

All Revisions to Original Syllabus are Underlined

HUHI 6355: Spring Semester 2020
Class Meetings: Thursdays 10am-12:45pm
Class Location: JO 4.112, Online during April

Professor: Dr. Katherine Davies
OH: By Virtual Appointment, Email to Schedule
OH Location: Online via Jitsi
Email: Katherine.Davies@utdallas.edu

Twentieth Century Philosophy: Hannah Arendt as Political Thinker

Course Description

Hannah Arendt remains a provocative, original, and timely thinker. The roles she assumed over the course of her career span activist organizer, academic professor, political theorist, public intellectual, and journalist, to name a few. Her work is situated and motivated by her experience with Nazism in her early life. She relentlessly grappled with the details of the atrocities of the Holocaust, hoping to understand how it had been made possible so as to learn how best to guard against any future formation of totalitarianism.

Arendt writes what may well be the leitmotif of her corpus in *The Human Condition*: “What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.” This proposal proved far less simple to mobilize than Arendt had perhaps hoped. She returns to the task time and time again. The different ways in which Arendt attempts to pursue this venture will structure our seminar tracing the major contours of Arendt’s middle to late work.

In her 1958 book *The Human Condition*, Arendt relentlessly explores what it means to “do.” Challenging the value philosophy typically assigns to the *vita contemplativa*, Arendt aims instead to explore the condition of the *vita activa* by way of three conditioning activities she identifies as labor, work, and action. Her philosophical commitment to theorizing “doing,” however, is arrested in her encounter with Adolf Eichmann during her coverage of his 1961 trial for The New Yorker, subsequently collected and published as *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. In Eichmann, Arendt encountered a Nazi war criminal whose sole distinguishing characteristic was a “quite authentic inability to think” about what he was doing. Theorizing this unhinging of “thinking” from “doing” constitutes Arendt’s groundbreaking reconception of “evil.” Despite her long-standing resistance to philosophical analysis of thinking, Arendt found herself compelled to return to the *vita contemplativa* before her death in 1975 in order to more clearly determine the ethical and political connection between “thinking” and “doing.” In her posthumously published work *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt provides two volumes exploring “Thinking” and “Willing,” passing away suddenly with the title page of the third planned volume “Judging” still on her typewriter.

Course Materials

Texts for Purchase:

The Human Condition second edition, Hannah Arendt (The University of Chicago Press edited Margaret Canovan, ISBN: 9780226025988)

Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, Hannah Arendt (Penguin Classics, ISBN:

9780143039884)

Responsibility and Judgment, Hannah Arendt (Schocken Books edited Jerome Kohn, ISBN: 9780805211627)

The Life of the Mind one-volume edition, Hannah Arendt (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, ISBN: 0156519925)

Electronic copies of suggested secondary literature will be provided

Further Suggested Scholarly Sources:

Edited Volumes

Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays, Ed. Hinchman and Hinchman 1994

Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt, Ed. Honig 1995

Hannah Arendt: Twenty Years Later, Ed. Kohn 1997

The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt, Ed. Villa 2000

Thinking in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt on Ethics and Politics, Ed. Berkowitz, Keenan, and Katz 2009

Politics in Dark Times: Encounters with Hannah Arendt, Ed. Benhabib 2010

Monographs

Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought, Canovan 1994

Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political, Villa 1995

The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Conception of the Social, Pitkin 1998

Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt, Villa 1999

The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt, Benhabib 2003

Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World, Young-Bruehl 2004

Hannah Arendt and Human Rights: The Predicament of Common Responsibility, Birmingham 2006

Why Arendt Matters, Young-Bruehl 2006

Politics without Vision, Strong 2012

Arendt and America, King 2015

Why Read Hannah Arendt Now, Bernstein 2018

Journals

Arendt Studies: <https://www.pdcnet.org/arendtstudies>

Philosophy Today: <https://www.pdcnet.org/philtoday/Philosophy-Today>

Research in Phenomenology: <https://brill.com/view/journals/rip/rip-overview.xml>

Continental Philosophy Review: <https://link.springer.com/journal/11007>

Online Resources

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Arendt Entry: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/>

The Hannah Arendt Center at Bard: <https://hac.bard.edu>

Vita Activa: The Spirit of Hannah Arendt Intellectual Documentary. Access provided via [UTD library's kanopy subscription](#)

Course Particulars

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, the student will have gained: (1) a working knowledge of Hannah Arendt's major middle to late major philosophical works and associated scholarly commentary; (2) opportunities to engage and present difficult theoretical material; (3) guidance in producing an article-length research seminar paper.

Organization:

All assignments and electronic materials will be collected and disseminated via a shared Box folder. Electronic access to the Box folder will be provided during the first week of the semester.

Virtual Meeting Instructions:

After our extended Spring Break, all remaining meetings will be conducted online due to the global COVID-19 Pandemic. We will meet using Jitsi (jitsi.org) from 10am-12pm during our regular Thursday meetings. The instructor will email an invitation link to each session shortly before it begins. Jitsi works best on Chrome or Firefox browsers (it does not work well in Safari). If possible, it is strongly suggested to connect your laptop to the internet via a hard connection or ethernet cable. Also, please use a headset (with microphone) or at least headphones to maximize sound the audio quality of our meetings.

Requirements:

(1) Participation in Discussion 10%

Thorough preparation, punctual attendance, and consistent participation is expected of all students. This includes balancing contributions appropriately, neither remaining too quiet nor speaking over others. Active listening and speaking—responding to the ideas of others and helping to develop them—will form the *ethos* of the seminar. Ideally, we will assist one another in elaborating our ideas-in-progress in conversation with the text rather than simply transmitting our own thoughts, however brilliant, to the class.

(2) Weekly Reading Reflections 15%

Each week students are expected to submit a written reflection which will take the form of a commentary or extended question pertaining to the assigned reading for the meeting that week. These short papers of 1-1.5 double spaced pages are due by 5pm via the Box folder each Tuesday preceding our Thursday class meeting. The topic is entirely up to you but must deal with the week's reading. You may summarize the material, give a close reading of a difficult passage, criticize an argument contained in the reading, or connect a reading with a previous week's reading or class discussion. These weekly reflections are graded pass/fail on the basis of submission. You must submit these reflections in order to pass the course. You do not need to submit a reflection the week

you present. You may also elect one week of your choosing to skip submitting a reflection. No reflection is due the week of the film screening. All Weekly Reading Reflections are optional after the extended Spring Break.

(3) Seminar Presentation 25%

Every enrolled student is required to present at least once during the semester. Depending on class size, enrolled students may be invited to present more than once, or auditors may be invited to do presentations. The presentation should be approximately 10-12 double spaced pages. The text of the presentation paper must be submitted to the professor by 5pm on Tuesday via Box before the Thursday class presentation to take place during the second half of our meeting. Additionally, a handout must be prepared for distribution to all participants at the seminar presentation (not required for presentations after the extended spring break). The presentation may range from the exegetical to the critical and everything in between. Discussion will follow. Sign-ups for presentations will take place during the second seminar meeting of the semester.

(4) Final Seminar Paper and Prospectus 50%

At the end of the term, students will submit a seminar paper of 12-15 pages on a topic approved in consultation with the professor. It may be, but does not have to be, an expanded version of a seminar presentation or a weekly reading reflection. Additionally, the seminar paper must engage at least one scholarly article, essay, or book chapter. This scholarly source may be drawn from the suggested readings listed in the Schedule of Readings, from the Suggested Scholarly Sources listed above, or from your own research. The final week of the term each participant has the option to submit an approximately 3-page prospectus for the final paper at 5pm the Tuesday before our final meeting. This prospectus should provide a sketch of the proposed structural, argumentative moves of the final seminar paper. It should list the texts from Arendt the paper will engage as well as the scholarly sources to be referenced in a bibliography. The professor will provide written feedback on the prospectuses.

Schedule of Readings

This schedule may be modified as the semester progresses. Updated versions of the syllabus will be made available should such changes be deemed necessary.

January 16: Course Introduction and discussion of Arendt's essay "We Refugees"

The Human Condition

January 23: "Prologue," "The Human Condition," and "The Public and the Private Realm" pp. 1-78
Suggested: "Introduction" to *The Human Condition* by Margaret Canovan

January 30: "Labor" and "Work" pp. 79-174
Suggested: "Hannah Arendt as a Conservative Thinker" by Margaret Canovan

February 6: “Action” and “The *Vita Activa* and the Modern Age” pp. 175-325
Suggested: “In the Presence of Others: Arendt and Anzaldúa on the Paradox of Public Appearance” by Susan Bickford

Eichmann In Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil

February 13: “The House of Justice” through “The Final Solution: Killing,” sections I-VI, pp. 3-111
Suggested: “Introduction” to *Eichmann in Jerusalem* by Amos Elon

February 20: “The Wannsee Conference, or Pontius Pilate” through “The Killing Centers in the East,” sections VII-XIII, pp. 112-219
Suggested: “Guilt versus Responsibility: A Reading and Partial Critique of Hannah Arendt” by Iris Marion Young

February 27: “Evidence and Witnesses” through, “*Postscript*,” sections XIII-XV, Epilogue, and *Postscript*, pp. 220-298 (Second Half of Class Canceled)
Suggested: “Did Hannah Arendt Change Her Mind?: From Radical Evil to the Banality of Evil” by Richard Bernstein

March 5: “Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship” and “Thinking and Moral Considerations” in *Responsibility and Judgement* and “Truth and Politics” (pdf provided)
Suggested: “The Banality of Philosophy: Arendt on Heidegger and Eichmann” by Dana Villa

The Life of the Mind

March 12: “Introduction” and Thinking: “Appearance” pp. 1- 65
Suggested: “The Political Dimension of the Public World: On Hannah Arendt’s Interpretation of Martin Heidegger” by Jeffery Andrew Barash

March 19: *Spring Break*

March 26: *Class Cancelled*

ALL MEETINGS ONLINE FROM THIS POINT UNTIL END OF SEMESTER

April 2: Thinking: “Mental Activities in a World of Appearances” and “What Makes Us Think?” partial, pp. 69-151
Suggested: “Evil and Plurality: Hannah Arendt’s Way to *Life of the Mind*, I” by Jerome Kohn

April 9: Thinking: “What Makes Us Think?” continued and “Where Are We When We Think?” pp. 151-216
Suggested: “Reflections on Hannah Arendt’s *The Life of the Mind*” by Elisabeth Young-Bruchl

April 16: Willing: "Introduction" and "The Philosophers and the Will" pp. 1-51
Suggested: "Hannah Arendt and the Will" by Suzanne Jacobitti

April 23: Willing: "*Quaestio mihi factus sum*: The Discovery of Inner Man" and "Will and Intellect"
partial, pp. 55-125
Suggested: "Arendt's Augustine" by Roy T. Tsao

April 30: Willing: "Will and Intellect" continued and "Conclusions" pp. 125-217
Suggested: "Judging in a World of Appearances: A Commentary on Hannah Arendt's
Unwritten Finale" by Ronald Beiner

Final Papers Due by 5pm, May 8th