

Toward a Global History of Political Thought

Graduate Seminar

POLI 523B/449E

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Course Description:

The question of the global is now at the forefront of contemporary intellectual and political life. It is deployed as a scalar descriptor as much as a byword for various theoretical aspirations. The intellectual rise of the global has generated a novel approach to transnational connections and exchanges, opening up a newer set of perspectives and questions. For political theorists, it is no longer sufficient to think of germinal concepts such as justice, equality, and sovereignty in terms of the inherited scalar dichotomy of the national and the international; the normative boundaries of political ideas are being increasingly reshaped by global considerations. Yet, for all its intellectual salience, the global turn in political theory remains little understood. For many, it essentially functions as a stand-in for connections across distant regions and ideas. To others, it is the name of an aspiration to escape the (European) provincialism underlying a great deal of modern scholarship. Above all, the global is understood to be a virtue, conceptual as well as methodological.

This course seeks to consider the pressing question of the global from within the broader tradition of the history of political thought. Deeply invested in studying textual traditions and intellectual contexts, the history of political thought, in all its different iterations, constitutes a powerful vantage point to evaluate the promises and perils of the global turn. This is in part because of the challenges that the global approach poses to inherited notions of contexts and traditions. However, new work on global political thought has been flourishing primarily in other cognate fields of inquiry such as global history and comparative political theory. The course will bring together resources from these connected bodies of scholarship. Through a select set of texts, we will explore how historians of political thought have grappled with global connections and scales; we will also take stock of the ways in which political theorists have responded to the political and moral problems ushered in by the global age. Last but not least, we will analyze the disciplinary quandaries that trailed the rise of the global question across the historical disciplines. In so doing, the seminar will aim to render the ubiquitous—if elusive—problem of the global thinkable for students of modern politics.

Schedule

Week 1 (September 5):

No readings

Week 2 (September 12)

Meanings of the Global

1. Lynn Hunt, *Writing History in the Global Era* (NY: W.W. Norton, 2014), 119-152.
2. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, "Approaches to Global Intellectual History," *Global Intellectual History*, eds. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (NY: Columbia UP, 2013), 3-30.
3. John Dunn, "Why We Need a Global History of Political Thought," in *Markets, Morals, Politics*, pp. 285-310 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
4. Duncan Bell, "Making and Taking Worlds," *Global Intellectual History*, eds. Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (NY: Columbia UP, 2013), 254-279.
5. Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Terrestrial Lessons: The Conquest of the World as Globe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 1-36.

Week 3 (September 19)

History of Political Thought at the Limit of the Global

1. Quentin Skinner, "Political Philosophy and the Uses of History," in *History in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, eds. Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner, pp. 194-210 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).
2. JGA Pocock, "On the Unglobality of Contexts: Cambridge Methods and the History of Political Thought," *Global Intellectual History* 4, no. 1 (2019): 1-14.
3. Annabel Brett, "Between History, Politics and Law: History of Political Thought and History of International Law," in *History, Politics, Law: Thinking through the International* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 19-48.
4. Patchen Markell, "Unexpected paths: on political theory and history," *Theory & Event* 19, no. 1 (2016).

The Global as a Historical Problem (Week 4-6)

Week 4 (September 26)

(Spatial) Connections and Integrations I

1. Charles Bright and Michael Geyer, "Benchmarks of globalization: The global condition, 1850–2010." *A companion to world history* (2012): 285-300.
2. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735-762.
3. Frederick Cooper, "What is the concept of globalization good for? An African historian's perspective." *African Affairs* 100, no. 399 (2001): 189-213.
4. Stuart Hall, "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minnesota: UMN Press, 1997), 173-187.

Week 5 (October 3)

Connections and Integrations II

1. Sudipta Kaviraj, "Global intellectual history: Meanings and Methods," In *Global intellectual history*, pp. 295-320 (NY: Columbia University Press, 2013).
2. Faisal Devji, "Losing the Present to History," *Modern Intellectual History* 20, no. 2 (2023): 592-600.
3. Lynn Zastoupil, "Intellectual flows and counterflows: the strange case of J. S. Mill," in *Colonial Exchanges: Political Theory and the Agency of the Colonized*, eds. Burke Hendrix and Deborah Baumgold (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2017).
4. Nazmul Sultan, "The Birth of the People: Liberalism and the Origins of the Anticolonial Democratic Project in India," in *Waiting for the People: The Idea of Democracy in Indian Anticolonial Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2023).

Week 6 (October 10)

Temporality of the Global

1. Ranajit Guha, *History at the limit of world-history* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) (selections)
2. Richard Bourke, "Hegel and the French Revolution," *History of European Ideas* (2022): 1-12.
3. Jennifer Pitts, *Boundaries of the International: Law and Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 148-183.
4. Priya Satia, *Time's Monster: How History Makes History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021): 1-59.

The Global as a Moral Problem (Week 7-8)

Week 7 (October 17)

From the Universal to the Global

1. G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (selections)
2. Kok-Char Tan, Ines Valdez, et. al., "Symposium: Global Ethics, or Universal Ethics," *Journal of World Philosophies* 6 (2021): 99-138.

3. Samuel Moyn, "On the Non-Globalization of Ideas," in *Global Intellectual History* (NY: Columbia UP, 2013), 187-204.

Week 8 (October 24)

Global Justice

1. Thomas Nagel, "The Problem of Global Justice," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Spring, 2005), pp. 113-147
2. Anne Philips, "Global Justice: Just Another Modernization Theory?" *Empire, Race, and Global Justice*, ed. Duncan Bell, 145-162 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
3. Katrina Forrester, "Going Global," in *In the Shadow of Justice: Postwar Liberalism and the Remaking of Political Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 140-171.

The Global as a Political Problem (Week 9-13)

Week 9 (October 31)

What is global about comparative political theory?

1. Leigh K. Jenco, "Introduction: on the possibility of Chinese thought as global theory," in *Chinese Thought as Global Theory: Diversifying Knowledge Production in the Social Sciences and Humanities*, ed. Leigh Jenco (NY: SUNY Press, 2015).
2. Andrew F. March, "What is comparative political theory?," *The Review of Politics* 71, no. 4 (2009): 531-565.
3. Murad Idris, "Political Theory and the Politics of Comparison," *Political Theory* (2016) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591716659812>>
4. Melvin Richter, "Introduction: Translation, the history of concepts and the history of political thought," in *Why concepts matter: Translating social and political thought*. Brill, 2012. 1-40.

Week 10 (November 7)

The Global and the International

1. Mark Mazower, *Governing the world: The history of an idea, 1815 to the present*, (New York: Penguin, 2013) (selections).
2. Tara Zahra, *Against the world: anti-globalism and mass politics between the world wars*. WW Norton, 2023 (selections)
3. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 37-70.
4. Kimberly Hutchings and Patricia Owens "Women Thinkers and the Canon of International Thought: Recovery, Rejection, and Reconstitution," *American Political Science Review* 115, no. 2 (2021): 347-359.

Week 11 (November 14): No Class

Week 12 (November 21)

The global history of two political concepts: Equality and Progress I

1. Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1-36.
2. David Graeber and David Wengrow. *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (London: Penguin UK, 2021),
3. David Bell, "A Flawed History of Humanity," *Persuasion* <<https://www.persuasion.community/p/a-flawed-history-of-humanity>>
4. Ian Hacking, "The End of Captain Cook," in *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 207-225.

Week 13 (November 28)

The global history of two political concepts: Equality and Progress II

1. Bankimchandra Chatterjee, *Equality* [Samya] (New Delhi: Liberty Institute, 2002 [1879])
2. Henry Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England* (selections)
3. Alexis de Tocqueville, Introduction to the volume one of *Democracy in America*.
4. John Stuart Mill, "M. Tocqueville on Democracy in America," (part two)

Week 14 (December 5)

The Global and the Planetary

1. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 1-6, 248-289.
2. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The planet: An Emergent Humanist Category," *Critical Inquiry* 46, no. 1 (2019): 1-31.
3. Benjamin Lazier, "Earthrise; or, the globalization of the world picture," *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 602-630.
4. Melissa Lane, "Political Theory on Climate Change," *Annual Review of Political Science* 19 (2016): 107-123.

