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Office hours: Tues. 3–5 or by appointment

HANNAH ARENDT'S *THE HUMAN CONDITION*

Political Science 24520 / 34520
Winter Quarter 2006

Tuesdays, 9-11:50 am, Stuart 105

This seminar will be devoted to a reading of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition* (1958), one of the most influential works of political theory written in the twentieth century. The central purpose of the seminar is to grasp the meaning and function of Arendt's often-puzzling conceptual distinctions—among “public,” “private” and “social”; or among “labor,” “work,” and “action”—and to understand her account of the significance and prospects of human activity, including political activity, in modernity. Each week, a portion of Arendt's book will be paired with two other kinds of texts: first, selections from some of the other philosophers and social theorists with whom Arendt was more or less explicitly in conversation, including Aristotle, Plato, Marx, Weber, and Heidegger; and, second, selections from some other works from the 1950s—some still famous, others now obscure—whose themes overlap with Arendt's, and which will help place *The Human Condition* in its mid-century American contexts.

The seminar will be open to advanced (normally, third- and fourth-year) undergraduates, as well as graduate students. Enrollment will be limited and requires instructor consent.

TEXTS: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, 1958, 2nd ed. 1998) will be available for purchase at the Seminary Co-op. (The pagination of the second edition is the same, so if you own the first edition you do *not* need to buy a new copy, although you may wish to.) All other readings will be on electronic and paper reserve at Regenstein Library.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: A 15–20 page seminar paper, due on Tuesday, March 14, on a topic of your choice, designed in consultation with me.

GRADES: Your grade for the seminar paper will determine your grade for the course. However, any student who is absent for three or more sessions of the seminar (except in cases of medical or other documentable emergency) will be graded on a pass-fail basis only.

LATE PAPERS AND INCOMPLETES: Unless you have arranged prior to the due date to take an incomplete, late papers (again, except in cases of medical or other documentable emergency) will be penalized 2/3 of a letter grade per day, e.g. an A paper 2 days late becomes a B-minus.

PLAGIARISM is grounds for failing the course.

WEEKLY MEETINGS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

Jan. 3. Introduction

(no reading)

Jan. 10. “Prologue” and “The Human Condition”

1. Arendt, *HC*, 1–21.
2. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §12 (Macquarie and Robinson trans., 78–86).
3. Edward Teller and Albert L. Latter, *Our Nuclear Future*, 13–17, 168–73.

Jan. 17. “Public and Private”

1. Arendt, *HC*, 22–78.
2. Aristotle, *Politics*, book 1, Reeve trans., 1–25.
3. Arendt, “Reflections on Little Rock” and “A Reply to My Critics.”

Jan. 24. “Labor”

1. Arendt, *HC*, 79–135.
2. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Fowkes trans., 125–52, 163–77, 283–306.
3. John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society*, 1st ed., 334–48.

Jan. 31. “Work,” I

1. Arendt, *HC*, 137–74.
2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 6, chap. 4, Ostwald trans., 151–52.
3. Daniel Bell, “Work and its Discontents,” in *The End of Ideology*, 222–62.

Feb. 7. “Work,” II

1. Arendt, “The Crisis in Culture,” in *Between Past and Future*, 197–226.
2. Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 17–45.
3. Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters,” in *The Tradition of the New*, 23–39.

Feb. 14. “Action,” I

1. Arendt, *HC*, 175–207
2. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* book 1, chap. 10, Ostwald trans., 23–26.
3. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Lattimore trans., 90–97.
4. C. Wright Mills, “The Higher Circles,” in *The Power Elite*, 1–29.

Feb. 21. “Action,” II

1. Arendt, *HC*, 207–47
2. Plato, *Statesman*, 287b–311c, Rowe trans., in *Complete Works*, 330–358.
3. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 372–391

Feb. 28. “The Vita Activa and the Modern Age”

1. Arendt, *HC*, 248–325
2. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, chap. 5, trans. Parsons, new Routledge pagination 102–25.
3. David Easton, *The Political System*, chap. 1, 3–36.

March 7. Concluding session

No new reading. Discussion of interpretive issues related to students’ papers.