



**Philosophy 2208E (570)**  
**INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT**  
**Fall/ Winter 2025-2026**

**Instructor:** A. Calcagno  
**Email:** acalcagn@uwo.ca

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**Course Information**

**Calendar Description:**

An introduction to Social and Political Thought through a reading of some of the main figures in European traditions of social theory, political sociology, Marxism and Frankfurt School critical theory.

**Antirequisite(s):** The former Philosophy 2204E.

**Extra Information:** 3 hours.

**Course Weight:** 1.00

**Breadth:** Category B

**Subject Code:** PHILOSOP

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**King's University College**  
**Department of Philosophy**  
**PHILOSOPHY 2208E—Introduction to Social and Political Thought**  
**2025–2026**

**Instructor:** Antonio Calcagno, Ph.D., FRSC

**Contact Information:**

acalcagn@uwo.ca (EMAIL IS BEST MEANS OF CONTACT)

**Office Hours:**

*Office Hours information can be found on Brightspace.*

**PREREQUISITES:** None

**ANTIREQUISITES:** The former PHILOSOPHY 2204E

**DESCRIPTION:**

This course introduces students to some of the important concepts of social and political philosophy by exploring the deeper, often hidden and obscured structures that give shape to our present-day society. We examine social, legal, political, economic, military and psychological forces of power, which condition our lived experience of social and political reality. We investigate how concepts and imagined ends or goals of human power and desire come to form the sense of ourselves, how we view others, and how we organise and build our worlds.

Whether we investigate the effects of debt and global financial capitalism, powerful advancing technologies, changing views of sexuality and social relations, imperial geo-political forces or the effects of colonisation and decolonisation, students will be invited to examine the unspoken and often tacit assumptions at work in the play of power. Making evident the fundamental assumptions of the power plays mentioned above will give students the opportunity to challenge existing structures while thinking about and imagining alternatives to what is already at work in our present society.

This course has three aims or objectives:

1. To introduce students to key questions, figures, and ideas of contemporary social and political thought;
2. To help develop students' critical and analytical skills, especially in reading and writing arguments;
3. To give students a philosophical framework whereby they can develop their own responses to the questions that help form our social and political reality.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

4 small in-class critical writing assignments (4 X 10 = 40%) (In class on: September 29, 2025; November 17, 2025; January 26, 2026; March 9, 2026)

1 midterm examination (20%) (during December exam period: date to be announced by Registrar)

1 final exam (30%) (Date to be announced by Registrar)

Class Participation and attendance (10%)

### **MODE OF INSTRUCTION:**

In-person class meetings.

### **METHOD:**

We will proceed with a lecture-discussion format. Students are encouraged to ask questions and participate in class discussion. It is expected that students complete the reading assignments indicated below in order to participate fully in class discussion. Lectures will supplement readings through discussion of relevant scholarship and figures.

### **TEXTS:**

All texts will be available on the class OWL Brightspace site. In the syllabus, you may also find direct hyperlinks to some of the readings and videos, though all the readings are on the class site.

## **COSTS OF TEXTS:**

None.

## **SYLLABUS:**

**8 September:** Introduction and explanation of course requirements; what is social and political thought?

### **15 September: THEME: FRAMING AND CONTEXTUALISING OUR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL WORLD**

Neo-Liberalism and Globalization

Milton Friedman's "Neo-Liberalism and Its Prospects"

<https://miltonfriedman.hoover.org/internal/media/dispatcher/214957/full>

and

Milton Friedman's "Capitalism and Freedom"

<https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/FreedomDemocracyEconomicWelfareCh2.pdf>

**22 September:** The Rise of the Modern World: Capitalism, Liberalism and Private Property

Excerpts from Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (read book I, chapters 1-5)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3300/3300-h/3300-h.htm#link2HCH0001>

**29 September:** Rethinking Capital and Work: Marx

Excerpts from Marx's *Capital*

Read Part I, Chapter 1

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf>

**[First in-class critical reading and writing exercise]**

**6 October:** Empire and Colonization

Excerpts from Walter D. Mignolo's *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*: Read pp. 1–37

**13 October:** Thanksgiving Holiday [No Class]

**20 October:** A New form of Global Empire:

Excerpts from Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*, read sections 1.1, pp. 3–50.

[https://monoskop.org/images/9/95/Hardt\\_Michael\\_Negri\\_Antonio\\_Empire.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/9/95/Hardt_Michael_Negri_Antonio_Empire.pdf)

**27 October:** The Slow Death of Modernity and the Rise of the Postmodern: Liquefaction and Its Possibilities

Excerpts from Zygmunt Bauman's *Liquid Modernity* (Foreword and chapter 1)

**3 November: FALL READING BREAK [No class]**

**10 November: PIVOTAL CONCEPTS:**

*Power: Modern Views of Power: Hobbes and Machiavelli*

Excerpts from Hobbes' *Leviathan* (Part 1, chapters 10 and 13–16)

[https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hobbes1651part1\\_2.pdf](https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hobbes1651part1_2.pdf)

and

Machiavelli's *The Prince* (Part I, chapters 1-10)

<https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/machiavelli1532part1.pdf>

**17 November: Foucault: A New Model of Power and Subjectivation**

Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" [posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**[Second in-class critical reading and writing exercise]**

**24 November:** *Biopower*

Michel Foucault: Excerpts from *The Foucault Reader*, read “Right of Death and Power over Life”

[posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**1 December:** *Class*

Excerpts from Angela Davis’ *Women, Race, Class*: on OWL site, under Resources tab. We will focus on the article on housework.

and

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

[Both articles posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**9 December:** *Race*

Excerpt from Dale Turner’s *This Is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards A Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Read chapter 3). [Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

and

Review for midterm exam

## SECOND TERM

The majority of the second term will be spent exploring concrete issues. We shall examine causes, implications, and possible responses to contemporary problems.

### **5 January: Gender**

Excerpts from: Chandra Talpade Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*: on class Brightspace OWL class site. Read chapters 1 and 9.

### **12 January: The Rules Based International Order and The Continued Contemporary Liberal Paradigm**

John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, Read pp. 3–30

[Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

### **19 January: CONTEMPORARY ISSUE: DEBT, PRECARIETY, INEQUALITY AND THE NEW SOCIALITY AND SUBJECTIVITY, NEW FORMS OF WORK**

Excerpts from Maurizio Lazzarato's *The Making of the Indebted Man*: Read preface and chapter 1.

[Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**26 January:**

Excerpts from Elena Pulcini's *Care of the World*: Read chapter 3: [posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**[Third in-class critical reading and writing exercise]**

**2 February:**

Peter Fleming: *The Death of Homo Economicus: Work, Debt and the Myth of Endless Accumulation*: Read Introduction and chapter 4.

[Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**9 February: CONTEMPORARY ISSUE: SOVEREIGNTY, POPULATIONS/PEOPLES, AND LAND**

Excerpts from Glen Sean Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*: Read chapter 4

[Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**16 February:** Reading Week: No Classes

**23 February:** Postcapitalism? Degrowth Movement

Peter Frase: *Four Futures: Visions of the World After Capitalism*, reader chapter 2: “Rentism: Hierarchy of Abundance”

<https://sites.evergreen.edu/politicalshakespeares/wp-content/uploads/sites/226/2015/12/Frase-Rentism.pdf>

and

Kohei Saito, *Slow Down: The Degrowth Manifesto*, excerpts: read chapters 1 and 7

[Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**2 March:** Michael Dummett: *On Immigration and Refugees*

Read Part One

[Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**9 March: CONTEMPORARY ISSUE: TECHNOLOGY, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ROBOTICS**

Life with Technology and Technology without Life:

Gunther Anders' *The Obsolescence of Humankind*, vol. 2. Read Preface, Introduction and chapter one

[Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**[Fourth in-class critical reading and writing exercise]**

**16 March:** The Virtual: Robots, Artificial Intelligence, and the End of Humanity

UNESCO Report “Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence”

[Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

and

Video on Shoshana Zuboff and surveillance capitalism: discussion of ideas contained in her *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIXhnWUmMvw>

**23 March:** The Transhuman: Overcoming human limitations?

Natasha Vita-More “Transhumanist Manifesto” and Susan B. Levin’s “The Irrationality of Transhumanists”

[Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**30 March: CONTEMPORARY ISSUE: THE NEW POPULISM**

Chantal Mouffe’s *For a Left Populism*: Read chapters 3 and 4

[Posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

**6 April:** Possible Responses to Rising Populism: New Socialities

Read María Lugones: “Playfulness, “World”-Travelling, and Loving Perception” [posted on class Brightspace OWL site]

and

REVIEW and PREPARATION FOR FINAL EXAM

**Statement on AI Tools:**

King’s is committed to fostering a culture of professionalism, honesty, and academic integrity, and all members of our community—faculty, staff, and students—have a role to play in promoting an ethical learning environment. Furthermore, through the work they submit for academic evaluation, students develop important habits of critical thinking, independent inquiry, and creativity. Thus, it is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor.

**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**  
**GENERAL COURSE POLICIES**  
**2025-2026**

**1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences**

**Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)**

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

**Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at [https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses\\_enrollment/exams\\_and\\_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf](https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf).

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

[https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

**Absences from Final Examinations**

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under Special Examinations).

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

## **2. Support Services**

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:  
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University

College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-supportservices/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:  
[https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/)

Academic Support Services at King's University College:  
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

### **GBSV Support:**

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:  
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing [Care@kings.uwo.ca](mailto:Care@kings.uwo.ca) or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safecampus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html)

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

### **3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

### **4. Statement on Academic Offences**

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammarchecking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

### **5. Copyright of Course Material**

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

### **6. Use of Recordings**

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

### **7. Policy on Attendance**

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.