

## PHI 417 / PSC 382: Contemporary Political Philosophy

Spring 2022

Professor Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson (she/her)

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NOTE: I check email once per day M-F, usually in the afternoon. Depending on when you email me, you may receive a reply up to 24 hours later. I try very hard not to check email on weekends.

Office: 524 Hall of Languages  
Office hours: T 1:00 to 2:00 P.M.

Classroom: Carnegie 114  
Class hours: T/Th 11:00 A.M. to 12:20 P.M.

**Course description:** This course is concerned how contemporary political philosophers theorize political violence with an eye to social justice. In particular, we will mine accounts of political violence in feminist theory and practice to explore how these approaches challenge traditional theories of everyday violence, war, and terrorism and help us better understand and respond to contemporary threats.

**Course goals:** Upon completion of this course, you will be able to (1) summarize, explain, and respond to some of the most important positions on violence in (feminist) political theory; (2) explain and critically assess how social structures of gender and racial inequality are reproduced and challenged in theories of violence; (3) critically interrogate your own beliefs about political violence, its causes, and its perpetrators; (4) formulate philosophical questions about political violence, especially from a gender perspective; (5) work individually and with others to answer these questions in speech and writing; and (6) assess your own progress, describe your achievements, and identify areas for improvement.

**Course readings:** All readings are available electronically on Blackboard. Please bring a printed or electronic copy of the reading to class.

**Access:** This course follows principles of Universal Design in Learning (UDL). This means, in the first place, that all required readings are available electronically and in accessible format; all videos are captioned; audio files include transcripts; alternative text is provided for all graphics. Assignments are designed in order to allow for flexibility in completion. I encourage all students who require accommodations beyond those covered under UDL to meet with me.

If you need accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you should pursue them with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) as soon as you can. The approval process might take some time, so please also reach out to me to make sure I know what your needs are and that they are met. If you're struggling for reasons that are not covered by the ADA, please reach out to me.

Keep in mind that a whole range of things can be disruptive to your learning experience. If you're experiencing any form of harassment or discrimination based on your sex, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, or disability, or if you're the first in your family to go to college and need advice, please let me know!

If you face challenges securing basic needs such as food or a safe place to live and believe this may affect your performance, please notify me, if you are comfortable doing so. This will allow me to share any resources I may have.

The use of technology is encouraged for the purpose of learning and building community in the classroom.

**Expectations:** I will do what I can to make this course an enjoyable, rewarding, and productive learning experience, but I cannot do this by myself. To make sure everyone can flourish, we have to consider, and make, our classroom a community of thinkers and learners. This takes effort! Please share responsibility for creating and maintaining a space in which we can try out ideas, graciously accept criticism, challenge each other, and push each other to become better thinkers and writers. Take responsibility for all our learning by coming to class prepared, which means that you have done the reading and *thought about it*, have questions and comments about the text/s, have a copy of the text/s in front of you, have your devices charged, and have yourself charged with rest, sleep, and other kinds of nourishment. Allow yourself to be frustrated when you're distracted from learning by everything else going on around us, when the technology fails, or when we work through difficult material that is not immediately intelligible. But be gentle with yourself and others when frustration takes over. Thinking, like any other activity, requires practice to get better at it!

**Method of evaluation:** Over the course of the semester, you will write one response to a reading assignment and complete a final project. You will also record, with a partner, a podcast conversation and engage in discussion of other students' recordings. (See separate document for details about each assignment.)

This course follows two key principles in evaluating your work:

1. This course has a strict "no busy work" policy. We will not work on assignments that keep us busy but don't have much value for our learning and intellectual growth. Assignments should have a clear purpose in this course and for your academic training. This does not mean that every assignment will be electrifying, though ideally assignments should be interesting so you are motivated to work on them. At the very least, you should always have a clear sense that there is a good reason for doing the work. If you find that any of the assignments for this course are mere busy work, let me know.
2. This course centers your learning rather than the grade you will earn. To this end, this course is, for the most part, a grade-free zone. We will focus on qualitative rather than quantitative assessment, something we will discuss and develop over the course of the semester. While I will have to assign you a final grade at the end of the semester, I will not be grading your assignments. Instead, I will give you feedback and engage you in conversation about your work and your learning. You will also be reflecting carefully on your own work and the work of your peers. My hope is that removing the constraints of grades will allow you to identify what you want to accomplish in this course and then work towards your goals in a way that works best for you. At regular intervals during the term, you will write guided self-evaluations in which you reflect on your learning process, assess your achievements, and identify new goals and areas of improvement. At the end of the semester, I will ask you to grade yourself. Your self-evaluations, our conversations, and further information supplied in due course will help you determine your grade. Just in case, I reserve the right to change grades.

**Course schedule:** Changes are to be expected and will be communicated via email and on Blackboard.

### Introduction

Jan 18

Jan 20 Frazer and Hutchings, "The Feminist Politics of Naming Violence"

### The Politics of Violence

Jan 25 Benjamin Valentino, "Why We Kill: The Political Science of Violence against Civilians"

Jan 27 Thomas Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan*

Feb 1 Jonathan Wolff, "On Violence"

Feb 3 Frantz Fanon, "On Violence"

### Feminist Perspectives on Violence

Feb 8 Gwen Hunnicutt, "Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence against Women: Resurrecting 'Patriarchy' as a Theoretical Tool"

Feb 10 Sara Davies and Jacqui True, "Reframing Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: Bringing Gender Analysis back in"

Feb 15 Helen Kinsella, "Securing the Civilian: Sex and Gender in the Laws of War"

Feb 17 Patricia Hill Collins, "On violence, intersectionality, and transversal politics"  
Talia Bettcher, "Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion"

### Toxic Masculinity and Incel Violence

Feb 22 Elliot Rodger, selections from *My Twisted World*

Bruce Hoffman et al., "Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence"

Feb 24 Christine Agius et al., "Anti-feminism, gender and the far-right gap in C/PVE measures"

### Sexual Violence

March 1 Ida B. Wells, "Southern Horrors"

March 3 Susan Griffin, "Rape: The All-American Crime"

Susan Rae Peterson, "Coercion and Rape: The State as a Male Protection Racket"

March 8 Claudia Card, "Rape as a Terrorist Institution"

March 10 Susan Brison, selections from *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*

March 15 Spring break

March 17 Spring break

### Gender, War, and Terrorism

March 22 Zillah Eistenstein, selections from *Hatreds: Racialized and Sexualized Conflicts in the 21st Century*

March 24 Rana Jaleel, selections from *The Work of Rape*

March 29 Rachel Pain, "Everyday Terrorism: Connecting Domestic Violence and Global Terrorism"

March 31 Laura Sjoberg, "The Terror of Everyday Counterterrorism"

Christen Smith, "Impossible Privacy: Black Women and Police Terror"

April 5 Gargi Bhattacharyya, "The Misuse of Feminism in Foreign Policy"

April 7 Iris Marion Young, "Feminist Reactions to the Contemporary Security Regime"

- April 12 Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai, "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots"
- April 14 Shaista Patel, "Racing Madness: The Terrorizing Madness of the Post-9/11 Terrorist Body"

Women as Perpetrators

- April 19 Caron Gentry & Laura Sjoberg, "A Woman Did That?"
- April 21 STUDENT CHOICE
- April 26 STUDENT CHOICE
- Frantz Fanon, "Algeria Unveiled"
  - Kathleen Blee, "Women and Organized Racial Terrorism in the United States"
  - Yamuna Sangarasivam, "Militarizing the Feminine Body: Women's Participation in the Tamil Nationalist Struggle"
  - Yasmin Jiwani, "Gendered Islamophobia in the Case of the Returning ISIS Women: A Canadian Narrative"