Northeastern University London

Foundations of Critical Thought Course Descriptor

Course code	LPINT5238	Discipline	Politics and International Relations(IR)
UK credit	15	US credit	4
FHEQ level	5	Date approved	November 2022
Core attributes			
Pre-requisites	None		
Co-requisites	None		

Course Overview

This course offers an in-depth study of key theoretical perspectives and approaches in the history of critical political thought. The course analyses key texts and figures that have contributed to shape trajectories of political thinking that sit beyond the traditional Western-centred canon and with a strong attention to the global, racial, economic, and gendered context of their emergence and production. The course enables students to analyse and apply conceptual, methodological, and theoretical frameworks of critical political thought to the practice of in-depth and sophisticated textual analysis and to the writing and development of political arguments informed by these traditions. Through the engagement with thinkers that foreground questions of race, gender, ability, and diversity in the foundations to their political theories and thought, students on the course are asked to develop a nuanced understanding and sensitivity towards societal and cultural differences and the way these have been interpreted and articulated historically and in the present in the advancing of political claims and arguments. Students are also led to practice the theoretical and intellectual tools that enable them to apply critical approaches to the analysis of contemporary policy, societal, and public discourses.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

Knowledge and Understanding

K1b   Analyse and compare key contributions to critical political thought through the study of texts and figures beyond the Western canon.

K2b   Question traditional subject boundaries by critically analysing the interconnection between philosophical arguments and the historical, cultural, and societal processes that inform them.

Subject Specific Skills

S1b   Critically analyse foundational and recent work from key thinkers, currents, and movements in critical political thought and reflect on praxis and research in critical approaches to political thought and their contexts.

S2b   Demonstrate an ability to critically reflect on praxis and research in critical approaches to political thought and their contexts.

Transferable and Employability Skills

T2b   Apply critical modes of thought to the analysis of contemporary political, social and policy debates.

T3b   Demonstrate an effective technical proficiency of written English that uses a wide range of literacy skills and vocabulary selected appropriately to communicate to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Teaching and Learning

This course has a dedicated Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) page with a syllabus and range of additional resources (e.g. readings, question prompts, tasks, assignment briefs, discussion boards) to orientate and engage students in their studies.

The scheduled teaching and learning activities for this course are:

1. **Lectures and seminars**

   40 scheduled hours - typically including induction, consolidation or revision, and assessment activity hours.

   o   Version 1: all sessions in the same sized group

       OR

   o   Version 2: most of the sessions in larger groups; some of the sessions in smaller groups

Faculty hold regular 'office hours', which are opportunities for students to drop in or sign up to explore ideas, raise questions, or seek targeted guidance or feedback, individually or in small groups.

Students are to attend and participate in all the scheduled teaching and learning activities for this course and to manage their directed learning and independent study.

Indicative total learning hours for this course: 150 hours

Assessment

Both formative and summative assessments are used as part of this course, with purely formative opportunities typically embedded within interactive teaching sessions, office hours, and/or the VLE.

Summative Assessments

The assessments will require students to analyse key texts in the tradition of critical political thought and to utilise the arguments from these diverse traditions to critically reflect on contemporary political, social, and policy debates:

AE:	Assessment Activity	Weighting (%)	Duration	Length
1	Written Assignment	40	N/A	1500 words
2	Written Assignment	60	N/A	2500 words

Further information about the assessments can be found in the Course Syllabus.

Feedback

Students will receive formative and summative feedback in a variety of ways, written (e.g. marked up on assignments, through email or the VLE) and/or oral (e.g. as part of interactive teaching sessions or in office hours).

Indicative Reading

Note: Comprehensive and current reading lists are produced annually in the Course Syllabus or other documentation provided to students; the indicative reading list provided below is for a general guide and part of the approval/modification process only.

- Shilliam, R. (ed.), International Relations and Non-Western Thought (London: Routledge, 2010).

- Oren, T., & A. Press (eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Feminism (London: Routledge, 2019).

- Huggan, G. (ed.), The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

- Said, E., Selected Subaltern Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Indicative Topics

Note: Comprehensive and current topics for courses are produced annually in the Course Syllabus or other documentation provided to students; the indicative topics provided below are used as a general guide and part of the approval/modification process only.

- Western political thought through the lens of critical theory.

- Postcolonial and anti-colonial studies.

- International political thought beyond the West (Pan-Africanism, Pan-Asianism, Pan-Islamism.

- Feminist, queer, and indigenous political studies.

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