

Critical Thinking in Political Science (K001125)

Course size (nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)

Credits 6.0 Study time 180 h Contact hrs 45.0 h

Course offerings in academic year 2018-2019

A (semester 1) English

Lecturers in academic year 2018-2019

Parker, Christopher PS05 lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2018-2019

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences (main subject Communication Studies)	6	A
Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences (main subject Political Sciences)	6	A
Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences (main subject Sociology)	6	A
Joint Section Bachelor of Science in Social Sciences	6	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Position of the course

Contents

The *Critical Thinking* courses build on concepts introduced in the first year, emphasizing their role as tools of scientific and social critique. They also introduce new concepts, approaches and problems that are specific to the critical tradition. Students will explore how a variety of critical currents have informed the production of knowledge in each of the three program disciplines: communication studies, political science and sociology. Through in-depth lectures, discussion of core theoretical texts and examination of exemplary case studies, students will learn the various ways in which these disciplines engage with and deploy the notion of critique.

Of the core social science disciplines, Political Science—with its origins in advisory tracts to kings and princes, normative treatises on government, the administration of empire, positive law and, over the second half of the 20th century, the management of mass democracy and Cold War rivalry—probably has the weakest link to formal traditions of critical thought. Like economics, the discipline sought from the beginning to establish itself as a positive, managerial science. The field continues to be dominated by approaches that emphasize quantification and formal modeling (e.g., rational choice theory). This does not mean that political scientists do not do critical work. *They do*. It does, however, mean that being critical has a somewhat limited meaning within mainstream political science: it implies methodological rigor, a commitment to evidence-based argument, and close attention to the possible influence of ideology on conclusions. These are of course crucial commitments. But in order to see how contemporary political scientists are working to get critical traction on developments in today's rapidly changing world, we also need to explore how some are looking across disciplinary boundaries, and—by doing so—tapping into more formal traditions of critique.

In this course, we will begin by tracing the roots of political science and examine some of the critical analytical strategies that emerged within the discipline (with an emphasis on comparative method). From there, we will review different traditions of critical

thought and consider how they might inform the practice of political research. Our main focus will be on the notion of genealogical critique, an approach that we will apply in-depth to two themes: the critique of political economy; and the critique of the state. Attention will be paid to issues of coloniality and post-coloniality. We will engage with observers of political life from across a range of disciplines, including anthropology, human geography, sociology and post-colonial studies. In doing so, students will not only develop a more critical perspective on the political world, but also a critical awareness of the potential and limitations of political science itself.

The course will be structured around a series of *ex cathedra*-lectures, complemented by three reading seminars. The first seminar will examine the notion of genealogical critique. The second will look at how genealogical critique was deployed to open up innovative research agendas within political economy. And the final seminar will explore lines of research opened up by a genealogical critique of the state. The reading seminars seek to strengthen students' ability to approach academic texts with an inter- and trans-disciplinary mindset, and to make effective use of the resulting insights. Students are expected to actively participate in discussion about the texts, thus practicing the skill of formulating clear stances, supported by critical theories and concepts in a way that adds to scientific and societal debate.

Initial competences

Students who want to enroll for this course, must have passed for 'Introduction to Political Science' and must have obtained at least 30 ECTS-credits on bachelor level.

Final competences

GENERAL COMPETENCES

After successful completion of this course. Students will be able to:

Identify key concepts and theories (both classical and contemporary) that underpin critical approaches to the study of political life;
Apply these concepts and theories to key political phenomena and critically analyze these phenomena in the light of the knowledge acquired throughout the course.
Independently process and review core theoretical texts and reproduce the central argument of such texts both verbally and in written format.
Grasp the different conceptions of "critique" that define the three disciplinary perspectives.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Lecture, seminar

Extra information on the teaching methods

Description of expected study load:

Below is a rough approximation of the expected study load of this course. The specific contact hours are amenable to change.

Lectures: collective contact-dependent moments during which the lecturer engages with learning materials.

39 hours (13 lectures x 3 hours)

Seminar, Exercises or Practicals (Practical): collective or individual contact-dependent moments during which the students are guided to actively engage with learning materials. Reading seminars in which key theoretical texts are discussed in smaller groups.

7 hours (3 seminars x 2 hours + 1 hour individual feedback)

Self-study: 112 hours

Keeping up with the course material during the semester: 39 hours (3 hours per class)

Preparation texts reading seminars: 24 hours (8 hours per seminar)

Preparation reading notes: 9 hours (3 hours per reading note)

Preparation exam: 40 hours

Learning materials and price

Course material (Engels):

- Reader (required): The reader for his course will consist of a series of selected texts that will be made available through Pointcarré
- Slides (required): Slides for each lecture will be made available on Pointcarré

References

Course content-related study coaching

Evaluation methods

end-of-term evaluation and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the first examination period

Written examination

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the second examination period

Written examination

Examination methods in case of permanent evaluation

Participation

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent evaluation

examination during the second examination period is not possible

Extra information on the examination methods

The final grade is composed based on the following categories:

Written Exam determines 70% of the final mark.

Seminar determines 30% of the final mark.

reading notes: 20%

participation: 10%

The written exam will consist of a series of open-ended questions which probe insight, the ability to link different aspects of the course and basic knowledge of the key ideas discussed throughout the lectures and in the reader.

In case a student fails this course in the first session, the written exam can be redone in the second session. The grades on reading notes and participation are specific to the reading seminars and cannot be changed for the second session.

More specific details will be provided in the course's "study guide".

Calculation of the examination mark

The final grade is composed based on the following categories:

Written Exam determines 70% of the final mark.

Practical Exam determines 30% of the final mark.

Within the Written Exam category, the following assignments need to be completed:

Written Exam with a relative weight of 1 which comprises 70% of the final mark.

Note: .

Within the Practical Exam category, the following assignments need to be completed:

Reading Notes & Participation with a relative weight of 1 which comprises 30% of the final mark.