

Prof. Linda Zerilli

Studies in Twentieth-Century Political Thought  
**Hannah Arendt: From Kantian Aesthetics to the Practice of Political Judgment**

The third volume of Hannah Arendt's *The Life of the Mind* was never written. As her editor, Mary McCarthy, observed: "After her death, a sheet of paper was found in her typewriter, blank except for the heading 'Judging' and two epigraphs. Some time between the Saturday of finishing 'Willing' [the second volume of the aforementioned work] and the Thursday of her death, she must have sat down to confront the final section." Fond of quoting McCarthy, commentators have turned the missing volume on Judging into an enigma of spectral proportions. It is said that Arendt's reflections on the faculty of judging suggest a turn away from the *vita activa* and toward the life of the mind; in short, judging brought Arendt back home to Western philosophy, especially the philosophy of Kant. Arendt's attempt to develop an account of political judgment based on Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment, says Jürgen Habermas, was deeply mistaken. To model political judgment on a non-cognitive aesthetic judgment (i.e., on a judgment that cannot be demonstrated by proofs and that is only "an example of a rule that we cannot state," as Kant puts it) is to bypass the central problem of political judgment, namely the rational adjudication of competing validity claims. In this course we will consider the possibility that Arendt does address the problem of validity with one important caveat: she does not think that validity is the all-important problem or task for political judgment—the affirmation of political community as the realm of human plurality and freedom is.

**Course Requirements**

One oral presentation and one final essay. (Auditors do not have to write the final essay.)

Video: Hannah Arendt in Conversation with Gunter Gauss ([www.mmlc.northwestern.edu/gauss-arendt](http://www.mmlc.northwestern.edu/gauss-arendt)) The user name is learner and the password is ich.bin

Some familiarity with German (especially Kantian) philosophy is desirable. I suggest the following works:

Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (classic commentary on the Kantian system)

Ernest Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought* (excellent work by a key figure in Kant studies who sought to expand Kant's work to the realm of culture--also a rival of Heidegger)

Sarah Gibbons, *Kant's Theory of Imagination* (excellent work that foregrounds the productive and non-cognitive function of imagination in the *CPR* and *CJ*)

Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (now standard work on Kantian aesthetics)

Salim Kemal, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (walks you through the *Critique of Judgment*, though certain interpretations are quite controversial, e.g., *sensus communis*)

Béatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* (brilliant, complex, but difficult; primarily a reading of the first *Critique*, arguing for the importance of reflection and the relation between the first and the third *Critiques*)

Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the Critique of Judgment*.

New work by an NU philosophy professor, which cogently argues for the unity of the *CJ* based on the principle of purposiveness.

## Required Texts

Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*  
\_\_\_\_\_, *Between Past and Future*

William Dray, *Philosophy of History* (Prentice Hall, 1993).

G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner Pluhar (Hackett). [Do not use another translation, save the Cambridge Edition translation by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood].

**There is a reader at Quartet Copies.**

## Selected Books and Articles about Hannah Arendt (in English)

Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky, eds., *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*

Kennan Ferguson, *The Politics of Judgment: Aesthetics, Identity, and Political Theory*

Jacques Taminiaux, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker: Arendt and Heidegger*

Dana Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political*

Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*

Richard Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*

Patricia Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality*

Margarete Canovan, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt*

C. Calhoun and J. McGowan ed., *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics*

Maurizio Passerin D'Entreves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*

Lisa Jane Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy*

Melvyn Hill, *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World*

L. Hinchman and S. Hinchman ed., *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays*

Bonnie Honig ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social*

Jennifer Ring, *The Political Consequences of Thinking*

Elisabeth Young-Bruel, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*

Kimberly Curtis, *Our Sense of the Real: Aesthetic Experience and Arendtian Politics*

Peter Steinberger, *The Concept of Political Judgment*

Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedlesky, *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*

Linda M. G. Zerilli, " 'We Feel Our Freedom': Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt," *Political Theory* 33, no. 2 (April 2005): 158-188.

## Selected Books on Arendt in German, French, and Italian

Hannah Arendt /Kurt Blumenfeld, "*in keinem Besitz verwurzelt*"—*Die Korrespondenz*

Hauke Brunkhorst, *Hannah Arendt* (Verlag Beck, 1999)

Karl-Heinz Breier, *Hannah Arendt*

Hans-Jürgen Bendikt, "Totalitarismus und Imperialismus im Jahre 1967," in H.E. Bahr, *Weltfrieden und Revolution*

Roberto Esposito, "H. Arendt tra volonta e rappresentazione: per una critica del decisionismo," In *Mulino*, 35/303 (Jan/Feb. 1986): 95-121

Simona Forti, *Il totalitarismo* (Rome, 2001).

\_\_\_\_\_, *Vita della mente e tempo della Polis* (Milano, 1994).

Wolfgang Heuer, *Citizen. Persönliche Integrität und politisches Handeln. Eine Rekonstruktion des politischen Humanismus Hannah Arendts* (Berlin, 1992).

Peter Kemper ed., *Die Zukunft des Politischen: Ausblicke auf Hannah Arendt* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993)

Julia Kristeva, *Le Génie Féminin: Hannah Arendt* (2003).

Claude Lefort, "Hannah Arendt et la question du politique," *Essais sur le politique*

Christoph Menke, *Spiegelungen der Gleichheit* (Akademie Verlag, 2000)

Anne Amiel, *La non-philosophie de Hannah Arendt: Révolution et jugement* (2001)

Teresa Serra, *L'autonomia del politico. Introduzione al pensiero di H. Arendt*

*Magazine littéraire*, no. 337 (novembre 1995) Hannah Arendt: Philosophie et politique

An asterisk \* denotes required reading. As a rule, you should read in the order listed on the syllabus.

### **I. Introduction: Political Judgment in the Gap Between Past and Future**

Hannah Arendt, "Preface" and "Tradition and the Modern Age," in *Between Past and Future*  
Cristina Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy* (MIT, 1999).

Kennan Ferguson, *The Politics of Judgment: Aesthetics, Identity, and Political Theory*  
(Lexington, 1999)

Dana Villa, "Totalitarianism, Modernity, and the Tradition," in *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*,  
(Berkeley UP, 2001).

Richard Bernstein, "Hannah Arendt: "The Ambiguities of Theory and Practice," in *Political Theory and Praxis*, ed. Terence Ball (New Perspectives, 1977).

### **II. The Philosophy of History and the Question of Judgment**

\*Arendt, Arendt, "The Concept of History," in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*

\*Kant, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View," in Immanuel Kant,  
*On History*, ed. Lewis White Beck (Prentice Hall, 2001), pp. 11-26. (Reader)

\*Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*; and Sections 548-551 of the *Encyclopedia*,  
part 3. In Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 277-291. (Reader)

\*Nietzsche, "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life," in *Unfashionable Observations*,  
The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, vol. 2, trans. Richard T. Gray (Stanford,  
1998), pp. 83-168. (Reader)

#### Recommended:

Herder, "This too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity," in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge, 2002).

### **III. Historicism, Judgment, and the Specter of Relativism**

\*Georg Iggers, "Historicism: The History and Meaning of the Term," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol 56, no. 1 (Jan. 1995), pp. 129-152. (Reader)

\*Eugene Miller, "Positivism, Historicism, and Political Inquiry," *APSR*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (Sept. 1972), pp. 796-817. (Reader)

\*Leo Strauss, "Relativism," in *The Rebirth of Classical Rationalism* (Chicago, 1989). (Reader)

\*John G. Gunnell, "Relativism: The Return of the Repressed," *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 4. (Nov., 1993), pp. 563-584. (Reader)

\*Hannah Arendt, "Truth and Politics," in *Between Past and Future*

#### Recommended:

Arendt, "Concern with Politics in Recent European Philosophical Thought," in *Essays in Understanding*

Cristina Lafont, "World Disclosure and Reference," *Thesis Eleven*, no. 37, 46-63.

Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (UPenn, 1983), 1-49, 171-197, 207-223.

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, section 44, pp. 196-211.

Jeffrey Andrew Barash, *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning* (Fordham, 2003)

Charles Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Cornell, 1995)

George G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History* (Wesleyan, 1968), chs. 6 and 7.

Peter Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (UC Press, 1975)

Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol 1, "Language," 73-114.

Friedrich Jaeger and Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus* (Verlag C. H. Beck, 1992)

Annette Wittkau, *Historismus: Zur Geschichte des Begriffs und des Problems* (Göttingen, 1992).

Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (Berlin, 1936)

Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und seine Probleme* (Tübingen, 1922)

Leo Strauss, "Natural Right and the Historicist Approach," in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Hilail Gildin

Cristina Lafont, *Heidegger and Language as World Disclosure*

Jürgen Habermas, "Excursion on Leveling the Genre Distinction between Philosophy and Literature," in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*

Linda M. G. Zerilli, "Truth and Politics," *Theory and Event*, vol. 9, issue 4 (2006).

#### **IV. Judging the Past**

\*Arendt, "Understanding and Politics," in *Essays in Understanding* (Reader)

\*Arendt, "Social Science and Concentration Camps" in *Essays in Understanding* (Reader)

\*Carl Hempel, "The Function of General Laws in History," in *Readings in Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Herbert Feigl, pp. 459-471 and Wilfred Sellars (Appleton, NY) (Reader)

\*William Dray, *Philosophy of History*, second edition (Prentice Hall 1993).

\*Robert Pois, "The Holocaust and the Ethical Imperative of Historicism" (Reader)

#### **V. The "Subjective Universal Validity" of Reflective Judgment (2 weeks)**

\*Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, [Kant's] "Preface," "Introduction," §§1-23.

##### Recommended:

Salim Kemal, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory*, 1-66.

Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the Critique of Judgment*

Michael Halberstam, "The Indeterminacy of Kant's Rational Reason and the Intervention of Taste," in *Totalitarianism and the Modern Conception of Politics*

John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment*

Stanley Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems in Modern Philosophy," *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*

#### **VI. The "Subjective Universal Validity" of Reflective Judgment (continued)**

\*Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §§23-50, 55-60.

##### Recommended:

Sarah Gibbons, *Kant's Theory of Imagination*, pp. 1-124

Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Discovery of the Imagination" and "Logic, Imagination, Reflection"

in *World in Fragments*  
Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* (UChicago, 1990).  
Jean Francois Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (Stanford UP, 1994)  
Salim Kemal, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory*, 67-102

## **VII. The Reflective Character of Political Judgment**

\*Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (including Ronald Beiner's "Interpretive Essay")

### Recommended:

Jürgen Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," in *Hannah Arendt, Critical Essays*, ed. Lewis Hinchman and Sandra Hinchman (Albany, 1994).

Albrecht Wellmer, "Hannah Arendt on Judgment: The Unwritten Doctrine of Reason,"

*Judgment, Imagination, and Politics: Themes from Kant and Arendt*, ed. Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedlesky (Boston, 2001).

Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, pp. 171-223.

Lisa Jane Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy*

Seyla Benhabib, "Judgment and the Moral Foundations of Politics in Hannah Arendt's Thought," and Iris Marion Young, "Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder and Enlarged Thought," both in *Judgment, Imagination, and Politics*

Alessandro Ferrara, "Judgment, Identity and Authenticity: A Reconstruction of Hannah Arendt's Interpretation of Kant," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 24, nos 2-3 (1998):1-24.

## **VIII. Judgment and the Question of Political Community**

\*Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," in *Between Past and Future*

\*Linda M. G. Zerilli, "'We Feel Our Freedom': Imagination and Judgment in the Thought of Hannah Arendt," *Political Theory* 33, no. 2 (April 2005): 158-188.

\*David Carroll, "Community After Devastation: Culture, Politics and the 'Public Space'," in *Politics, Theory, and Contemporary Culture*, Mark Poster, ed. (Columbia UP, 1993).