

This is an upper-division political theory course. It is going to be open ended and I presuppose that students have not only smarts and intellectual curiosity, but a relatively high tolerance for indeterminacy or ambiguity. What I want to teach you is how to think like a political theorist. That means we will be less concerned with what this or that author says than with how we can use insights derived from various authors to think and argue about photography and its uses. In large measure this is uncharted territory. But political theory is in many ways about vision and imagination and representation and the limits of all three.

“Theorists have given us pictures of political life in miniature, pictures in which what is extraneous to the theorist's purpose has been deleted. The necessity for doing this lies in the fact that political theorists, like the rest of mankind, are prevented from "seeing" all political things at first hand. The impossibility of direct observation compels the theorist to epitomize a society by abstracting certain phenomena and providing interconnections where none can be seen. Imagination is the theorist's means for understanding a world he can never "know" in an intimate way.”

~ Sheldon Wolin *Politics & Vision*

If you are interested in some of what I think about this broad domain you can have a look at the blog I've been keeping for a couple of years. The blog is *(Notes On) Politics, Theory & Photography*; the URL is <http://politicstheoryphotography.blogspot.com/> .

Having said all that, you can expect the class to be quite time consuming. There is a lot of required reading and it is not especially easy. I hope to run the class as a seminar. That means I will expect you to participate actively and regularly in class ~ which means keeping up with the reading. We also will look at a lot of pictures and I will recruit you in tracking them down in books and on-line. I also anticipate scheduling a series of additional sessions, usually in the early evening, so that we can watch some documentaries about specific photographers. While these will not be required, I expect you to attend barring some completely persuasive excuse. Class attendance, by contrast, is *not* optional. I expect you to show up and I expect you to have something to say!

Grades: Your grade will reflect two things: (1) You will be responsible for becoming the class “expert” on *two* different photographers. The method for matching you to the photographers will be pretty random ~ the point is to get you to perhaps deal with material that you would prefer to avoid. At some point in the term you will be responsible for giving a short presentation (accompanied by examples of their work) on each of your subjects. (2) A final research paper (or, by agreement with me project) of roughly 20-25 pages. The topic is up to you, but you should discuss it with me before embarking on research. I am happy to talk with you and provide advice about your papers as the term proceeds.

Required Readings:

A First Cut: Photography and its Conventions

- * Steven Edwards. *Photography: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford Univ. Press.
- Alan Trachtenberg. *Reading American Photographs*. Hill & Wang. Pages, 164-230.
- John Stromberg. "A Genealogy of Orthodox Documentary" in Reinhart, *et. al.*
Beautiful Suffering
- Martha Rosler. 2004. *Decoys & Disruptions*. MIT Press. Pages, 151-206.
- James Johnson. 2007. "What to do with Invidious Distinctions?"
Art Signal (Barcelona) - Issue 0.

Photography & Some of Its Uses

- * Geoff Dyer. 2005. *The Ongoing Moment*. Vintage.
- * David Levi Strauss. 2003. *Between the Eyes*. Aperture.
- Rebecca Solnit. 2007. *Storming the Gates of Paradise*. University of California Press. Pages 135-64, 225-53.

A Handful of Critics

- Walter Benjamin. "A Short History of Photography" In *Classic Essays on Photography*.
Ed. Alan Trachtenberg. Leete's Island Books. Pages 199-216.
- Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In
Illuminations. Schocken Books. Pages 219-53.
- Susan Sontag. 1977. *On Photography*. Picador. Pages 3-48.
- Susan Sontag. 2007. *At the Same Time*. FSG. pages 124-7.
- John Berger. 1968. "Understanding a Photograph." In *Selected Essays*. Vintage. Pages 215-18.
- John Berger. 1982. "Appearances." In John Berger & Jean Mohr.
Another Way of Telling. Vintage. Pages 81-129.
- Susie Linfield. "The Treacherous Medium" <http://bostonreview.net/BR31.5/linfield.html>

Photography as Technology: Thinking *With* Rather than *About* Photographs

- * Patrick Maynard. *The Engine of Visualization*. Cornell.
- Amelie Rorty. 1988. *Mind In Action*. Beacon Press. Pages 330-46.
- Hannah Arendt. "Reflections on Little Rock." In *Responsibility & Judgement*.
Schocken Books. Pages 192-213.
- Danielle Allen. *Talking to Strangers*, University of Chicago Press. Pages 3-36.
- *John Dewey. *The Public & Its Problems*. Swallow Press.

Photographs of Pain: What Are They For? What Do We Do With Them?

* Susan Sontag *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

* Mark Reinhart, et. al. *Beautiful Suffering*. University of Chicago Press.

John Berger. 1972. "Photographs of Agony" In *Selected Essays*. Vintage.

Susie Linfield. "Memuna, Almost Smiling" <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/?article=383>

James Johnson. 2007. "'The Arithmetic of Compassion': Rethinking the Politics of Photography."

Susie Linfield. "The Last Page" <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/?article=436>

Debra Satz. 2004. "Noxious Markets: Why Some Things Should Not Be For Sale." In *Globalization, Culture & the Limits of the Market*. Ed. S. Cullenberg & P.K. Pattanaik. Oxford University Press, Pages 11-38.

Prison ~ Cruelty, Humiliation, Surveillance

*Michel Foucault. *Discipline & Punish*. Vintage.

James Johnson. 1997. "Communication, Criticism, and the Postmodern Consensus." *Political Theory* 25:559-83.

Susan Sontag. 2004. "Regarding the Torture of Others," *New York Times Magazine* (May 23) pages 24-29,42.

Andrew Sullivan. 2004. "Picture Frame," *TNR Online* (May 24th)

David Levi Strauss. 2004. "Breakdown in the Grey Room: Recent Turns in the Image War" In *Abu Ghraib: The Politics of Torture*. North Atlantic Books, Pages 87-101.

Luc Sante. 2004. "Tourists and Torturers," *New York Times* (May 11th), A23.

Susie Linfield. 2005. "The Dance of Civilizations"

<http://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/?article=269>

George Gessert. 2006. "An Orgy of Power," *Northwest Review* (Spring V44,#2).

Photography & Whose Experience?

* John Dewey. *Art & Experience*. Peregree.

Class Schedule

September 4	5	6 Edwards
11 Trachtenberg through Johnson	12	13 Dyer
18 Levi Strauss	19	20 <i>NO CLASS</i>
25 Solnit	26	27 Benjamin -Sontag
October 2 Berger - Linfield	3	4 Maynard
9 Maynard & Rorty	10	11 Arendt & Allen
16 Dewey	17	18 Dewey - Sontag
23 Sontag	24	25 Sontag - Reinhart
November 30	1	2 <i>NO CLASS</i>
6 Reinhart - Johnson	7	8 Linfield & Satz
13 Foucault	14	15 Foucault
20 Foucault & Johnson	21	22 <i>Happy Thanksgiving</i>
27 Sontag - Levi Strauss	28	29 Sante - Gessert
December 4	5	6 Dewey
11 Dewey	12	13 <i><u>Final Papers Due</u></i>