

**Hannah Arendt: Philosophy and Politics**  
**Spring 2021**

**Richard Bernstein**

Bernster@newschool.edu

Professor Bernstein's Zoom Office Hours by appointment.

**Alice Crary**

Crarya@newschool.edu

Office hours: W 2:45-3:45/Th 12:30-1:30 and by appointment

**Course Description**

Hannah Arendt is one of the great political theorists of the twentieth century, and her work has a claim to be as urgently pertinent today as ever. This course will pursue a number of themes central to Arendt's thinking, including the human condition, labor, work, action, politics, power, thinking, willing and judging. We will roughly follow her intellectual development. Readings will include selections from *The Jewish Writings*, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *The Human Condition*, *On Revolution*, *Between Past and Future*, *Crises of the Republic*, and *The Life of the Mind*. Discussions will combine examination of philosophical and political themes from these works with consideration of their pertinence to current events.

**Learning outcomes**

This course should equip you to give a graduate-level overview of themes from (1) Hannah Arendt's philosophy and (2) political thought; to describe and critically respond to central interpretative questions Arendt's work raises both (3) orally and (4) in writing<sup>3</sup> and to bring Arendt's work to bear on current and historical political affairs both (5) orally and (6) in writing.

**Required texts:**

*The Jewish Writings*

*The Origins of Totalitarianism*\*

*The Human Condition*\*

*Between Past and Present*\*

*On Revolution*\*

*Eichmann in Jerusalem*\*

*Crises in the Republic*

*Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*

Ordinarily we would ask that students purchase or obtain library copies of the required texts. Given the circumstances of the pandemic, which make access to materials difficult, we will ensure that all required and recommended materials are available on our seminar Canvas site. However, we still strongly recommend that you try to get copies of the required texts, especially those above marked with asterisks. Your professors will be recommending readings from the large secondary literature on Arendt's work weekly, as they present on individual texts and topics. One book you may find particularly helpful is Professor Bernstein's *Why Read Hannah Arendt Now*.

**Course requirements**

All enrolled students must:

- do one (no longer than) 10-minute seminar presentation, and

- write one (no longer than) 15-18-page seminar paper,

*Presentations*—During the third week of class, you will sign up to do a presentation during one of the remaining seminar meetings. Presentations are productive responses to course materials and may engage larger themes of the seminar. They are strictly time constrained. You should aim to talk for 7 minutes (and, in any case, no longer than 10 minutes). You are also welcome to present casually and to use any presentation-tools that you find helpful (e.g., outlines, handouts, projected images, film clips, etc.). You should submit a short text of no more than 2 pages to us by 9am on the day that you present, so that we can incorporate your remarks into that day’s session. Presentations are ungraded, but we will give you comments on your submitted texts. This can be a helpful exercise in preparing for your final paper. *Papers*—Your seminar paper will be due before seminar on the day of our last meeting, Wednesday, May 5<sup>th</sup>. There will be no penalty for late papers, but, if your paper is late, you will have no guarantee of having it commented on, graded and returned to you quickly.

### **Reaching us**

Our contact information is at the top of the first page of the syllabus. Professor Bernstein’s regular zoom-office hours are on zoom by appointment. Professor Crary’s regular zoom-office hours are Wednesday 2:45-3:45, Thursday 12:30-1:30 and by appointment. (The links for Professor Crary’s google calendar and zoom meeting places are posted at the top of this syllabus.) You should feel free to contact us about any course-related issue, no matter how small. We will try to respond to emails as quickly as possible. If you write to us about a substantive issue, we will very likely write back and suggest that we meet to chat over zoom.

### **Fairness, grading methods and disputes**

There is good evidence to suggest that implicit or unconscious bias is a serious issue in academic settings, and that it puts members of underrepresented groups at a substantial disadvantage. One recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to do anonymous assessment. This is not possible in a relatively small class in which we will be in close conversation with you about your individual writing projects. A second recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to attend carefully to how one interacts with students (e.g., what form of address is used, how often speaking time is granted and to whom, and how much time individual students spend speaking). Throughout the semester, we will monitor our own practice with an eye to being fair to all. A third strategy is to get anonymous feedback on pedagogy and methods well before the end of the course, and we will arrange for an anonymous survey before midterm with an eye to making improvements in the running of the seminar.

If you believe that there is something amiss with the evaluation of your work, we urge you to let us know. We are open to discussion and willing to re-read papers.

### **Course policies**

This course will adhere to New School academic policies, as appropriate for remote learning. As far as possible we have integrated new policies into what follows:

1. Policy on attendance and lateness

- \* Please see the university’s new policy here: [Meaningful Participation in Online Courses 2020-2021](#).

- \* Absences may justify some grade reduction and a total of four unexcused absences mandate a reduction of one letter grade for the course.

- \* More than four absences mandate a failing grade for the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as the following:
  - an extended illness requiring hospitalization or visit to a physician (with documentation)
  - a family emergency, e.g. serious illness (with written explanation)
  - observance of a religious holiday

The attendance and lateness policies are enforced as of the first day of classes for all registered students. If registered during the first week of the add/drop period, the student is responsible for any missed assignments and coursework. For significant lateness, the instructor may consider the tardiness as an absence for the day. Students failing a course due to attendance should consult with an academic advisor to discuss options.

2. Policy on academic honesty and integrity. For details, you should go to the list of New School policies here <https://www.newschool.edu/Components/Wireframes/TwoColumnWireframe.aspx?pageid=591> and click on the link for “Academic Honesty and Integrity”.
3. Of particular importance is the policy on plagiarism, which you can find and click on by following the same link (i.e., <https://www.newschool.edu/Components/Wireframes/TwoColumnWireframe.aspx?pageid=591>). Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc.), intentional or unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, internet postings, student or faculty papers, etc. This includes the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the fourth edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, pages 26-29.

### **Academic resources for students**

*Please bear in mind that the following information may need to be adjusted for the remote learning situation.*

Important resources include the *Learning Center* (66 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, 6<sup>th</sup> floor) and the office for *Student Disability Services*. In keeping with the university's policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with the office staff privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service (SDS). SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for you to bring to your instructors. At that point, we will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course. Student Disability Services is located at 63 Fifth Avenue, room 425. The phone number is (212) 229-5626. Students and faculty are expected to review the Student Disability Services webpage. The webpage can be found at <https://www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services/>, and the office is available to answer any questions or concerns.

### **Comment on course readings and other resources and activities**

The tentative schedule of readings and assignments, below, lists only the texts by Arendt which will indeed be our main focus. On a weekly basis, as they discuss each succeeding week, your professors may require or recommend readings from the secondary literature. Anything required or

recommended will be made available on our course Canvas site. Additional activities will involve individual screenings and group discussions of two films, the Ushpiz documentary, *Vita Activa* (<https://newschool.kanopy.com/video/vita-activa-spirit-hannah-arendt-1>), and the von Trotta narrative film, *Hannah Arendt* (<https://newschool.kanopy.com/video/hannah-arendt-1>).

<b>Tentative list of seminars and readings</b>
--

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. <b>January 20</b>  | Introduction<br>“What Remains? The Language Remains,” in Arendt, <i>Essays in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile and Transformation</i><br><i>Note: you will receive an email before our first seminar meeting, asking you to watch this interview</i> ( <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsoImQfVsO4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsoImQfVsO4</a> ), and to read the transcript (i.e., the text listed above), ahead of time |
| 2. <b>January 27</b>  | Jewish Writings<br>“The Jewish Army—The Beginning of Jewish Politics?” (pp. 136-139)<br>“We Refugees” (pp.264-274)<br>“The Jew as Pariah” (pp. 275-297)<br>“To Save the Jewish Homeland” (pp. 388-401)   |
| 3. <b>February 3</b>  | <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i><br>“Preface to the 1951 edition”<br>“The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man” (pp.267-302)<br><i>Today in seminar, students will sign up to do class presentations</i>  |
| 4. <b>February 10</b> | <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i><br>“Total Domination” (pp. 437-459)<br><i>Other resources</i><br>“Ideology and Terror”   |
| 5. <b>February 17</b> | <i>The Human Condition</i><br>“Prologue” and Chaps. 1-3 (pp. 1-174)  |
| 6. <b>February 24</b> | <i>The Human Condition</i><br>Chaps. 4-5 (pp. 175- 247)<br><i>Today in class we will do a brief, anonymous midterm survey</i>  |
| 7. <b>March 3</b>     | <i>On Revolution</i><br>Chaps. 1-3   |
| 8. <b>March 10</b>    | <i>On Revolution</i><br>Chaps. 4-6   |

***March 15-21 Spring Break—NO SEMINAR MEETING***

9. **March 24**      *Between Past and Future*  
 “Preface: The Gap between Past and Future”  
 “What is Freedom?”
  
10. **March 31**      *Between Past and Future*  
 “Truth and Politics”  
 “Lying in Politics (from *Crises in the Republic*)
  
11. **April 7**              “The Crisis of Culture” (from *Between Past and Future*)  
***Today in seminar we will schedule a times for viewings and discussions of the Ushpiṣ documentary and the von Trotta narrative film (see above)***
  
12. **April 14**              *Eichmann in Jerusalem*  
 Chaps, 1-7
  
13. **April 21**              *Eichmann in Jerusalem*  
 Chaps. 8 through Postscript
  
14. **April 28**              Texts on thinking and judging  
 “Thinking and Moral Considerations”  
*Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy, Part I*
  
15. **May 5**                  Conclusions  
***Seminar papers should be submitted to your professors by email before class today***