

Comparative Studies 7936: Politics and Art

Florida Atlantic University, Spring 2022

Course Credits: 3.000 Prerequisites/Corequisites: None

W 4:00-6:50PM, Social Sciences Boca 377

Professor: Dr. Rebecca LeMoine

Contact: rlemoine@fau.edu or (561) 287-3947

Office Location: SO 384C

Office Hours: Wed. 1:30 – 3:30PM,
or by appt.

Course Description

This course examines the relationship between politics and art from an interdisciplinary perspective. While the word “art” tends to conjure up images of oil paintings hung on museum walls, we will consider art more broadly—not only visual works of art such as paintings, sculptures, and graffiti, but also literature, music, dance, cinema, architecture, and more. Rather than study any particular form of art, our inquiry will proceed by exploring core theoretical questions relevant to “art” broadly conceived. We begin in Part I with the ancient theory of mimesis and the question of how and to what extent art influences politics. Is there a legitimate case to be made for government censorship of art, or is art merely a harmless form of entertainment? In Part II, we flip the question by exploring the influence of politics on art. Should art be in the service of political goals, or does art lose its potency and purity by becoming political? How does art support or challenge political ideologies and regimes? Finally, in Part III, we will contemplate whether politics itself is art—that is, whether there is an aesthetics of politics. Throughout the course, we will bear in mind the difficulties of determining what “counts” as art and, likewise, of defining the “political.” To facilitate us in our explorations, we will read the works of thinkers from a variety of disciplines, including Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Bourdieu, Rancière, and more.

Objectives

- 1) Become familiar with major texts, concepts, and debates in the study of politics and art.
- 2) Develop an understanding of various methodological approaches to the study of politics and art from across different disciplines, and evaluate these approaches for their usefulness in carrying out an original research project.
- 3) Improve ability to read dense works of scholarship from disciplines including political science, sociology, and philosophy.
- 4) Improve written communication and research skills by writing an original research paper.

Course Delivery Mode

Course meetings will take place **in-person** unless otherwise notified by instructor. There is no remote option for this course.

Required Texts

At the Ph.D. level, class meetings typically revolve around close exegesis of passages from the assigned readings. Given that it can be difficult to locate a particular page in an electronic edition or in an edition other than the one assigned to the whole class, you will be required to purchase in print form (hard or paper copy) the exact editions of the five books listed below.

Adorno, Theodor; Walter Benjamin; Ernst Bloch; Bertolt Brecht; and Georg Lukács. *Aesthetics and Politics*. Trans. Bostock, Hood, Livingstone, McDonagh, and Zohn. Verso, 2020. ISBN: 9781844675708.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Nice. Routledge, 2010. ISBN: 9780415567886.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*. Trans. Kaufmann. Vintage, 1967. ISBN: 9780394703695.

Rancière, Jacques. *Dissensus*. Trans. Corcoran. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015. ISBN: 9781472583550.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Politics and the Arts*. Trans. Bloom. Cornell University Press, 1968. ISBN: 9780801490712.

Instructor Availability

It is important to me to be accessible to students throughout the semester. Below are the ways you can contact me:

FAQ Discussion Board

You should ask general, course-related questions in the FAQ discussion board on Canvas, which will be active throughout the semester. If you have questions of a personal nature, you should email me at rlmoine@fau.edu or visit during office hours.

Email

Except for weekends and holidays, I will typically respond to email within 48 hours. **Please use your FAU email address rather than the Canvas inbox system.** Follow basic norms of professionalism (don't start an email with "hey"). If you have questions about what is appropriate, this is a helpful resource <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>

Office Hours

I will hold office hours every Wednesday from 1:30-3:30PM in SO 384C. My office hours are "open," meaning that no appointment is necessary; it's first-come, first-serve. If you prefer to meet virtually or by phone, please email me to schedule an appointment. Also note that if you have a scheduling conflict, I'm happy to schedule a meeting outside of my designated office hours. I strongly encourage each student to meet with me at some point to discuss the research paper.

Course Requirements

Participation:	20%
Discussion Paper:	10%
Research Paper:	50%
Presentation:	20%

Participation (20%)

This class is a graduate-level seminar. The success of the course therefore depends on each student maintaining regular attendance and active participation. I will take attendance each class.

Excessive tardiness or absenteeism (*i.e.* more than one late/missed class, except in approved cases) will result in substantial grade deductions. If you think you will miss more than one class due to University-approved activities, please see me at the start of the semester. Please note I will abide by *FAU's official attendance policy*: "Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes

and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University-approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence."

In addition to attending regularly, students are expected to come to class having read the assigned material carefully and prepared to discuss it. Furthermore, for a graduate-level seminar to work, everyone must be present not just physically, but psychologically. You cannot be present if you are checking email, texting, watching ESPN, etc. If you use an electronic device to take notes, please be sure to close every other window/application to avoid the temptation of distraction.

To facilitate discussion, you will be required to post two thoughtful discussion questions on each week's assigned readings on the Canvas discussion board **by 11:00PM the night before class**. Your questions should not be simple reading comprehension questions (e.g., "What musical instruments does Plato's character Socrates think should be allowed in the ideal city?"). Rather, they should require an answer that *goes beyond* mere summary of the text. In other words, assume that everyone has read the text and basically understands it; ask questions that provoke us to analyze the text more deeply (e.g., a potential contradiction you're grappling with; a concept used in the text or assumptions in the argument that you want us to examine more closely; interesting connections between parts of the text or to other texts; additional support for or challenges to ideas presented in the text, etc.).

Discussion Paper (10%)

Each student is expected to make one presentation of approximately 20 minutes' length during the course of the semester. Presentations are to be accompanied by 3-4 page (double-spaced) essays explaining the major points of the reading as the presenter sees them and critically assessing the arguments presented in the reading. Essays are to be posted on the relevant Canvas discussion thread 48 hours before class meetings. Your presentation itself should highlight and elaborate on the major points made in your essay, as well as pose two substantial questions for discussion.

Research paper (50%)

The major assignment for this course is a journal article-length (approx. 20-25 pages, double-spaced) research paper. The goal is to develop a paper that you can present at a professional conference, submit for publication in an academic journal, and/or develop into a thesis. Your paper should aim to make an original contribution to a substantive area of research in the study of politics and art. I encourage you to develop your topic in consultation with me, but there is much leeway as long as your topic falls within the parameters of the course description. The choice of methodology is also deliberately open-ended. For instance, one student might intervene in an important theoretical debate concerning politics and art using logical argumentation, another might examine how memes affect voting behaviors, yet another might examine Senegalese hip-hop as a form of political activism, and so on.

Your paper should include the following:

- (1) An attention-grabbing explanation of your research question and its significance.
- (2) A clear, concise statement of your argument and how it makes an original contribution to scholarship.
- (3) A literature review that situates your contribution within relevant debates in the field. Note that the full paper should engage at least **20-30 major scholarly works** pertaining to the topic examined in your paper. You are encouraged to include texts read in class wherever relevant, but your works cited page should go well beyond the assigned readings.
- (4) An analysis section in which you present evidence and arguments to support your thesis statement. This should be the bulk of the paper.
- (5) A conclusion that ties the paper together and reminds the reader of your contribution and its importance, without repeating verbatim earlier parts of the paper.

Given the demanding nature of this assignment, you should begin thinking about this paper early in the semester and managing your time such that you can do the necessary research and writing (while still keeping up with the assigned course readings). To help you stay on track, midway through the term you will be required to submit a 1-2 page (double-spaced) paper proposal in which you explain your research question and provide a list of 15-20 scholarly books/articles related to your topic. I am happy to help you navigate the secondary literature to the best of my ability, and highly recommend that you schedule a meeting to discuss the paper with me once you have started looking into a topic that interests you.

Presentation (20%)

During the examination period, students will give short, conference-style presentations of their original research. Your presentation should be well-rehearsed and within the specified time limit (TBD based on the number of students; typically, each student has about 8-10 minutes). It is not customary in my discipline to give a PowerPoint presentation or to distribute handouts, but you may do so if you wish. Alternatively, you may deliver your presentation only using notes or you may even read from prepared remarks, though you should do your best to be engaging and make eye contact with the audience. After a set number of presentations, we will take a break to open the floor to any questions or suggestions.

Grading Policies

- *Presentations*: Late presentations will be accepted only for university-approved absences (see attendance policy above), and in all but the most extraordinary of circumstances must be delivered at the next class meeting or, in the case of the final presentation, recorded and sent to the whole class within 48 hours.
- *Papers*: Late papers will be penalized 5% if less than an hour late. Beyond an hour late (even by a single minute), papers will be penalized 10% per every 24-hour period late. This means that your paper will not be accepted for any credit if it is 10 or more days late. The best way to avoid a late penalty is to make sure to submit your work well ahead of the deadline. **Note that copy-editing and revision are integral parts of the writing process. Papers that show an unacceptably high level of error or carelessness (for instance, five or more errors in a paragraph) will be returned for you to proofread before resubmitting them. You will have five business days to edit the paper and to resubmit it with an automatic penalty of 10%. After five days, the grade on the paper will automatically drop to an F.**

- *Graded Work:* I will not discuss grades on any assignments for 24 hours after they have been returned. If, after 24 hours reflection, you do not understand why you received a particular grade, send me a written memo via email and I will respond as soon as possible.

Grading Scale

A = 94-100	A- = 91-93.99	B+ = 87-90.99	B = 83-86.99
B- = 80-82.99	C+ = 77-79.99	C = 73-76.99	C- = 70-72.99
D+ = 67-69.99	D = 63-66.99	D- = 60-62.99	F = below 60

Please be aware that you can track grades for individual assignments on the Canvas 'gradebook' but do not rely on the Canvas reported grade. The percentages do not calculate correctly and many assignments cannot be inputted correctly into the interface. Throughout the semester, if you have any concerns, you can ask me for an update on your grade.

Honor Code Violations

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see http://wise.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/Reg_4.001_5-26-10_FINAL.pdf.

Please note that I take plagiarism very seriously. If I catch you plagiarizing on a paper, you will receive an automatic “F” in the course and will be reported to the university, which will likely result in a permanent honor violation notation on your transcript. So that we are all on the same page, here is the university’s definition of plagiarism (found in the document linked above):

- “1. The presentation of words from any other source or another person as one’s own without proper quotation and citation.*
- 2. Putting someone else’s ideas or facts into your own words (paraphrasing) without proper citation.*
- 3. Turning in someone else’s work as one’s own, including the buying and selling of term papers or assignments.” (FAU Code of Academic Integrity, 2.B)*

Disabilities

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU’s campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/. If you require a special accommodation, please make an appointment at the beginning of the semester to discuss the accommodation with me.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAP) Center

Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>.

University COVID Policy

Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases and the omicron variant, all students regardless of vaccination status are expected to wear masks while indoors in any FAU facilities, including classrooms and laboratories. Students experiencing flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) or students who have come in contact with confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 should immediately contact FAU Student Health Services (561-297-3512). Symptomatic students will be asked to leave the classroom to support the safety and protection of the university community. For additional information visit www.fau.edu/coronavirus. In classes with face-to-face components, quarantined students should notify me immediately as you will not be able to attend class. I will not be able to offer an online version of the class but will make reasonable efforts to assist students in making up the work.

Policy on the Recording of Lectures

Students enrolled in this course may record video or audio of class lectures for their own personal educational use. A class lecture is defined as a formal or methodical oral presentation as part of a university course intended to present information or teach students about a particular subject. Recording class activities other than class lectures, including but not limited to student presentations (whether individually or as part of a group), class discussion (except when incidental to and incorporated within a class lecture), labs, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, test or examination administrations, field trips, and private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the lecturer, is prohibited. Recordings may not be used as a substitute for class participation or class attendance and may not be published or shared without the written consent of the faculty member. Failure to adhere to these requirements may constitute a violation of the University's Student Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Academic Integrity.

It should also be noted that one of the objectives of this course is to facilitate critical thinking and debate around topics, theories, and concepts where disagreement is not only anticipated, but encouraged. The ability to think critically, express your ideas clearly, and respond to the professor and other students civilly is the keystone of the academic experience. In this course, the professor may articulate positions and make statements for the purpose of accomplishing this objective and enhancing the learning environment. As a result, students should keep in mind that, at times, the ideas conveyed during class may not necessarily reflect the professor's personal beliefs or opinions on the subject matter.

Course Schedule

(CV) = reading on Canvas

Section I: Influence of Art on Politics

January 12: Introduction to Course

January 19: Plato on the Dangers of Art

- Plato, *Republic*, Books 2-3 & 10 (CV)
- Plato, *The Laws*, Book 2 (CV)

January 26: Aristotle on the Benefits of Art

- Aristotle, *Poetics* excerpts (CV)
- Aristotle, *Politics*, Book VIII (CV)

February 2: Revisiting the Power of Art with Rousseau

- Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*

February 9: Revisiting the Power of Art with Nietzsche

- Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

*****SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 13th, 11:00PM: Research Proposal Due*****

February 16: Contemporary Views on Art's Influence

- Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" (CV)
- Edelman, *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions*, ch. 1-2 (CV)

Section II: Influence of Politics on Art

February 23: Culture, Capital, and Art

- *Aesthetics and Politics*, Presentation III (Adorno, "Letters to Walter Benjamin" and Benjamin, "Reply"), pp. 107-154

March 2: Culture, Capital, and Art

- *Aesthetics and Politics*, Presentation IV (Adorno, "Reconciliation under Duress" and "Commitment"), pp. 155-216

March 9: *Spring Break*

March 16: Power Relations and Artistic Taste

- Bourdieu, *Distinction*, Part I

March 23: Power Relations and Artistic Taste

- Bourdieu, *Distinction*, Part II ch. 2-3

March 30: Democracy and Popular Culture

- Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics* excerpts (CV)

Section III: Politics as Art/Art as Politics

April 6: The Aesthetics of Politics

- Rancière, *Dissensus*, Part I (pp. 35-119)

April 13: The Politics of Aesthetics

- Rancière, *Dissensus*, Part II (pp. 123-210)

April 20: The Political in Art, Art in the Political

- Chantal Mouffe, "Every Form of Art Has a Political Dimension," *Grey Room* 2 (2001): 98-125 (CV)
- Nancy S. Love and Mark Mattern, "Introduction: Art, Culture, Democracy," in *Doing Democracy: Activist Art and Cultural Politics*, eds. Love and Mattern (2013): 3-28 (CV)

*****WEDNESDAY, MAY 4th, 4:00-6:30PM: RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS; RESEARCH PAPER DUE*****