

POLI 13: Power and Justice
UCSD Dept. of Political Science
Summer I 2020

Mondays / Wednesdays 8-10:50

Fonna Forman
fonna@ucsd.edu
Office hours: By appt.

TA:
Micah Farver
mfarver@ucsd.edu
Office Hours: Th. 11-12am (+ by apt.)

This is an introductory course in political theory. Through an examination of classic texts, case studies, news clippings, editorials, speeches, literature, documentary and film, we will explore two general themes: 1) the ways that individuals and their habits, beliefs and choices are consciously and unconsciously shaped by various modes of *power* embedded in the social and political worlds in which they live; and 2) theories and practices of resistance that have emerged to challenge modes of power deemed *unjust*.

We will devote special attention this term to the subject of racial justice in America.

Course materials

All readings are provided or linked on Canvas.
You will need access to four films for independent viewing, through online sources like Amazon, Netflix, YouTube etc. Recommended sites are linked in Canvas.

Ma Vie en Rose (1997)
The Wave (1981)
I am Not Your Negro (2016)
13th (2016)

Requirements

This is a writing intensive course. There is no traditional midterm or final exam.
Participation in weekly Discussion Threads (20%)
Four review essays / film responses (3 pages each, 12pt font, double-spaced; 20% each)
Extra Credit: Participation in **The Path Forward Project** (details on Canvas) - Due July 29.

Significant improvement in your written work will be considered when calculating your final grade.

Each week, by Sunday midnight, you are required to submit six entries in the week's Discussion Threads. (Three must be well thought-out paragraphs of your own, responding to three different prompts). The remaining three can be responses to other students' entries.) We encourage you not to wait until Sunday night, but to engage the Discussion Threads

throughout the week. You are of course invited and encouraged to submit as often as you wish! We see these threads as a common space for class discussion. Disagreement and debate are always welcome. We see contestation as essential to democracy, and it lies at the very heart of this class on “power and justice”. But insults, name-calling, threats of any kind; racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic commentary, overt or implicit, will not be tolerated. If you find fault with these rules, or cannot abide by them, you should not enroll in this class.

Attendance

Typically Mondays are deigned around lectures and group-based discussion; Wednesdays are designed for independent work, based on asynchronous viewing of films, participation in asynchronous discussion threads.

We encourage you to come to Monday lectures as frequently as possible, to participate in group discussion. Lectures will be posted on Canvas; discussions will not.

Schedule

WEEK 1: POWER AND OBEDIENCE I: AUTHORITY AND DISCIPLINE

M: **Introduction: Power and Justice**

W: **Authority**

READ

-Stanley Milgram, “The Perils of Obedience”

VIDEO CLIPS: Milgram *Obedience*; Zimbardo, *Stanford Prison Experiment* (in class, and will also be posted on Canvas)

Discipline

READ:

-Michel Foucault, “Panopticism”

-Plato, *Republic* 514a-517a

Discussion threads:

What does Milgram’s experiment reveal about human behavior? Can you think of real-world examples that seem to validate what Milgram observed?

Foucault wrote that “visibility is a trap”? What does he mean? Can you give some real-world examples of this?

Can you think of real-world examples of Plato’s “cave”? How is your example cave-like?

WEEK 2: POWER AND OBEDIENCE II: OPINION AND NORM

M: Opinion

READ:

- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chs. 1-3
- John Stuart Mill, *On the Subjection of Women*, chs. 1-3
- Frederick Douglass, "The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro"

W: INDEPENDENT WORK:

**FILM 1: View *Ma Vie en Rose* (2016), and write a 3 page review essay, drawing on the theories of power explored in weeks 1-2.
Due Sunday, July 12, midnight.**

Discussion threads:

Is Mill's description of extreme social conformity still relevant in the 21st century? How so? Or is it a relic of Victorian England? How so?

To what extent do you agree with Mill's understanding of individual liberty in *On Liberty*? Does custom always undermine a genuinely free life? Must one surrender all cultural traditions and claims upon him/her in order to be genuinely free?

In *Subjection of Women*, Mill asked, "But was there ever any domination which did not appear natural to those who possessed it"? What does this mean? To what extent are Mill's 19th century observations about the enduring nature of women's inequality still relevant in the 21st century? Is the subjection of women a thing of the past?

What does the 4th of July mean to the Negro, according to Frederick Douglass. Why?

WEEK 3: POWER AND OBEDIENCE III: COMPLICITY AND THE MASS

M: Complicity

READ:

- Melissa Dittmann, "What Makes Good People Do Bad Things?"
- James Waller, "Perpetrators of Genocide"
- Bruno Bettelheim, "Remarks on the Psychological Appeal of Totalitarianism"
- FILM SELECTIONS** from **Leni Riefenstahl, *Triumph of the Will*** (in class, and will also be posted on Canvas)

READ:

- Bob Dylan, "Only A Pawn in their Game"
- Anne Applebaum, *History will Judge the Complicit*
- Teddy Cruz and Fonna Forman, *Neutrality is Complicity*
- Michael Kimmelman, *Prison Architecture and the Question of Ethics*

W: INDEPENDENT WORK:

FILM 2: View *The Wave* (1981), and write a 3 page review essay, drawing on the theories of power explored in weeks 1-3.

Due Sunday, July 19, midnight.

Discussion threads:

What for Bruno Bettelheim was the significance of the Nazi salute? Can you think of other practices, presently or historically, that perform in similar ways?

What does a study of “rank-and-file” killers in a genocide reveal to us, according to James Waller?

What is Dylan's argument about the racism of poor white Americans? Do you agree with him that “it ain’t him to blame.”?

WEEK 4: JUSTICE AS RESISTANCE**M: Conscience****READ:**

Kristen R. Monroe, Michael C. Barton and Ute Klingeman, “Altruism and the Theory of Rational Action: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe,” *Ethics*, 1990

FILM: *The Courage to Care* (in class, and will also be posted on Canvas)

Resistance**READ:**

Henry David Thoreau, *On Civil Disobedience*

Gandhi, *Selections*

Martin Luther King, *Letter from Birmingham Jail*

Malcolm X, *Ballot or the Bullet*

James Baldwin, *Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation* pp. 3-10 in *The Fire This Time*. We encourage you to download and read the entire book – if not now, then after the class ends.

James Baldwin, “The Fire This Time: A Message to Black Youth”

VIDEO CLIP: Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, James Baldwin. (in class, and will also be posted on Canvas)

W: INDEPENDENT WORK:

FILM 3: View *I Am Not Your Negro* (2016), and write a 3 page review essay, drawing on the theories of power explored in weeks 1-2. Due Sunday, July 26, midnight.

Discussion threads:

Thoreau, like many theorists and activists, draws a distinction between law and justice. What is the difference between these two concepts? Give examples of their divergence, and how they might be brought more closely together.

Why for Gandhi is satyagraha strength, and not weakness? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

Do you think the debate between MLK and Malcolm X is relevant to today's discussion about racial justice? How so? Do you find one perspective or the other more compelling? Neither? Both?

What are James Baldwin's central messages to his nephew, and to Oakland high school students in 1963?

WEEK 5: POWER AND JUSTICE: BLACK IN AMERICA

(Note: only one Discussion Thread entry is required this week)

M: The Path Forward

Guest Speaker: Paul Watson, President/CEO, The Global Action Research Center

READ:

Keisha N. Blain, "Violence in Minneapolis is rooted in the history of racist policing in America"

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, "Don't understand the protests? What you're seeing is people pushed to the edge"

Callie Watkins-Liu, *We Must Love Each Other and Support Each Other: Black Liberation, Black Lives Matter, and the Radical Investment in Black Humanity*

EXPLORE: Black Lives Upended by Policing: The Raw Videos Sparking Outrage

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/19/us/police-videos-race.html>

W: INDEPENDENT WORK:

FILM 4: View Ava DuVernay's documentary *13th* (2016), and write a 3 page review essay, drawing on the theories of power and justice explored throughout the term. Due Saturday, August 1, midnight

Discussion thread: (only one response required this week. The theme is aligned with the Extra Credit assignment, and you are welcome to post similar thoughts in both places.)

What do you see as the "path forward" to advance racial justice in America? What can / will you do? What should universities do? You can respond to any part of this question.