

## ***Reading Hannah Ardent***

Spring 2007

Masaryk University

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Office Hours: 6-7 PM Wednesdays (or by appointment)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Hannah Arendt is hailed as one of the twentieth century's greatest philosophers. Her thought is strikingly original and disturbingly unorthodox. Yet, while she is recognized as a foremost philosopher, her contribution to social critique is all but ignored in the social sciences, although her thought was formulated in reaction to the most prominent political thinkers of the modern era: Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger.

In her own way, Arendt created a distinct form of social theorization which engages a broad range of philosophical, existential, and political themes. In this course, through a close reading of selections from her central texts, namely, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *The Human Condition*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, *Men in Dark Times* and *On Revolution*, we will attempt to unravel the nature of her political and philosophical thought paying particular attention to her treatment of: anti-Semitism, race, imperialism, totalitarianism, labor, and the meaning of democratic forms of government. In the first essay assignment, students will be encouraged to employ the discussion generated in class to contemporary political and social issues. The second essay assignment will concern how Arendt's work can be applied to social theorization or empirical investigation in the context of the Czech Republic.

### **COURSE READINGS**

Primary Texts by Hannah Arendt:

- The Origins of Totalitarianism
- The Human Condition
- Eichmann in Jerusalem
- Men in Dark Times
- On Revolution

Secondary Sources

- Hannah Arendt, By Julia Kristeva
- Why Arendt Matters, By Elisabeth Young-Bruehl

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Students must produce TWO 8-10 page essays based upon the reading and class discussions. Instructor will assign essay questions in advance of due dates. Student are also required to write TWO 1 page response papers.

### **COURSE RULES**

Students are expected to come to class having already read the readings cited on the syllabus for that day. **ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY, ROLE WILL BE TAKEN IN EVERY CLASS.** Students are allowed only TWO undocumented absences. Any student missing more than 3 classes without a documented (i.e. medical or family) emergency will be dropped from the

class without exception. (Students observing religious holidays are excused from class, but please inform instructor in advance).

This course is intended as a seminar, rather than a lecture course. Students' work consists of intensive reading of required texts and active participation in the class discussions. Students are graded on the basis of their performance in class, the quality of their oral presentation, and the writing of assigned essays.

### **COURSE GRADING POLICY**

50% Essay Assignments

50% Class Attendance

### **COURSE READINGS & OUTLINE**

All reading is available online through the university system, please come to class with a copy of the reading materials printed for discussion.

#### **Week 1: INTRODUCTION**

##### **Week 2:**

- *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: PART I
- Hannah Arendt, By Julia Kristeva

##### **Week 3:**

- *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: PART II
- Hannah Arendt, By Julia Kristeva

##### **Week 4:**

- **FIRST RESPONSE PAPER DUE IN CLASS**
- *The Origins of Totalitarianism*: PART III
- Hannah Arendt, By Julia Kristeva

##### **Week 5:**

- *The Human Condition*: PART I & II
- Hannah Arendt, By Julia Kristeva

##### **Week 6:**

- **FIRST ESSAY QUESTION HANDED OUT**
- *The Human Condition*: PART III & IV
- Hannah Arendt, By Julia Kristeva

#### **Week 7: NO CLASS, READING WEEK**

##### **Week 8:**

- **FIRST ESSAY DUE IN CLASS**
- *The Human Condition*: PART V & VI
- Why Arendt Matters, By Elisabeth Young-Bruehl

##### **Week 9:**

- *Eichmann in Jerusalem*: pgs. 3-134
- Why Arendt Matters, By Elisabeth Young-Bruehl

**Week 10:**

- *Eichmann in Jerusalem*: pgs. 135-194
- Why Arendt Matters, By Elisabeth Young-Bruehl

**Week 11:**

- **SECOND RESPONSE PAPER DUE IN CLASS**
- *Eichmann in Jerusalem*: pgs. 195-254
- Why Arendt Matters, By Elisabeth Young-Bruehl

**Week 12:**

- *On Revolution*: Chapter 1 (pgs. 21-58), “The Meaning of Revolution”& Chapter 4 (pgs. 143-172), “What is Freedom?”

**Week 13:**

- *Men in Dark Times*: pgs. 3-32 (Lessing), pgs. 71-94 (Jaspers)

**Week 14:**

- **SECOND ESSAY QUESTION HANDED OUT**
- *Men in Dark Times*: pgs. 95- 110 (Dinesen), pgs. 153-206 (Benjamin)

**FINAL ESSAY DUE AT END OF EXAMINE PERIOD**