



Independent Study: Political Psychology + Social Cohesion (2024-25)

Course Syllabus / Fall 2024-25, bi-weekly F 1-3 PM, D290

Instructor: James Magnus-Johnston, PhD Candidate (ABD), McGill University; MPhil, Cambridge University; BA (Hons), University of Winnipeg

jmagnus-johnston@cmu.ca // Office hours T/Th 10AM-1 PM
c. 204.952.7751

Summary: This course builds upon previous study of the "culture war," describing a movement toward new rather than traditional forms of group affiliation, and its implications for social cohesion and public trust in institutions. Through a series of independent study projects, this course applies quantitative and qualitative methods to measure or reflect the degree and velocity of cultural change within particular field sites, including faith-based university settings.

Objectives:

1. Understand the significance of axiological conflicts in contemporary "Western" society
2. Understand the social, historical, and theological dimensions of axiological conflict
3. Consider the role of nationhood and hard power in the enforcement of axiological norms
4. Identify and represent the main groups and representatives of various perspectives
5. Formulate a meta-analysis and independent opinion on issues related to cultural conflict
6. Help others interpret axiological conflict with greater perspective

[Axiology is the study of the nature, types, and criteria of values and of value judgments.]

Deadline for withdrawal: Nov 5, 2024

Reading List

COMMON TEXTS

Haidt, Jonathan. 2013. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. First Vintage Books ed. New York: Vintage Books.

Hunter James Davison. 1991. "Cultural Conflict in America" and "The Anatomy of Cultural Conflict," in *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. New York: BasicBooks.

INDIVIDUAL TEXTS: ALYSSA

Appleman, D. (2022). *Literature and the new culture wars : triggers, cancel culture, and the teacher's dilemma*. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Bal, M., & Pearce-Gonzales, B. (1999). *The practice of cultural analysis : exposing interdisciplinary interpretation*. Stanford University Press.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=6651>

Fisher, K., Rubenson, K., Shanahan, T., & Trottier, D. (2010). *The development of post-secondary education systems in Canada*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Marginson, S. (1999). After globalization: emerging politics of education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 14(1), 19–33.

Sacerdote, B., & Glaeser, E. (2001). *Education and Religion* (No. w8080). National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w8080>

Emler, N., & Frazer, E. (1999). Politics: The education effect. *Oxford Review of Education*, 25(1/2), 251-273.

INDIVIDUAL TEXTS: HANNAH

Harari, Y. N. (2017). *Homo Deus: A brief history of tomorrow*. Harper.

Haidt, J. (2018). *The coddling of the American mind: How good intentions and bad ideas are setting up a generation for failure* (with Greg Lukianoff). Penguin Press.

O'Gieblyn, M. (2023). *God, human, animal, machine: Technology, metaphor, and the search for meaning*. Doubleday.

Kingsnorth, Paul. "The Tale of the Machine." The Abbey of Misrule. June 29, 2023.
https://paulkingsnorth.substack.com/p/the-tale-of-the-machine?r=9loh6&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web.

INDIVIDUAL TEXTS: TAYLOR

Phelan, S. (1997). *Sexual strangers: Gays, lesbians, and dilemmas of citizenship*. Temple University Press.

Marks, J. (2023). *Let's be reasonable: A conservative case for liberal education*. Princeton University Press.

Conover, D. (1983). *Political psychology: New ideas for activists*. Brooks/Cole Pub. Co.

Klein, E. (2020). *Why we're polarized*. Simon & Schuster.

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS

See the list of texts online at postgrowth.ca/culturewars

Assignments and Grades

Letter	Percentage	Grade Points	Descriptor
A+	90–100	4.5	Exceptional
A	85–89	4.25	Excellent
A-	80–84	4.0	Great
B+	77–79	3.5	Very Good
B	73–76	3.25	Good
B-	70–72	3.0	Satisfactory
C+	67–69	2.5	Competent
C	63–66	2.25	Acceptable
C-	60–62	2.0	Adequate
D	50–59	1	Marginal

An “excellent” assignment (A) would display:

1. Original thinking and a superior grasp of the subject matter
2. A highly developed capacity for critical evaluation, synthesis, and creativity
3. Appropriate descriptions and quotations
4. Organizing and subordinating information well; writing and/or speaking clearly
5. The use of research sources using *any* recognized style format. For reference, see:

Hacker,

Diana. *A Pocket Style Manual*. Eighth edition. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2018

Reading/discussion schedule (agreement – due Sept 20)	10%
Engagement + attendance (ongoing)	20%
Reading responses (notes, ongoing)	20%
Individual research project (2 nd last month – TBD)	20%
Group project design (last month of course – TBD)	10%
Group project (public facing)	20%

Reading/discussion schedule: You will be required to organize readings and discussion meetings according to your availability and interests. The reading schedule will help you allocate time outside of class to read and will function as an agreement with the instructor. You will be expected to hold yourself accountable to this schedule.

Engagement in discussions / attendance: Much of this class draws upon the required reading. Initiative, attendance, and participation in discussions with the instructor are critical to the learning process. It will be especially important to prepare questions to ask in dialogue with the group – the following “reading response” assignment will help with that.

Reading responses: In order to catalyze conversation for in-class discussions, students will be expected to maintain a notebook that keeps track of direct and indirect connections to course material. In your notebook, you will be expected to record daily experiences, quotations of readings, facts, and summaries of information that you might use throughout the course. You might also record something provocative or interesting from class discussion, a link to relevant online material, a relevant photograph you have taken, or a summary of a presentation, newscast, sermon, speech, or film that you experienced. You can be creative: draw diagrams, write in point form, take pictures, record sounds, or come up with some other brilliant way to share information with the class. Some class time will be designated for free writing reflections, exercises, and peer evaluation.

Here are some online tools that provide some examples and ideas for record-keeping:

<https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Commonplace-Book>

<https://evernote.com/blog/how-to-create-commonplace-with-evernote/>

<http://www.marknagelberg.com/creating-a-commonplace-book-with-google-drive/>

Individual research project (3000+ words): Each student is invited to write a 3-5000-word research paper dealing with a substantive issue in the chosen topic area. Please ensure that you conduct a thorough appraisal of the issue and invest effort in the structure and quality of your argument. Please use a minimum of 15 sources, four of which must come from recognized scholarly journals or books.

Final group project: First, the group will be required to select a public-facing project to collate their research and consider the appropriate methods for project development. Consider using the “mapping journeys” tool from the Service Design Methods website:

(<https://www.thisisservicedesigndoing.com/methods/mapping-journeys>). After developing a group endeavour, the team will set a series of milestones for implementation.

Policies

Final grades: Grades submitted by instructors become final only after they are vetted by the Dean’s Council. That process occurs early in January for fall semester grades and early in May for winter semester grades.

Academic integrity: *Academic Integrity*—All material referred to in any assignment MUST be appropriately referenced. Plagiarism is a serious matter. Students should be aware of CMU Academic Policies, particularly those regarding academic misconduct (plagiarism and cheating), which apply to all University courses. These are detailed on CMU’s [website](#) and in the CMU Calendar. If you still have questions about appropriate referencing and what plagiarism is, a useful tutorial can be found [here](#). For more information on CMU policies regarding grades, academic misconduct, appeals, and other matters, please see CMU’s *Academic Calendar*.

Accessibility: CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loeppky, Coordinator of Accessibility Programs at sloeppky@cmu.ca or 204.487.3300 x.340. In recognition of individuals with asthma, allergies and severe environmental/chemical sensitivities, CMU is striving to become a scent-free campus. Students, staff and guests are asked to refrain from wearing fragrances and scented personal care products at CMU. This includes perfumes, colognes, aftershave and scented hair products. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by those affected.

Academic support services: Student studying, tutoring, and the Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) program are offered to CMU students free of charge in the Marpeck Mezzanine.

Counselling: University students face many challenges and at times may benefit from having a trained professional to talk to. There are qualified counsellors at CMU who volunteer their services free of charge to students on the CMU campus. Students wishing to book an appointment with a counsellor are asked to contact the North Side Receptionist at 204.487.3300 or info@cmu.ca. Confidentiality is maintained at all times. The counselling office is located at C365 (north side) and is free for CMU students.

Course schedule TBD