

**CONF 803**  
**Structural Theories:**  
**Sources, Structures and Systems of Abusive Social Power**

**Spring 2014**  
**Wednesday 4:30 am - 7:15 pm, Founder's Hall 468**  
**Solon Simmons**

“But there is only one thing which gathers people into seditious commotions and that is oppression.”

John Locke  
*A Letter Concerning Toleration*

**Course Objectives:**

It is far too common in the field of peace and conflict studies to focus only on bloody confrontations, civil wars and overt escalations. Accordingly, conflict scholars have developed a foundational distinction between what we now call “negative” and “positive” peace. What we mean with this distinction to differentiate between the overt signals of protracted conflict and the root causes of them. What we find at the root of conflicts all around the world and throughout history is power which has been in various and contested ways been abused and worked into routines, structures and systems of domination. As social power comes in a variety of forms, so too must the analysis of its articulation in structures and systems. This is what we will do in this class; we will explore the various forms of abusive social power and how these have come to play important conceptual and emotional roles for those who articulated grievances and conflict positions in global and domestic conflicts.

**Student Learning Outcomes** (see <http://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/blooms-taxonomy/>):

By the end of the class, students should be able to:

- ❖ *Examine* the student’s chosen doctoral dissertation research topic through the lens of each week’s readings in a THEORY DIARY of at least *500 words per week*. **For each diary entry:**
  - *Identify* thematic threads in the argument under consideration. Pay attention to the ways that the author uses and concepts and links them together in larger explanations, paying special attention to how the argument fits into your broader set of interests. Use this small set of paragraphs to clarify the argument from the perspective of your particular topic as far as is possible.

- *Apply* the theoretical ideas of each week's readings to the chosen research topic to develop your research topic by generating at least two research questions derived from it
  - *Interpret* the significance of your research questions in the light of the week's readings
- ❖ *Apply* the readings to a contemporary case of protracted civil conflict from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset. Each student will prepare four case application cases, one for each of the four sections of the class (THE STRANGER, THE STATE, THE MARKET, AND THE MAJORITY). Record the following in a CASE APPLICATION DOCUMENT. **For each case entry:**
- *Select* as a representative ONE leader who has presented a speech or written a short document about the core issues involved in the conflict and then *choose* ONE representative ideological document from an escalated conflict somewhere around the world and present in translated electronic format. (criterion: PERTINENCE OF SELECTION)
  - *Identify* where precisely in the text the conception of abusive social power discussed in that week's readings is used and be prepared to share that with the group. (criterion: USE OF EVIDENCE)
  - *Explain* how material in these key passages demonstrates a grievance anchored in some interpretation of past oppression. (criterion: MASTERY OF CODES)

### **Instructor and Office Hours:**

This section of the course is taught by Solon Simmons, who can be reached at 703-993-3781 or [ssimmon5@gmu.edu](mailto:ssimmon5@gmu.edu). The instructor will be available prior to class for office hours in Einstein's Bagel in University Hall.

### **Graded Exercises and Related Matters:**

You will be graded on the development of a research topic in conversation with a number of different theoretical perspectives. In each class we will confront a different theoretical point of view. You will be expected to keep a THEORY JOURNAL in which you test your topic of interest against the theoretical perspective presented in the week's readings. In the journal, you should develop your ideas about your topic in light of the research objectives presented above; namely in each week's entry you should identify and differentiate the key contributions developed in the readings, explain how the system of ideas presented works for the author, examine your research topic in light of the week's readings and apply that system of thought to your tentative dissertation topic in order to generate questions that might arise from it. We will also apply each of these readings to a

live ideological document and capture our interpretations in a CASE APPLICATION DOCUMENT in order to plumb the applicability of a discursive analysis of conflict justifications to ongoing conflicts around the world. Finally, each student will present her final research question and the path through which she came to it in an end of class conference.

Your grade will be based on using the following elements:

- Active participation and satisfactory progress towards project goal including attendance in class sessions and discussion: 25 points
- Theory journal: 25 points
- Case Application Document: 25 points
- Development of PowerPoint presentation (or other suitable presentation software program document) on the progress of your topic, question and significance: 25 points (and presentation must be presented to earn a passing grade on May 7<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 PM)

Grading:

- To earn an A, students need to earn over 90 points
- To earn a B, students need to earn over 80 points
- Scores below 80 points will be treated as needed

### **Academic Integrity:**

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using MLA or APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

### **Diversity:**

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails

different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

## **Privacy:**

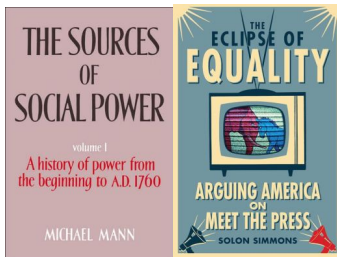
Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this project. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

## **Disability Accommodations:**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, <http://ods.gmu.edu>. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

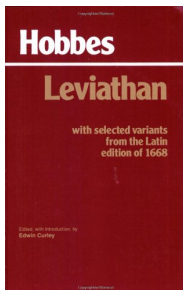
### SOURCES OF SOCIAL POWER, ABUSE AND CONFLICT

Week 1 January 22 Selections made available from: *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760* Michael Mann AND *The Eclipse of Equality: Arguing America on Meet the Press* by Solon Simmons

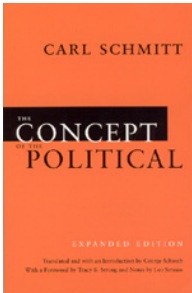


### THE STRANGER

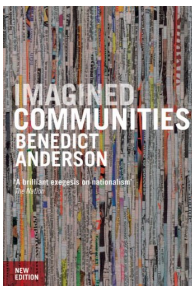
Week 2. January 29 *Leviathan: With Selected Variants from the Latin Edition of 1668* [Paperback] Thomas Hobbes (Author), Edwin Curley (Editor) ISBN-13: 978-0872201774



Week 3. February 5 *The Concept of the Political: Expanded Edition*  
by Carl Schmitt

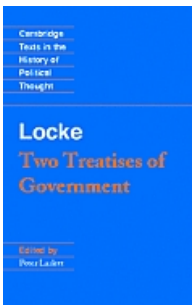


Week 4. February 12 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* Paperback by Benedict Anderson

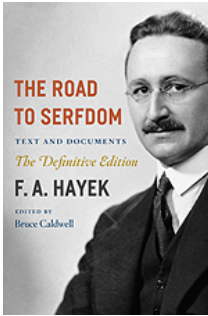


## THE STATE

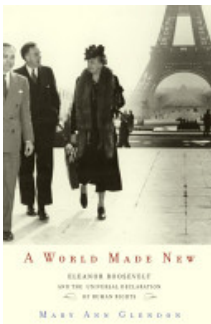
Week 5. February 19 Locke: *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought) by John Locke (Author), Peter Laslett (Editor)  
ISBN-13: 978-0521357302



Week 6. February 26 *The Road to Serfdom: Text and Documents--The Definitive Edition* (The Collected Works of F. A. Hayek, Volume 2) Paperback by F. A. Hayek , Bruce Caldwell (Editor, Introduction, Foreword) ISBN-13: 978-0226320557

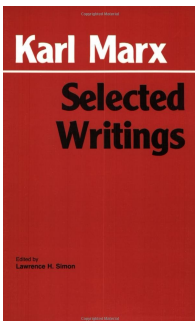


Week 7. March 5 *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* by Mary Ann Glendon (Author) ISBN-13: 978-0375760464

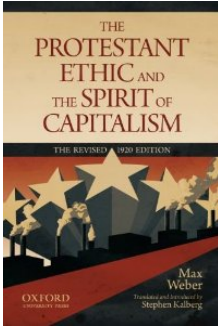


## THE MARKET

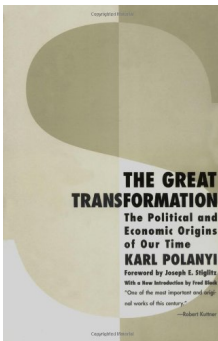
Week 8. March 19 *Selected Writings* by Karl Marx , Lawrence H. Simon (Editor) ISBN-13: 978-0872202184



Week 9. March 26 *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* by Max Weber Stephen Kalberg (Translator) ISBN-13: 978-0199747252



Week 10. April 2 *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* by Karl Polanyi ISBN-13: 978-0807056431

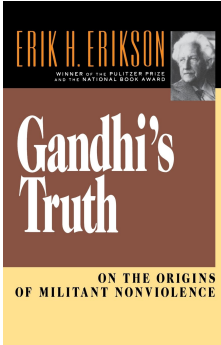


## THE MAJORITY

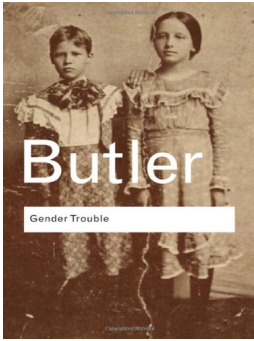
Week 11. April 9 *Black Skin, White Masks* Paperback by Frantz Fanon ISBN-13: 978-0802143006



Week 12. April 16 *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* Paperback  
by Erik H. Erikson ISBN-13: 978-0393310344

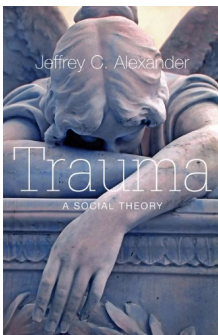


13. April 23 *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* by Judith Butler  
ISBN-13: 978-0415389556



#### GRIEVANCE, SOLIDARITY AND TRAUMA

14. April 30 *Trauma: A Social Theory* by Jeffrey Alexander ISBN-13: 978-0745649122



FINAL PRESENTATIONS: MAY 7, 4:30 PM - 7:15 PM