

YORK UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
1999-2000

**POLS 4040 3.0/ GS/POLS 5040 3.0 F**  
**Vico to Gramsci: Historicism and Social Science**

Course Director: Esteve Morera  
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Office hours: Thursday and Friday 9:30-11  
or by appointment

Thursday 11:30-2:30  
SSB 202

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BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION.

This course is concerned with the analysis of the theoretical foundations and general methodological principles of a variety of thinkers who can loosely be described as historicist. From Vico's original idea of a New Science, the science of history, to Gramsci's absolute historicism, this school is noted for its emphasis on the historical analysis of social practices, and its critique of the so-called positivist social sciences. The thought of Vico, Sorel and Gramsci will be carefully examined. Their views on the nature of knowledge, the historical process, and their contribution to the methods of social enquiry will constitute the focus of the course.

READINGS.

Required readings.

Khaldun, Ibn. *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*. Translated by Franz Rosenthal. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967. (Scott reserves)

Cox, Robert. "Towards a Post-Hegemonic Conceptualization of World Order: Reflections on the Relevancy of Ibn Khaldun." In *Governance Without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*, ed. James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, 132-59. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1992. (Scott reserves)

Braudel, Fernand. *On History*. (Scott reserves)

Vico, Gianbattista. *The Autobiography of Gianbattista Vico*. Cornell University Press.

Vico, Gianbattista. *The New Science of Gianbattista Vico*. Cornell University Press.

Sorel, Georges. *Essays in Socialism and Philosophy*. Edited by John Stanley. Oxford University Press. (Scott reserves)

Sorel, George. *Reflections on Violence*. Peter Smith. (Scott reserves)

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. New York: International Publishers, 1971.

Recommended readings.

Berlin, Isaiah. "A Note on Vico's Concept of Knowledge" In *Giambattista Vico. An International Symposium*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Hayden V. White, 371-77. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969. (Scott reserves)

Cantelli, Gianfranco. "Myth and Language in Vico." In *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Donald Phillip Verene, 47-63. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. (Scott reserves)

Collinwood, *The Idea of History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956. (Scott reserves)

Cox, W. W. *Production, Power, and World Order*. (Scott reserves)

\_\_\_\_\_. "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method." *Millennium. Journal of International Studies* 12 (1983): 162-75.

Fiori, A. *Antonio Gramsci. Life of a Revolutionary*. (Scott reserves)

Haddock, B. A. *Vico's Political Thought*. Brynmill: Mortlake Press, 1986. (Scott reserves)

Hobsbawm, Eric. "The Great Gramsci." *The New York Review of Books* 4 (April 1974) (Xeroxed, Scott reserves)

Hughes, H. Stuart. *Consciousness and Society*. New York: Vintage Books, 1977. (Scott reserves)

Jacobitti, Edmund E. "From Vico's Common Sense to Gramsci's Hegemony." In *Vico and Marx: Affinities and Contrasts*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo, 367-87. New Jersey: Humanities, 1983. (Scott reserves)

Jennings, J. R. "Sorel, Vico, and Marx." In *Vico and Marx: Affinities and Contrasts*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo, 326-41. New Jersey: Humanities, 1983. (Scott reserves)

Morera, Esteve. *Gramsci's Historicism. A Realist Interpretation..* London and New York: Routledge, 1990. (Scott reserves)

Munz, Peter. "The Idea of 'New Science' in Vico and Marx. In *Vico and Marx: Affinities and Contrasts*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo, 1-19. New Jersey: Humanities, 1983. (Scott reserves)

Stark, Werner. "Giambattista Vico's Sociology of Knowledge" In *Giambattista Vico. An International Symposium*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Hayden V. White, 297-307. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969. (Scott reserves)

Walsh, W. H. "The Logical Status of Vico's Ideal Eternal History." In *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Donald Phillip Verene, 141-53. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. (Scott reserves)

White, Hayden. "The Tropics of History: The Deep Structure of the *New Science*." In *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo and Donald Phillip Verene, 65-85. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. (Scott reserves)

#### USEFUL WEB SITES:

Resources on Antonio Gramsci (Bibliografia Gramsciana and others)

<http://www.soc.qc.edu/gramsci/>

International Gramsci Society

<http://www.italnet.nd.edu/gramsci/>

#### GRADING SCHEME.

Short paper (due Oct. 21) .....	30%
Research paper (due Dec. 9) .....	50%
Seminar participation .....	10%
Seminar presentation .....	10 %

#### ASSIGNMENTS.

##### Undergraduate Students:

1. Each week, one (or two) students will present one (or two) of the non-required readings to the class. The purpose of the presentation is to provide some key ideas and arguments on which to centre the discussion. Hence, rather than a full and detailed report on the contents of the article, the presentation should bring out the main conclusions, the salient points, the supporting arguments, and any other feature worth discussing.

2. The first paper should be a critical analysis of one of the readings for the course. It is not to be a mere summary of the article; rather, it should focus on the central argument of an article, explore its soundness, draw its implications, and then either criticize its weaknesses, or if you deem it appropriate, attempt to strengthen the author's position. This essay should be of 6 to 8 pages (1500-2000 words) in length.

3. The second paper should develop a thesis on some appropriate topic of your own choice. You must consult the instructor on your chosen topic. This paper should be based on some research to explore different approaches to the subject matter of the paper. However, the paper is not to be merely a report on the state of the debate, but rather a well-developed, systematic argument in defence of your well-considered thesis. Research is a necessary component; it helps you to discover other ways of dealing with the material at the same time that it connects you with the intellectual community: Writing is essentially a dialogue. It must be of 10 to 15 pages in length (2500-3000 words).

Provide proper reference notes for all quotations, paraphrases, ideas, or significant facts taken from other sources. Consult Kate Turabian's *Manual for Writers*, or Joseph Gibaldi and Walter S. Achtert's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* for proper notes or citations and bibliographical entries.

#### Graduate Students:

All graduate students will initiate the discussion with a presentation similar to the one described in 1 above. However, they will have the option of writing a single research paper of roughly 25 pages (6250 words) or a short, exploratory paper of 8-12 pages (2000-3000 word) and a longer research paper of 15-20 pages (3750-5000 word).

Both undergraduates and graduates should consult the instructor on assignment choices.

#### READING SCHEDULE.

- Sep. 9 Introduction: Historicism and History.
- 16 History and Philosophy  
Readings: Khaldun (pp. vii-xiv, 1-43), Cox, Braudel ("History and the Social Sciences: The *Longue Durée* ").
- 23 Vico and his times  
Readings: Vico, *The Autobiography of Gianbattista Vico*.
- 30 Vico on Knowledge  
Readings: Vico, *The New Science*. to p. 65.  
Collingwood, pp. 59-71  
Stark , "G. Vico's Sociology of Knowledge"  
Berlin, "A Note on Vico's Concept of Knowledge"

- Oct. 7 Language and Myth  
 Readings: Vico, *New Science*, Book II  
 White, "The Tropics of History"  
 Cantelli, "Myth and Language in Vico"
- 14 Vico on History  
 Readings: Vico, *New Science*,  
 Book IV, The Course of Nations Run  
 Book V, The Recourse of Human Institutions  
 Which Nations Take When They Rise Again  
 Walsh, "The Logical Status of Vico's Ideal Eternal History"  
 Munz, "The Idea of a "New Science" in Vico and Marx."
- 21 Sorel and his Times  
 Readings: Hughes, H. Stuart. *Consciousness and Society*.  
 Stanley, John L. "Editors Introduction" in Stanley ed., *From*  
 Hughes, H. Stuart. *Consciousness and Society*.
- 28 **First essay is due**
- Nov. 4 Sorel: Knowledge and History  
 Readings: Sorel "Critical Essays on Marxism." (*From Geroges Sorel*, pp.  
 111-76)  
 "Materials for a Theory of the Proletariat" (*From Geroges Sorel*,  
 pp. 227-56)  
 Jennings, J. R. "Sorel, Vico, and Marx."
- 11 Sorel: Morals and Action.  
 Readings: Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*  
 Sorel, " The Ethics of Socialism" (*From Geroges Sorel*, pp. 94-  
 110)
- 18 Gramsci and his Age.  
 Readings: Fiori, A. Antonio Gramsci. Life of a Revolutionary.  
 Hobsbawm, Eric. "The Great Gramsci."  
 Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Editors' s Preface  
 and Introduction.
- 25 Gramsci History and Political Theory.  
 Readings: Gramsci, *Selections*, pp. 123-276, 321-472  
 Morera, *Gramsci's Historicism*  
 Jacobitti, E. E. "From Vico's Common Sense to Gramsci's  
 Hegemony."  
 Cox, R. W. "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An  
 Essay in Method."

Dec. 2 Gramsci on Culture, History, and Fordism.  
Readings: Gramsci, *Selections*, pp. 1-122, 277-318  
Cox, R. W. Production, Power, and World Order, ch. 9.  
**Second essay is due**