

Spring 2017

POLS 3740 Capitalism, Racism, Patriarchy: Theorizing Structural Power

Professor Ruth Porter Groff

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Hours: Friday 12-1; and (for maximum flexibility) by apt.

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Theorizing Structural Power: Capitalism, Racism, Patriarchy

This course in what is sometimes called ‘social ontology’ is designed to teach you to think about structural power. It’s easy to imagine that individual people, or even numbers of individual people, affect things (or don’t) -- or, we might say, exercise power(s) (or don’t). But individual persons are not the only type of socio-political entity that causes effects in the world. Relationships *between* people (e.g., institutions such as the state) and whole systems, such as capitalism, racism and patriarchy, do too.

We will begin by thinking carefully about the nature of relational or sociological phenomena, of ‘social facts,’ as Durkheim called them. We will consider both (a) irreducibly sociological entities and the properties thereof; and (b) irreducibly sociological properties had by individuals. We will contrast the view that such entities and such properties exist (and ought to be studied by social scientists), with the view they don’t – that, in the end, it is only individuals, bearing non-relational properties, that exist. In the social sciences and philosophy of social science, the former view has traditionally been called ‘holism’ (or sometimes ‘emergentism’), the latter ‘atomism’ or ‘ontological individualism.’

Next we will examine the distinct logics of capitalism, white supremacy and patriarchy respectively, by considering each of these systems on its own, in the form of what is sometimes called an ‘analytic abstraction’. We will then consider the fact that, concretely, these systems are interconnected; they operate simultaneously, sometimes in tandem, sometimes at cross-purposes. Our goal will be to figure out how to conceptualize a situation in which each of these system conditions, and is conditioned by, each of the others, such that at present none of them exists independently of the others -- even if they have different histories and unique features.

Often these questions are addressed via an investigation of identity, subjective experience and/or the notion of ‘difference.’ We will be mindful of these issues, but they will not serve as our primary lens. Rather than thinking about individuals (or even pluralities of individuals), we will be thinking about social formations – and, at the meta-theoretical level, about how to think about social formations.

This is an upper-level course in social and political philosophy, which means that I am assuming that you enjoy thinking abstractly, and have experience doing it. Students with no theory background are welcome to take the class, but are encouraged to consult with me before doing so.

General Expectations and Policies

The bottom line requirement for this course is that you do difficult reading very, very carefully (more than once, in most cases), and come to class prepared to talk about the material with others, in order to understand and evaluate it. **If, for whatever reason, you are not in a position to take on a high level of intellectual responsibility and commitment, you should think hard about whether or not you will be able to meet this expectation;** this may not be the course for you to take this semester.

Attendance is mandatory unless you are sick or face an emergency situation. **Please do not attend class if you are sick;** do, however, send me an e-mail ahead of time to explain your absence. Irregular participation will result in a significant reduction of the final grade or in failure. Cell phones, laptops and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. In keeping with the 5 principles of Jesuit education at SLU, I take it that comportment in the classroom will be good-natured, considerate and intellectually disciplined.

All written and oral work must be either (a) your own ideas, expressed in your own words, or (b) properly referenced. Plagiarism will result in a failure for the course, at a minimum. I encourage you to ask me, if you have any questions about academic integrity, as not knowing that you have plagiarized does not make it acceptable to have done so. **Standard SLU language regarding academic honesty is attached.**

If you have a learning disability that may impact your classroom performance, you must contact the Disabilities Services office, located in the Student Center, to arrange for appropriate accommodations. Please also let me know. **Standard SLU language regarding resources and accommodations is attached.**

The easiest way to contact me is through e-mail, which I check frequently. In most cases I will be able to get back to you within 24 hours, if not sooner; if you haven't heard back, send me another e-mail. I retrieve phone messages when I am in my office, but I am not on campus every day. I'm also delighted to talk to you in person.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

1. Participation [including a portfolio, submitted intact at the end of the term (consisting of summaries of readings, reactions, thoughts, etc.) which counts for half of this grade] – 30%.
2. 3 analytic papers - %
 - #1 (5pps) = “Benchmark” – graded for the purpose of feedback, but doesn't count toward final mark;
 - #2 (5-7pps) = 20%
3. Short in-class quizzes – 10%
4. Final research paper (8-10pp) – 40%
 - This paper will be an analysis of an issue of your choosing, using the tools of the class. You will be required to address, and critique, alternate accounts of the issue, in the course of developing your own analysis. Due at the end of the term.

Mid-semester, you will be encouraged to have a short meeting with me in my office, to check in on your progress in the course.

Your grade will be based on your performance on the assignments listed above. You must submit all assignments in order to pass the class. There is no extra credit available for the completion of additional work. I give letter grades, corresponding to qualitative assessment criteria. I do not grade on a distributional curve; your grade is based solely on the quality of your own performance. I am a very transparent grader, and I am happy to talk with you about how to do your best in the course and to develop intellectually. Grading criteria are attached. **Standard SLU language regarding numerical**

grades is also attached, although it does not apply in classes in which number grades are not assigned.

I don't accept late papers, unless you have contacted me ahead of time or it is an emergency.

Books

The following books have been ordered through the SLU Bookstore:

Joe Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities and Future Reparations*

Robert Heilbroner, *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism*

Allen Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*

Michael Schwalbe, *Rigging the Game: How Inequality is Reproduced in Everyday Life*, Schwalbe

Ellen Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*

Additional University Information

Academic Integrity Syllabus Statement

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at:

http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf.

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

Title IX Syllabus Statement

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36; akratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address: <http://www.slu.edu/general-counsel-home/office-of-institutional-equity-and-diversity/sexual-misconduct-policy> www.slu.edu/here4you .

Student Success Center Syllabus Statement:

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center, a one-stop shop, which assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.

- University-level support (e.g., tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning) by visiting the Student Success Center or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Disability Services Academic Accommodations Syllabus Statement

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at Disability_services@slu.edu or [314.977.3484](tel:314.977.3484) to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.

Please note the College of Arts and Sciences' common grading scheme: A=93-100; A-=90-92; B+=87-89; B=83-86; B-=80-82; C+=77-79; C=73-76; C-=70-72; D=60-70;F=below 60.

POLSCI 3740: Capitalism, Racism and Patriarchy
Projected Reading Schedule – Note: schedule may change to accommodate class learning needs
Spring 2017

Introductory Concepts

Week 1 – Framing the Intellectual Project

Jan 18 First meeting: what to expect from the course

Jan 20 Introductory discussion – “What is a ‘social fact?’”

Emile Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*, ch. 1 [scan]

For examples: Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”

<http://www.case.edu/president/aaction/UnpackingTheKnapsack.pdf>

Week 2 – Philosophical Vocabulary

Mainly lecture; readings tba

Jan 23: Entities & the properties thereof

Jan 25: The tricky case of the social grounds of properties borne by entities with given natural properties

Jan 27: Positivism

Week 3 – The Reality of Sociological Phenomena - Structures

Jan 30 – Feb 3

Robert Heilbroner, *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism*, ch. 1

Doug Porpora, “Four Concepts of Social Structure” [scan]

Michael Schwalbe, *Rigging the Game*, chs. 1, 2 & 6

Groff, “Memo: What Is it that Social Structures Can Do?”

Week 4 – On the Relationship Between Structures and Individuals

Feb 6 – Feb 10

Mainly lecture; new readings t.b.a.

Analytic Abstractions

Weeks 5 – Abstraction #1: “Pure Patriarchy”

Feb 13 Allan Johnson, *The Gender Knot*, chs., 1-2

Feb 15 Johnson, ch. 4

Feb 17 Johnson, chs. 6-7

Weeks 6 – Abstraction #2: “Pure Racism”

Feb 20 Joe Feagin, *Racist America*, chs., 1-2

Charles Mills, “White Supremacy as a Sociopolitical System”

Feb 22 Feagin, chs., 3-4

Optional: Paul Taylor, “What Races Are: The Metaphysics of Critical Race Theory” [scan]

Feb 24 Feagin, chs., 5-7

Optional: Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, chs., 2-3 [scan]

Week 7 – Abstraction #3: “Pure Capitalism”

Feb. 27-March 3

Heilbroner, *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism*, chs. 2 and 3

Ellen Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*, chs 1, 3-5

Week 8 – Abstraction #3 “Pure Capitalism,” cont.

March 6-10

Heilbroner, chs. 4-5

Wood, “The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism,” [scan]

Wood, “The *demoi* versus ‘We the People: From Ancient to Modern Conceptions of Citizenship’ [scan]

SPRING BREAK

Week 9 – Discussion continued (if needed; otherwise begin Part 2 of the course)

March 20-24

Dialectical Dynamics: Patriarchy, Racism, Capitalism

Week 10 – Dialectics as a Way of Thinking

March 27 - Lecture

Himani Bannerji, *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism and Anti-Racism*, ch. 2 [scan]

Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I a Woman?” [scan]

March 29 & 31 - Identity vs ownership-based logics?

Adolph Reed, Jr., “Marx, Race, and Neo-Liberalism”

<https://libcom.org/files/Marx,%20Race%20and%20Neoliberalism%20-%20Adolph%20Reed.pdf>

Wood, “Capitalism and Human Emancipation: Race, Gender and Democracy” [scan]

Week 11 – Thinking Dialectically about Gender

April 3-7

The Combahee River Collective Statement

<http://ouleft.org/wp-content/uploads/BlackRadicalTradition.pdf>

Bannerji, *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism, Marxism and Anti-Racism*, ch. 5

Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, “Beyond Sexless Class and Classless Sex”

<http://spe.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/spe/article/viewFile/13332/10215>

Sue Ferguson, “Canadian Contributions to Social Reproduction Feminism, Race and Embodied Labor”

<http://davidmcnally.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Race-Gender-Class1.pdf>

Week 12 – Thinking Dialectically about Race

April 10-12

Harry Haywood with Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, “Is the Black Bourgeoisie the Leader of the Black Liberation Movement?”

<http://ouleft.org/wp-content/uploads/BlackRadicalTradition.pdf>

Vanessa Wills, “The ‘White Privilege’ Concept in Marxism & in Critical Race Theory”
[scan]

Week 14 – Thinking Dialectically about “Class”

April 19 & 21

Claudia Jones, “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman!”

<http://ouleft.org/wp-content/uploads/BlackRadicalTradition.pdf>

Martha Gimenez, “Marxism and Class, Gender and Race: Rethinking the Trilogy”

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/205916370/Martha-Gimenez-Marxism-and-Class-Gender-Race-Rethinking-the-Trilogy#scribd>

Symposium with Adolph Reed, Jr. “Unraveling the Relation of Race & Class in American Politics”

http://www.platypus1917.org/wpcontent/uploads/readings/reed_raceandclassunravel2002.pdf

Week 15 & 16 – Discussion continued: course content & student research

April 24-28;

May 1-5

Week 17 – May 8 Review