

ARTS2871

Power and Powerlessness

Term 3, 2022



Course Overview

Staff Contact Details

Convenors

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School Contact Information

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Acknowledgement of Country

UNSW Arts, Design and Architecture Kensington and Paddington campuses are built on Aboriginal Lands. We pay our respects to the Bidjigal and Gadigal peoples who are the Custodians of these lands. We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the First Australians, whose lands, winds and waters we all now share, and pay respect to their unique values, and their continuing and enduring cultures which deepen and enrich the life of our nation and communities.



Image courtesy of the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous [UNSW's Indigenous strategy](#)

Course Details

Units of Credit 6

Summary of the Course

What is power? What are its effects? What is power's relation to social inequality? Power is a fundamental concept in the social sciences. It is also one of the most contested. In this course, you will consider different approaches to power and how they apply to the contemporary social world. We will consider how power is understood and experienced in relation to key social science topics including culture, economy, ideology, knowledge, and identity.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Recognise key issues in theorizing the intersection of power with powerlessness
2. Distinguish between different perspectives on power
3. Practice reading as a mode of active analytical engagement.
4. Apply skills associated with scholarly inquiry including those related to critical analysis, argument and written expression

Teaching Strategies

This course is based on the following principles:

1. To create an intellectually stimulating space for students that rewards active engagement with challenging theories and concepts
2. To read and interpret primary texts and consider the insights they offer on contemporary social life and social inequalities.
3. To foster dialogue in and out of class between students, and with their teachers in order to create a community of learners
4. To read generously and learn to view social issues through multiple perspectives.
5. To create a cooperative learning environment
6. To encourage student responsibility to the broader academic community

This course will be a two-hour lecture and one-hour tutorial.

Lectures

The lectures will combine the techniques of a traditional lecture with participatory activities and class dialogue that will enable students to reflect on how the ideas and theories presented apply to the world around them. Students are encouraged to participate actively in lectures by discussing the course material and considering how they apply to real world examples.

Tutorials

Tutorials will involve active discussion and analysis of primary source readings in collaboration with the tutor and fellow students. They will enable students to raise questions and ideas relating to the readings and to establish a collaborative working environment where students can learn from one another.

Assessment

Assessment task	Weight	Due Date	Course Learning Outcomes Assessed
1. Workbook	45%	TBA	2, 3, 4
2. Argumentative Essay	55%	25/11/2022 04:00 PM	1, 4

Assessment 1: Workbook

Assessment length: 500

Submission notes: Submit via Turnitin links on the course Moodle page

Due date: TBA

You will prepare three written entries of approximately 500 words on a selection of the assigned primary source readings. The entries will be submitted and assessed periodically throughout the term. Each of the three entries will be worth 15% of your total grade.

Feedback: Written comments and graded against a criteria sheet.

This assignment is submitted through Turnitin and students can see Turnitin similarity reports.

Additional details

The workbook assessment provides you with an opportunity to reflect on key arguments, concepts and/or ideas from course readings and to consider how they can help you make sense of the world around you. The aim is to assess your **comprehension** of these arguments/concepts/ideas, and your ability to **apply** them to real world examples.

You are required to submit three workbook entries throughout the course, each of which will be worth 15% of the final grade. You will submit one entry every two weeks, starting week 2 (you can choose which of the required readings from each two week block that you write about). Weeks 1, 9 and 10 are excluded. Entries will be due at 4pm on the Monday following each block (e.g. the first entry will be due the Monday of week four).

In each entry, you should provide two things:

1. a summary of the idea, concept or argument from the text that you are reflecting on;
2. a reflection on how this idea, concept or argument applies to the world around you. This could include using a concept/idea/theory to reflect on your own experiences or on an event or phenomenon you have seen/read about in the media or in an academic journal article.

Assessment 2: Argumentative Essay

Assessment length: 2000

Due date: 25/11/2022 04:00 PM

You will prepare a 2000 word essay that critically reflects on the relative value of different concepts/theories from the course in response to an essay question.

Feedback: Written comments and graded against a criteria sheet.

This assignment is submitted through Turnitin and students can see Turnitin similarity reports.

Additional details

The aim of the essay assignment is to develop and demonstrate your capacity to think **critically** about power and how it shapes the social world.

This is an *argumentative* essay, meaning that you are expected to take a stance on (ie advance an argument about) a specific question or issue related to power or social inequality, using concepts, theories and/or empirical insights derived from course material. You will be assessed on the quality and persuasiveness of your argument, including how well you draw on course concepts and other evidence to make your case. You are encouraged to present empirical examples to illustrate your claims.

You will be provided with the essay question/s in the flexibility week (week 6). We will also dedicate some time in class in week 10 to discussing the principles of argumentative essay writing and workshopping your arguments.

Attendance Requirements

Students are strongly encouraged to attend all classes and review lecture recordings.

Course Schedule

[View class timetable](#)

Timetable

Date	Type	Content
O week: 5 September - 9 September		
Week 1: 12 September - 16 September	Topic	Course introduction: theory and the question of power Our opening class introduces the course and its focus: how social theory can help us understand the nature of power and how power shapes the societies in which we live. We will consider how theories of power fit within the broader social scientific enterprise and discuss what is sometimes described as their uniquely 'critical' or 'emancipatory' orientation. We will also outline some of the key points of tension and debate that run through social theory (e.g. structure vs agency, materialism vs idealism, and coercion vs consent), as this will help us compare and contrast different the perspectives on power that we will discuss throughout the course.
Week 2: 19 September - 23 September	Topic	Power as a material phenomenon This week we will consider materialist perspectives on power, focusing primarily on the most famous materialist thinker Karl Marx. We will explore Marx's conception of society as a set of structured relationships built around how we produce the things we need to survive and thrive. Building on this, we will look at Marx's conception of power in terms of class relations and struggles. We will also consider how Marx's material perspective has influenced research and theorising about other aspects of social inequality (e.g. gender).
Week 3: 26 September - 30 September	Topic	More than matter? Power, status and culture In this week's class, we will explore theories that

		view power as <i>more than</i> a material phenomenon. We will look specifically at work on the role of social status and culture in the (re)production of social inequalities, drawing on both classical and more recent works.
Week 4: 3 October - 7 October	Topic	<p>Power & ideology</p> <p>This week's class engages with attempts to make sense of the role of ideas and ideology in the operations of power. We focus particularly on how 20th century thinkers working in the Marxist tradition developed to concept of ideology, in part to try to explain the durability of capitalist class power.</p>
Week 5: 10 October - 14 October	Topic	<p>Power & knowledge</p> <p>We will explore a different approach to understanding the role of ideas in the operations of power this week, focusing on the question of the relationship between power and knowledge. We will discuss work in the structuralist and poststructuralist traditions, with a particular focus on Michel Foucault's radical rethinking of power and its relationship to knowledge and human subjectivity.</p>
Week 6: 17 October - 21 October	Topic	<p>Flexibility week</p> <p>No class!</p>
Week 7: 24 October - 28 October	Topic	<p>Power & lived experience</p> <p>This week we will explore what lived experience can teach us about power and inequality. We discuss a range of perspectives, including the classical insights of Du Bois on the impacts of social inequality on the 'consciousness' of racial minorities, as well as the more recent insights of feminist standpoint theory and the debates it engendered.</p>
Week 8: 31 October - 4 November	Topic	<p>Power & difference</p> <p>This week we explore the question of power and inequality through the lens of theories of social and cultural difference. We will discuss theoretical accounts of how the construction of certain groups as 'Other' has enabled their subordination and facilitated the privilege of others. We will also look at how difference is enacted and sustained</p>

		through the lens of Judith Butler's theory of performativity.
Week 9: 7 November - 11 November	Topic	<p>Recognition or redistribution?</p> <p>Bringing together themes discussed throughout the course, this week's class will explore debates about the relative emphasis given to questions of culture difference and material inequalities in contemporary theories of power. This will include a discussion of the purported shift from class politics to identity politics and what this means for the ability of critical theory to make sense of contemporary power relations and the resurgence of material inequality.</p>
Week 10: 14 November - 18 November	Topic	<p>Course summary & the principles of argumentative writing</p> <p>We conclude the course this week with a reflection on the core themes and debates covered in the preceding weeks. We will also discuss the core principles of argumentative essay writing, in order to prepare students for writing their final essays.</p>

Resources

Prescribed Resources

Not available

Recommended Resources

Not available

Submission of Assessment Tasks

Turnitin Submission

If you encounter a problem when attempting to submit your assignment through Turnitin, please telephone External Support on 9385 3331 or email them on externalteltsupport@unsw.edu.au . Support hours are 8:00am – 10:00pm on weekdays and 9:00am – 5:00pm on weekends (365 days a year). If you are unable to submit your assignment due to a fault with Turnitin you may apply for an extension, but you must retain your ticket number from External Support (along with any other relevant documents) to include as evidence to support your extension application. If you email External Support you will automatically receive a ticket number, but if you telephone you will need to specifically ask for one. Turnitin also provides updates on their system status on Twitter.

Generally, assessment tasks must be submitted electronically via either Turnitin or a Moodle assignment. In instances where this is not possible, it will be stated on your course's Moodle site with alternative submission details.

For information on how to submit assignments online via Moodle: <https://student.unsw.edu.au/how-submit-assignment-moodle>

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. It can take many forms, from deliberate cheating to accidentally copying from a source without acknowledgement.

UNSW groups plagiarism into the following categories:

Copying: Using the same or very similar words to the original text or idea without acknowledging the source or using quotation marks. This includes copying materials, ideas or concepts from a book, article, report or other written document, presentation, composition, artwork, design, drawing, circuitry, computer program or software, website, internet, other electronic resource, or another person's assignment without appropriate acknowledgement.

Inappropriate paraphrasing: Changing a few words and phrases while mostly retaining the original information, structure and/or progression of ideas of the original without acknowledgement. This also applies in presentations where someone paraphrases another's ideas or words without credit and to piecing together quotes and paraphrases into a new whole, without appropriate referencing.

Collusion: Working with others but passing off the work as a person's individual work. Collusion also includes providing your work to another student for the purpose of them plagiarising, paying another person to perform an academic task, stealing or acquiring another person's academic work and copying it, offering to complete another person's work or seeking payment for completing academic work.

Inappropriate citation: Citing sources which have not been read, without acknowledging the "secondary" source from which knowledge of them has been obtained.

Duplication ("self-plagiarism"): Submitting your own work, in whole or in part, where it has previously been prepared or submitted for another assessment or course at UNSW or another university.

Correct referencing practices

The [UNSW Academic Skills support](#) offers resources and individual consultations. Students are also reminded that careful time management is an important part of study. One of the identified causes of plagiarism is poor time management. Students should allow sufficient time for research, drafting and proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items.

UNSW Library has [the ELISE tool](#) available to assist you with your study at UNSW. ELISE is designed to introduce new students to studying at UNSW but it can also be a great refresher during your study. Completing the ELISE tutorial and quiz will enable you to:

- analyse topics, plan responses and organise research for academic writing and other assessment tasks
- effectively and efficiently find appropriate information sources and evaluate relevance to your needs
- use and manage information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- better manage your time
- understand your rights and responsibilities as a student at UNSW
- be aware of plagiarism, copyright, UNSW Student Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use of UNSW ICT Resources Policy
- be aware of the standards of behaviour expected of everyone in the UNSW community
- locate services and information about UNSW and UNSW Library

Academic Information

Due to evolving advice by NSW Health, students must check for updated information regarding online learning for all Arts, Design and Architecture courses this term (via Moodle or course information provided.)

For essential student information relating to:

- requests for extension;
- late submissions guidelines;
- review of marks;
- UNSW Health and Safety policies;
- examination procedures;
- special consideration in the event of illness or misadventure;
- student equity and disability;
- and other essential academic information, see

<https://www.unsw.edu.au/arts-design-architecture/student-life/resources-support/protocols-guidelines>

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