

COURSE SYLLABUS

POLI 5440 The Politics of Affect: Theories of Emotion and Political Life

Department of Political Science
Dalhousie University

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

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 political decision-making and public responses.

A central 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; 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 a consideration of emotions such as fear, disgust, and disdain, and compassion 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%
Presentation:	30%
Research Essay:	60%

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

1. Research Essay (4000-5500 words max)

You are asked to choose a topic from any of those listed on the course syllabus and/or discussed in class. **Drawing on a wide range of readings from the course syllabus**, and making use of additional research materials (specifically articles from scholarly peer-reviewed journals or recent book publications) to assist you in sharpening your topic and focusing your argument, develop a coherent discussion and/or analysis of either a current or historical debate; a significant question or line of inquiry; or a persistent theme or problematic relating to this topic.

A central objective of this assignment will be to **show your mastery of a wide selection of the course reading materials, and of the questions by different authors discussed in different weeks for this course.** *How* you make use of these materials will depend on your topic. You are encouraged to take time within the first three weeks of the course to skim or read all of the chapters in the text, the articles in the course pack, and the to get a sense of the types of questions covered by these authors, and the ways that some of their insights or arguments are related to each other.

There is plenty of room for you to choose topics of interest to you. You are encouraged to discuss your topic with me, by the 4th week of the course, especially if you wish to consider a topic that is not squarely related to the material on the syllabus. Ideally, you will spend a term developing your understanding of the facts, issues, leading debates, and scholarship relating to your topic, and take up a clearly focused question addressing and applying a theoretical account of affect or affective politics in relation to it.

2. Participation

Participation is based on regular attendance, thorough preparation for seminar discussion, demonstration of your familiarity with the readings for each week, and your respectful and active participation in each seminar.

3. Class Presentation

In the first week of classes, please review the syllabus, and choose a weekly topic that interests you. Please email me (at m.denike@dal.ca) your first two choices of topics/dates. On a first-come, first-serve basis, I will do my best to assign you to your first choice.

Your task will be to lead a class lecture and discussion (for approximately 60 minutes), presenting on the material, and clarifying its argument, implication, contribution, etc. to the class. In other words, your challenge will include “teaching” a brief class and/or leading a discussion on a reading/topic of your choice.

You are encouraged to approach the topic or issue creatively, bringing to bear any other material, readings, brief media or film clips, power-point slides, images, handouts; etc. that may assist you in engaging the class on the topic.

You are asked to submit an outline of your presentation, including lecture notes or any handouts by midnight, the night before you are scheduled to present.

Presentations will be evaluated on the basis of:

1. Content: the appropriateness of the detail covered; accuracy of information; scope of the material addressed; the use of relevant additional resources (50%)
2. Form/approach: effectiveness in teaching materials to the class; ability to distill and clarify key and relevant points of the material and subject; ability to engage the class in discussion (50%)

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*. Durnham: 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 Tereda. 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 why does it matter?
- 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 recommended resources:

- Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*
- Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*....
- 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 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.