Course Description:
This course is a rigorous, upper-level seminar in political theory. Our focus is going to be on contemporary developments in the field of political theory. To that end we are going to be reading seven books: Hannah Arendt’s influential work *The Human Condition* if fifty years old, Charles Mills’ *The Racial Contract* was written way back in 1996, and the other texts are all from the 21st century. My expectation is that every student has both an abiding interest and background in political theory. And, furthermore, that when we encounter unfamiliar ideas and theorists in our reading and discussion, everyone will be eagerly willing and able to seek out relevant background information in order to enrich our analysis.

Many, even most, of our discussions will be facilitated by the students in the class. Together, through careful analysis of our texts, we are going to be discussing democracy, individual and collective identity, justice, freedom, equality, and the challenges of living together, of the human condition. This course is also a writing-centered class: every student will be expected to write 20-25 page term paper, an original, independent work of political theory. To that end, we will be engaging in shorter writing assignments throughout the semester, including the development and revision of drafts, which will culminate in the final term paper.

Student Learning Objectives
In this course, students will:
- think critically and creatively about political theory
- examine questions of politics and identity
- draw connections between political theory and political practice and behavior
- develop understanding of the intersection of culture and power
- write an independent political theory term paper

Course texts
Course Requirements

Reading and Participation Assignments:

This is a seminar class, not a lecture course. We are going to be talking and listening to one another, engaging in a collective enterprise of exploration. The issues touched by the texts we will be reading get to the very heart of how we understand ourselves and the world we share. Accordingly, we can and should expect that we will not all agree with one another regarding the topics we will be discussing. Indeed, there may well be moments in this course that some people will find deeply upsetting. This course should neither be seen as an opportunity to preach to the choir, nor as a space for proselytizing. Vital to the success of this class is the commitment we make to listening and speaking with one another with respect and thoughtfulness.

The reading assignments for this course are rigorous and challenging. You are required to thoughtfully read every assignment. When I say that you are required to read, I do not mean that you should mechanically scan every page, but that you should grapple with the ideas. Mark up your text, read with a pen and paper, and write down ideas, questions, quotations, and points of confusion or contention. Read for comprehension rather than completion, pondering every idea rather than looking at every word. This means that you may need to read a section, think about it, read it again, write about it, discuss it, and then read it again. So, “do the reading” means “engage yourself with the ideas of the texts.”

The reading load will be quite heavy. To stay afloat, plan for a sufficient amount of time to complete the assignment, and read aggressively. Remember to make use of your resources. Come to my office hours and form reading groups with your classmates. Reading in this way will assist you in the second requirement: Your regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Come prepared to participate by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course material, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. Moreover, class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner to the thoughts of your classmates.

If you miss a class, whether excused or unexcused, you must write a 500 word paper analyzing the reading that was assigned for the day you miss. Your participation grade in the course will be lowered by half a grade for every short paper you do not turn in within a week of your return to class. More than two unexcused absences will result in a full grade deduction from your final course grade; each additional absence will result in an additional deduction of one full grade from your final grade. Persistent lateness or failure to prepare adequately for class discussions can also result in deductions from the final grade.

There is one more crucial facet of class participation. Throughout the semester students will be asked to not simply participate in class discussions, but also (in pairs) to lead and facilitate class discussions. Every student will have the opportunity to facilitate at least two class discussions. We will be talking more about how to prepare for this responsibility.

One more note about reading and participation: Throughout the semester, I will be distributing additional articles, essays, poems, and other texts for us to read and discuss. These additional readings are not listed on the schedule of events below, but will be designed to complement the major reading assignments, pick up on themes from our class discussions, and
keep us in touch with ongoing political developments. These supplemental texts and resources will contribute to the dynamism of the class, and let me add that you are each strongly encouraged to suggest texts and resources that we can discuss as a class.

Writing Assignments:
This is a writing-centered class. Accordingly we will be doing a lot of writing in the class: short in-class assignments, reflections pieces on the texts, and, of course, the final term paper (including a proposal and preliminary drafts). I will have much more to say in the coming days about this term paper assignment, but here is what you need to know from the outset: a) each student will work in consultation with me to develop an term paper subject/puzzle; b) the term paper will require extensive and close reading, careful analysis, and the cultivation of one’s individual voice as a political theorist; c) the term paper project will be evaluated cumulatively, including the successful fulfillment of all assignments and components (and not simply the final paper itself); d) each student will orally present their project to the class at the end of the semester.

* A crucial note about writing, editing, and rewriting: I strive to encourage all students in advanced classes to become careful and conscientious writers. My policy is simple: I can’t take your work seriously if you don’t. If, in reading your papers, I see multiple instances in which the work seems sloppy, or hasty, or lacking evidence of careful review and revision, I will have little incentive to keep reading, and it will be reflected in your grade. Like many of you, I have been guilty of not editing, proofreading, and revising my work carefully enough, and as such have submitted work that is sloppy. Falling into bad patterns is all too easy when so much of the writing we do is informal; this policy should make clear that written work for a class should be approached differently than email, texts, or tweets. I also know that editing one’s own work can be very difficult – the words on the page can seem so familiar that it is easy to start skipping sentences and paragraphs when reviewing one’s own work. Accordingly, I strongly encourage you to work with a partner in this editing and proofreading process.

** Note: A penalty of 1/3 grade per day will be imposed on assignments submitted late (one day’s lateness would reduce a B+ to a B). I generally do not grant extensions, but if extraordinary circumstances arise, please consult with me as soon as possible -- and certainly prior to the due date of the paper.

*** Another note: I fully appreciate that students like fast and thorough comments on their writing assignments. Unfortunately “fast” and “thorough” do not often go together well. I will strive to return your final papers in a timely fashion. As a general rule, you should receive your papers back within two weeks of turning them in.

**** Of Special Note: I take plagiarism and cheating very seriously. Willamette’s policy on cheating and plagiarism states:

* Cheating is any form of intellectual dishonesty or misrepresentation of one’s knowledge. Plagiarism, a form of cheating, consists of intentionally or unintentionally representing someone else’s work as one’s own. All members of the Willamette
University community are expected to be aware of the serious breach of principles involved in plagiarism. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism shall not be considered a valid defense. If students are uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism for a particular assignment, they should consult the instructor for clarification. Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a zero for the assignment AND WILL BE REPORTED TO THE DEAN.  http://www.willamette.edu/cla/dean/policies/plagiarism.html

****** Statement Concerning Disabilities: Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, no later than the first week of the term.

****** Willamette’s Credit Hour Policy holds that for every hour of class time there is an expectation of 2-3 hours work outside of class. Thus, you should anticipate spending 6-9 hours outside of class engaged in course-related activities. Examples include study time, reading and homework assignments, research projects, and group work. And the reality is that for you to succeed in this course, you should expect to dedicate much more than this required 6-9 hours per week.

****** Willamette University recognizes the value of religious practice and strives to accommodate students’ commitment to their religious traditions whenever possible. When conflicts between holy days or other religious practice and academic scheduling arise, every effort should be made to allow students to adhere to their tradition, including, when possible, excusing class absences and allowing make-up work. A student anticipating the need to miss a class for religious reasons should alert the faculty member within the first two weeks of the semester, and the two of them should determine the next course of action. Any unresolved difficulty should be referred to the Office of the Chaplains.

****** A final note about email and communication. I will often communicate with the class through email. I will try to respond to your messages as quickly as I can. However, I will only on the rarest of occasions respond after 9:00PM. In addition, I am planning on dedicating Tuesday and Thursday mornings this semester to my own writing and research. I will likely be email-free during these times.

**Grading**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitation of Discussion</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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50% includes successful completion of all assignments: drafts, revisions, peer reviews, oral presentation, etc.

DUE Friday, May 6, 5:00 pm.

**Total** 100%
**Schedule of Events**

Mon 1/18: Introduction, Syllabus, Vision; Sheldon Wolin, “Political Theory as a Vocation”
Wed 1/20: No class
Mon 1/25: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*
Wed 1/27: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*
Mon 2/1: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*
Wed 2/3: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*
Mon 2/8: Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*
Wed 2/10: Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*
Wed 2/17: Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*
Mon 2/22: Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*
Wed 2/24: Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*
Mon 2/29: Cristina Beltran, *The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity*
Wed 3/2: Cristina Beltran, *The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity*

**Final Paper Proposal**

Mon 3/7: Cristina Beltran, *The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity*.

**First Draft of Final Paper Due**

Mon 3/21: *Spring Break!*
Wed 3/23: *Spring Break!*
Mon 4/4: Ella Meyers, *Worldly Ethics: Democratic Politics and Care for the World*
Wed 4/6: Michaele Ferguson, *Sharing Democracy*
Mon 4/11: Michaele Ferguson, *Sharing Democracy*
Wed 4/13: Michaele Ferguson, *Sharing Democracy*
Friday 4/15: **Second Draft of Term Paper Due**

**Mon 4/18:** Research Presentations
Wed 4/20: SSRD
Mon 4/25: Research Presentations
Wed 4/27: Research Presentations
Mon 5/2: Research Presentations

**Friday, 5/6:** Final Paper Due at 5:00 PM