Smita A. Rahman 104 Asbury Hall

Assistant Professor 765-658-4830

Department of Political Science smitarahman@depauw.edu

DePauw University Office Hrs: R10:30-12:30

12:40-3:30PM (AH 318) (and by appt)

**POLS 450B: THE POLITICS OF MEMORY**

This seminar attempts to explore the many ways in which we construct, appropriate and negotiate collective memory in our politics. We will read a number of texts in modern and contemporary political theory that will allow us to explore the relationship between how we construct memory, both individually and collectively, and its impact on politics in terms of its representation and use.  Texts will include Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and Wendy Brown’s *Politics Out of History*, which asks how political theory can proceed as we become more aware of a complex temporal relationship between the past, present and future. This extensive engagement with the political theory of memory will then allow us to examine the role it plays in political life. If the past remains present through our construction of memory, how do injured societies, ethnic groups and other collectives, come to terms with their grievance for the sake of a better political future?  How does the construction of memory inscribe us in relationships of power that we seemingly cannot escape? We will examine the issue of collective memory in the area of International Human Rights, paying particular attention to issues of ethnic cleansing and genocide and the advantages and disadvantages of solutions to the problem of memory such as war crimes trials, truth commissions and indemnity legislation. The main objective of this seminar is to connect the theoretical and empirical understanding of politics through a deep and sustained engagement with the concepts of time and memory.

**COURSE RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES**

As a senior seminar, this course will require close reading of and critical engagement with influential philosophical texts. This course will require you to engage in a mode of productive thinking that recognizes how our understanding of memory, and the concept of time that structures, it shapes and influence thought and action in myriad ways.

The course is designed to help you:

* develop a broad philosophical understanding of the foundational theoretical concepts of time and memory and their political consequences
* Improve your ability to speak clearly about complex theoretical concepts
* Learn to write an independent research paper in political theory

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

As a senior seminar, this course will require close reading of and critical engagement with influential philosophical texts. This course will require you to engage in a mode of productive thinking that recognizes how our understanding of memory, and the concept of time that structures, it shapes and influence thought and action in myriad ways. We will spend most of the semester in intensive reading and discussion of these texts. In the second half of the semester we will begin to focus on writing the proposals, outlines and drafts that will assist you with completing your final paper. Along the way, there will be extensive peer reviews and individual meetings with me to help you in that task. You will have the last three weeks to work on your paper without class meetings. This is not to be considered “time off” but rather, time to focus on and deepen your research. During those weeks, you will be required to report to me on the progress you have made on your paper that week.

As a senior seminar, this course will require active participation by all students. You are expected to come to class, ready to discuss and analyze the texts. For each class meeting, you will be required to write a one page formal response to the assigned text and pose a question for discussion. Each student will also be required to make a twenty minute presentations that sets forth the key points of the assigned text and pose questions for discussion. This formal presentation is designed to aid the student in reading the text closely, to follow its twists and turns, and to be comfortable raising questions and issues that they feel need further illumination. Each oral presentation must be accompanied by a 5-7 page written essay on the text in question. The presentation should therefore advance a clear argument, point to key aspects of the text and raise provocative questions that emerge from the examination of the text for the class.

The second half of the seminar will be structured around enabling students to write an independent research paper on the politics of memory of approximately 20-25 pages. We will engage in peer review, have one-on-one meetings and have several sessions on the methodology of political theory and the framing of the research question. A portion of the grade will come from the “work-shopping” of the final paper—writing proposals, writing outlines and peer review participation.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Texts for Purchase:

Brown, Wendy, *Politics Out of History*

Minow, Martha, *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

# Readings on Electronic Reserve

Agamben, Georgio, *Time and History*

Brown, Wendy, *The Time of the Political*

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life*

Rahman, Smita, *Negotiating the Politics of Memory*

Taylor, Charles, *Modes of Secularism*

Wolin, Sheldon, *What Time is it?*

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation 20%

Weekly Responses 15%

Presentation and Short Paper 20%

Workshop Assignments 10%

Final Paper 35%

**SCHEDULE OF SEMINAR TOPICS AND READINGS**

* January 29: Introduction and Overview of the Politics of Time and Memory
* February 5: “Our” Time and the Politics of Difference (P)
	+ - \*Akbar, Hyder, *Memoir: Interrogation Unbound*, in *The New York Times Magazine.* July 11, 2004.
		- \*Wolin, Sheldon, *What Time is it?* In *Theory and Event*, 1:1. 1997
		- \*Brown, Wendy, *The Time of the Political* In *Theory and Event*, 1:1. 1997
* February 12: Time and Memory (P)
	+ - \*Agamben, Georgio, *Time and History*
		- \*Taylor, Charles, *Modes of Secularism*
* February 19: The Presence of the Past: Complex Time and Memory (P)
	+ - \*Nietzsche,  *On The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*
		- *\**Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (excerpt)
* February 26: Complex Time and the Politics of Affirmation (P)
	+ - Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (pp. 9-25, 88-102,121-148, 152-182)
* March 5: The Problem of Collective Memory (P)
	+ - Minow, *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair* ((pp. 1-139, 154-169)
		- Rahman, *The Presence of the Past: Negotiating the Politics of Collective Memory*
* March 12: Memory and Human Rights (P)
* Minow, *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*

(pp. 170- 288)

* Writing Workshop: How to write a Research Proposal
* March 19: Memory and the Politics of Futurity (P)

**RESEARCH PROPOSALS DUE IN CLASS**

* + - Brown, *Politics Out of History*, Chs. 1, 6, 7
		- Writing Workshop: How to write a Research Outline
* March 26: NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK
* April 2: : No Class Meeting—Work on Comprehensive Outline

**COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH OUTLINES DUE BY FRIDAY APRIL 5**

* April 9: No Class Meeting— Work on Draft of Paper
	+ - Weekly Progress Report due by Friday, April 12
* April 16: No Class Meeting—Work on Draft of Paper
	+ - Weekly Progress Report due by Friday, April 19
* April 23: Individual Meetings with Instructor on Draft of Paper
	+ - Weekly Progress Report due by Friday, April 26
* April 30: In Class Peer Review of Paper Drafts
* May 7: Conclusion and Final In Class Review of Paper Drafts

*Senior Seminar Dinner at 5PM at Almost Home Restaurant on*

*Tuesday, May 7*

**FINAL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE BY EMAIL ONLY ON**

**TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2013**