HON 407                          Spring 2009
Themes in Political Theory: An Interdisciplinary Approach

Catalog Description:
Prerequisite: acceptance to the University Honors Program, or consent of instructor.
Using an interdisciplinary, multimedia, transcultural approach to elicit and interrogate aspects of political theory essential to understanding this field and the practice of politics, students will read classical works in combination with works of literature, art, and films with political theory salience. (Offered as needed.) 3 credits.

Essential Equipment and Facilities: Seminar-style classroom with computer equipment.

Course Goals, Objectives and Learning Outcomes:
This course enables students to reason politically and make meaningful iterations between theory, principle, and practice. A major purpose of this specialized course is to expose students to the variety of subject matter to which they can apply their political tools of analysis, such as important concepts and principles in political philosophy. Honors and Political Science majors whose area of emphasis is political philosophy and theory will gain a greater appreciation for the relevance and place of political analysis guided by theory and principle, even when these are presented and contested in different media and cultures.

Learning Outcomes include:
- Students will be able to identify the political theory and political themes present in works outside the typical Political Science canon;
- Students will develop a sharpened appreciation for important concepts in political philosophy and theory through analysis of their presence both inside and outside the typical Political Science canon;
- Students will hone their ability to detect, identify, and analyze the implications for political theory in works outside the typical Political Science canon;
- Students will demonstrate their understanding of the political salience of alternative media and transcultural sources such as paintings, films, and literature, in their written assignments.
Content:

Study Unit 1: AUTHORITY and THE SOCIAL CONTRACT
“the state of nature” and the indivisibility of authority – Thomas Hobbes,
_Leviathan_ (excerpts)
collective vs. individual rationality – Albert Camus, _The Plague_; Robert H. Bates,
_Prosperity and Violence_
Study Unit 2: JUSTICE, WAR and PEACE
Jorge Luis Borges, “The Lottery in Babylon” in *Labyrinths*
Immanuel Kant, *To Perpetual Peace* (excerpts)
“using people as mere means” – Francisco de Goya: paintings and sketches
John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (excerpts)
+ guest lecturer from the Department of Art re: Art and Politics

Study Unit 3: SOVEREIGNTY
The divine right of kings – Shakespeare, *King Henry IV*; Film, *The Madness of King George*
The people are king – Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (excerpts)
+ guest lecturers from Dodge Film School and/or the Department of English re: how to view a film or the English monarchy and the English people

Study Unit 4: LIBERTY
“experiments in living” – John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (excerpts); Film, *Harold and Maude*
“freedom of expression” – John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (excerpts); film: *Amadeus*
“publicity” and “transparency” in government – Immanuel Kant, *To Perpetual Peace* (excerpts); film: *The Lives of Others* (German/English)
+ guest lecturers from Dodge Film School and/or the Department of English re: countercultural film

Study Unit 4: STATESMANSHIP
The statesman – Cornelius Castoriades, *On Plato’s “Statesman”*

Study Unit 5: TOLERANCE
religious violence, cultural oppression – Martha Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence* (excerpts); film: *Water* (Hindi/English)

Study Unit 6: Lesser Themes in Political Thought
“goodness and politics” – Hannah Arendt, various essays; Herman Melville, *Billy Budd*
“forgiveness and politics” – Hannah Arendt, various essays; film: *The Unforgiven*
religion and politics – Hannah Arendt, “Religion and Politics”; Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor*
+ guest lecturers from Dodge Film School and/or the Department of English
Current Required Texts:

Required Readings:
- Hannah Arendt, *Politics and Understanding*
- Robert Bates, *Prosperity and Violence*
- Cornelius Castoriades, *On Plato’s “Statesman”*
- Immanuel Kant, *To Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*
- John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*

Recommended readings:
- Albert Camus, *The Plague*
- Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor*
- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and Discourses*
- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*
- William Shakespeare, *King Henry IV*

Instructional Strategies: The Instructor will guide students through course materials, but relying on student input as well as guest lecturers from other fields of inquiry with expertise in a particular area so that students are given alternative presentations of works from within political philosophy and theory, and also works outside the typical Political Science canon from alternative media and other cultural origins than predominate in the canon.

Methods of Evaluation: Students will write (1) short essays on each study unit and (2) a term paper on the political theory or principle of their choice that reflects original research and argument. Students may also be asked to prepare oral presentations of some course materials that lend themselves to group participation, such as plays and speeches.

Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy:
The course syllabus should include the following statement:
Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university.

Students with Disabilities Policy:
The course syllabus should include the following statement:
In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the term. The University, through the Center for
Academic Success, will work with the appropriate faculty member who is asked to provide the accommodations for a student in determining what accommodations are suitable based on the documentation and the individual student needs. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Bibliography (optional):

**Prepared by:**
Gordon A. Babst, Spring 2009

**Last revised:**
Spring 2009