)religious Left’s ‘emotional cultural war,’ were we to apply Stein’s approach to the question.*

11. Nov. 14

Emotion and Political Identity in the International Politics Resonance Machines

- Andrew A.G. Ross, “Coming in From the Cold: Constructivism and Emotions,” *European Journal of International Relations* 12:2 (2006), pp. 197-202.
- Ty Solomon, “Resonances of Neoconservatism,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 48:1 (March 2013), pp. 100-121.

Additional considerations:

- Kathleen Woodward, “Calculating Compassion,” in Lauren Berlant, ed. *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*. NY: Routledge, 2004, pp. 15-28. (*on the political utility of invoking and deploying ‘compassion’*)
- Brian Massumi, “The Future Birth of the Affective Fact: The Political Ontology of **Threat**,” in Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Discussion questions

- *What is the role of affect in the forging of political identities?*

- *How might Ross's account—or that of any other theorist—help account for specific ethnic or other conflicts?*
- *What do you make of the idea of 'resonance'? and how might it be made to work in different contexts?*

12. Nov. 21

Emotions and Social Movements Queer Politics and AIDS Activism

- Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper and Francesca Polletta, "Introduction: Why Emotions Matter," in *Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, eds. Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, pp. 1-26.
- Deborah B. Gould, "The Emotion Work of Movements," in *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act-Up's Fight Against Aids*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, pp. ?????
- Douglas Crimp, "Melancholia and Moralism: An Introduction: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics." Cambridge: MIT Press, 1-25.

Additional suggestions:

- Deborah B. Gould, "Why Emotion," in *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act-Up's Fight Against Aids*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, pp. 1-48
- Randall Collins, "Social Movements and the Focus of Emotional Attention," in *Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, eds. Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, pp. 27-44.
- Deborah B. Gould, "The Pleasures and Intensities of Activism," in *Moving Politics: Emotion and Act-Up's Fight Against Aids*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009, pp. 181-212.
- Hunt, Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*. NY: W.W. Norton, 2007 (selections)
- Lauren Berlant, "Compassion (and Withholding)" in Lauren Berlant, ed. *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*. NY: Routledge, 2004, pp. 1-14.

13. Nov. 28

A Politics of Hope: Affective Philosophies of Change

- Ben Anderson, "Becoming and Being Hopeful: Towards a Theory of Affect," *Environment and Planning D* 24 (2006), pp. 733-52. (particularly 741-52)
- Michael Taussig, "Carnival of the Senses," in Mary Zournazi, ed. *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*. NY: Routledge, 2002, pp. 42-60

- Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, "Hope, Passion, Politics," in Mary Zournazi, ed. *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*. NY: Routledge, 2002, pp.122-149

Additional considerations:

- Brian Massumi, "Navigating Moments," in Mary Zournazi, ed. *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*. NY: Routledge, 2002, pp. 210-230.
- Ann Cvetovich, "The Everyday Life of Queer Trauma," *An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.