

# CHRISTIAN LOTZ

PHIL 421 – What is the Political? Hannah Arendt and Rosa Luxemburg

AUGUST 15, 2019 BY CHRISTIAN LOTZ

## Fall 2019: Phil 421 – What is the Political? Hannah Arendt and Rosa Luxemburg



*Rosa Luxemburg, Speaking in 1907*

“The Revolution is magnificent. Everything else is bilge  
[Quark]”  
(Rosa Luxemburg)

### General information

#### Instructor

[Here is more information about Prof. Lotz](#)

#### Class Meetings

Days: MW

Time: 3:00 PM – 4:20 PM

Place: 102 Farrall Ag Eng Hall

#### Office

Phone: 517.355.4490 [dept.]

Place: 518 South Kedzie Hall

Hours: MW, 1pm-2:30pm, and by appointment

## Other Contact

E-mail: [lotz@msu.edu](mailto:lotz@msu.edu)

Home Phone: please ask

Webpage: <http://christianlotz.com>

## Box

You will find my box in the front office of the philosophy department (SK 503)

## Schedule

### Introduction

Aug 28, no class

ProfLotz is out of town

By Sep 4 read the following introductory essays: H. Arendt, *A Heroine of Revolution*, and J. Rose, *Woman on the Verge of Revolution* (pdfs on D2L); pay especially attention to the claim that Luxemburg was a person who “had no country.”

Sep 2, no class

Holiday

Sep 4, Introduction

## From Totalitarianism to Political Freedom (Arendt)

Sep 9, Totalitarianism

Arendt, Ideology and Terror, pdf on D2L

Sep 11, Law, Power, Ruling

Arendt, Thinking without a Banister, 43-69

Sep 16, Authority

Arendt, Thinking without a Banister, 69-92

Sep 18, Marx

Arendt, Thinking without a Banister, 3-43

Sep 23, Marx

Arendt, Thinking without a Banister, 3-43

Sep 25, Freedom and Politics

Arendt, Thinking without a Banister, 220-243

[Homework Weekend Assignment 1 \(5\)](#)

## Labor, Work, Action: The Human Condition (Arendt)

Sep 30, Social vs Political  
Arendt, The Human Condition, Prologue+7-22

Oct 2, Social vs Political  
Arendt, The Human Condition, 22-50

[Homework Weekend Assignment 2 \(+in-class assignment\) \(5\)](#)

Oct 7, Private and Public Realm  
Arendt, The Human Condition, 50-79

Oct 9, Labor  
Arendt, The Human Condition, 79-126

Oct 14, Making and Action  
Arendt, The Human Condition, 175-192  
Presentation: Dominick

Oct 16, Making and Action  
Arendt, The Human Condition, 212-248  
Presentation: Jaret

## Politics, Revolution, Democracy (Luxemburg)

You should have Arendt's *Freedom and Politics*, her concept of action, as well as her concept of public sphere in mind when you read Luxemburg; the page numbers refer to *The Luxemburg Reader* (eds. Hudis & Anderson)

Oct 21, Critique of Lenin and Centralism  
Luxemburg, Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy, 248-266  
Presentation: Taylor

Oct 23, Spontaneity and Political Action  
Luxemburg, Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy, 248-266  
Bring Arendt, *Freedom and Politics*

Oct 28, no class  
ProfLotz is sick

[Homework Weekend Assignment 3 \(5\)](#)

Oct 30, no class  
ProfLotz is out of town

Nov 4, Critique of Bolshevik Policies

Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution, 281-312

Presentation: Greg (for Arendt/Luxemburg focus on 299-312)

Nov 6, Anti-Nationalism and Democracy

Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution, 281-312

Bring Arendt, *The Human Condition*

**Nov 11, No class**

**ProfLotz is out of town**

Nov 13, Mass Strike

Luxemburg, The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions, 168-200

Presentation: Jason

Nov 18, Mass Strike

Luxemburg, The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions, 168-200

Luxemburg, Theory and Practice, section II-IV, 215-233

## Revolution, Freedom, Council Democracy (Arendt)

Nov 20, The Freedom to Be Free

Arendt, Thinking without a Banister, 368-386

Presentation: Sasha

Nov 25, Revolution and Freedom & Council Democracy

Arendt, Thinking without a Banister, 332-355

Arendt, Thoughts on Politics and Revolution, pdf on D2L

Presentation: Alan

**Nov 27, No class**

**Thanksgiving**

Dec 2, Council Democracy

Arendt, Thinking without a Banister, 105-157, focus on 125-142 (devoted to the memory of Rosa Luxemburg)

Arendt, Thinking without a Banister, 157-159

Sitton, Arendt's Argument for Council Democracy, pdf on D2L

Totschnig, Arendt's argument for the council system: a defense, pdf on D2L

Dec 4, Wrap up

**Dec 12,**

**Final paper due by 11:59pm via D2L dropbox**

## Course Description



Hannah Arendt, 1969

In this class we will try to figure out how to think properly about the political realm from a philosophical and general human point of view. We will facilitate this via studying one of the most important 20th Century figures in European political thought, namely, Hannah Arendt. We will read parts of a larger text written on Marx and one of her main books, *The Human Condition*. We will connect her position to the political thought of Rosa Luxemburg who was one of the most important political and intellectual figures in the left revolutionary and anti-war movement before WWII (she was killed by conservative military and government forces in 1918). Luxemburg, one of the most important women in the entire tradition of socialist left wing thought and action, is well known for her critique of Lenin's top down approach to politics and revolution. She also tried to expand Marx's theory of market expansion. Topics discussed in this class will be the

essence of the political, the relation between labor, society, and the political, the concept of revolution, the concept of violence, the idea of council democracy, socialism and capitalism, and Arendt's relation to left wing thought, as represented by Marx and Luxemburg.

## Introductory Information

- Hannah Arendt: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannah\\_Arendt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannah_Arendt)
- Rosa Luxemburg: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa\\_Luxemburg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosa_Luxemburg)
- Who was Rosa Luxemburg? <https://www.rosalux.de/en/publications/mediacenter/detailseite-en/media/element/1079/> (video)
- Rosa Luxemburg: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08lfc77> (BBC audio)
- Introduction to Rosa Luxemburg: <https://www.rosalux.de/en/publication/id/39784/rosa-luxemburg-or-the-price-of-freedom/> (text)
- Read Drucilla Cornell on Luxemburg: <http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/rosa-luxemburgs-ethical-feminism/>
- Listen to a conversation between Drucilla Cornell and Jacqueline Rose on Luxemburg: <https://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2019/06/on-rosa->

[luxemburg-drucilla-cornell-and-jacqueline-rose-in-conversation/](#) (start at min 11)

- Red Rosa. A Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxemburg: <https://www.versobooks.com/books/2036-red-rosa>
- Arendt on Arendt: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsolmQfVsO4>
- Why Arendt Now? <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/20/opinion/why-read-hannah-arendt-now.html>

## Note

This is a 400-level course in philosophy and, as such, contains difficult material and requires mature students. If you are not willing to study dense written material, listen to unusual lectures, and discuss ideas in an organized fashion, then you should not take this class. This class though can be taken by students without prior knowledge in philosophy. You should not take this class if you are not an avid reader.

## Course Goals

This class should students introduce to

- central issues in political philosophy

- how to read major works of philosophy
- how to think beyond a naturalistically and scientifically reduced world view
- how to think critically about general conceptions of what it means to be political
- how to conceptualize central aspects of the political, such as the difference between politics and the political, the difference between the social and the political, the relation between freedom and politics, and the role of revolution in modern political thought
- how to think critically about the concept of democracy

## Note

Students should be aware of the fact that this course is based on difficult texts. Accordingly, this class requires self-responsible learners and an intense confrontation with the primary text. Accordingly, if you are not excited about the prospect of a daily confrontation with abstract and historical reflections, then you should not take this class. This class is not based on a set of fixed knowledge and, as such, is not based on a behavioral idea of education; rather, we will try to learn together and critically examine the material. The instructor of this class does not have anything to teach, but much to learn.



Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919)

*“Those who do not move, do not feel their chains”*

Rosa Luxemburg

## Required Texts

- Arendt, *The Human Condition*, U of Chicago Press (purchase)
- Luxemburg, *The Luxemburg reader*, eds Hudis and Anderson, The Monthly review Press (purchase)
- Arendt, *Thinking without a Banister, Essays in Understanding 1953-1973*, Schocken (purchase)
- Arendt, *On Rosa Luxemburg* (pdf on D2L)
- Arendt, *On Revolution* (no purchase necessary! Can be returned to book store!)

Arendt, *Power and Violence* ( no purchase necessary! Can be returned to book store)

You should always bring the books/essays to class! Digital editions are not permitted.

## Course Requirements

- daily reading and studying (around 5-10 pages, up to 50 per week)
- oral presentation + handout
- 1 final essay assignment
- homework assignments and spontaneous assignments in class; unannounced reading quizzes
- participation

## Note

The class and my lectures are solely based on the texts selected for class and require a thorough study and preparation of the material. I will primarily lecture on the readings, which will help you to more fully understand the texts. Therefore it is not sufficient for students to come to class without having prepared the texts. And indeed, in the

assignments you have to demonstrate whether you have appropriately prepared the readings selected for each lecture.

### Note

Every academic misconduct, such as plagiarism, will – without exception – lead to a failing grade in class. Check the Ombudsman's page (see also note below on plagiarism):

<https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/>

### Attendance

To get a good grade in this class, regular attendance is required. I will not call roll. Hence, it is up to you to come to class or not. However, if you do not come to class on a regular basis and participate in the class discussion, it is impossible for you to achieve a good grade in this class; so coming to class is your responsibility and your call. If you choose to attend class, please come on time, turn off cell phones and other electronic devices that interfere with your (and others') concentration, have the reading prepared and be ready to participate. If you are not prepared, do not bother showing up. It is a sign of disrespect to your peers and the instructor to attend class unprepared. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain class notes from a fellow student and

to catch up on reading. Nevertheless, please be aware that you should not make me responsible for a failure that results out of your decision. You should be aware that chances to master this class are minimal, if you do not show up for class or if you do not prepare the readings (=studying).

## Assignments

### Oral Presentation (overview of assigned reading)

Each student has to prepare one oral presentation for class. The presentation should contain [a] a list of main points and claims, [b] concepts that are unclear, [c] intelligent questions about the readings. You should distribute a handout 2 days in advance.

### Reading Quizzes

Given recent negative experience with student's unwillingness to read and study primary material, I *might* assign reading quizzes. Questions *might* be passed out in advance. Quizzes cannot be made up (except in cases mentioned below).

### Homework Assignments

From time to time I will send out via email weekend homework assignments; usually a short writing prompt in relation to either lecture or video material online, or in relation to our readings. Given that these homework assignments are always due on Sundays at 11:59pm, I will not accept late turn-ins. There is plenty of time for you to respond to the task, given that I usually send this out on time.

### Unannounced Assignments

There might be – from time to time – spontaneously assigned group assignments in class. Students who do not attend class (and have no medical documentation) will lose all points.

### Make-Up Assignments

Students who need to miss assignments for excusable reasons, such as a death in their families, MSU related business, emergency weather conditions, or medical reasons, must inform me ahead of time, and will be permitted to make up assignments. I will only accept official doctor notes (no faxes, no emails) or letters from other professors.

Unfortunately I am unable to accept any other reasons than those mentioned.



Mies van der Rohe's Revolutionsdenkmal for Liebknecht and Luxemburg (1926, Zentralfriedhof Berlin); destroyed by the Nazis in 1935; reconstructed in 2019.

### Course Evaluation

#### Assignments

|                                               |           |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 final take-home assignment                  | 25 points |
| Participation                                 | 20 points |
| Assignments (weekend, quizzes, in-class, etc) | 30 points |
| Oral presentation+handout                     | 25 points |
| ---                                           | ---       |

## 100 points

[illegible]

**GENERIC SYLLABUS (might not be applicable to each class)**

## Laptop/Cell Phone/Tablet Policy

You are not permitted to use laptops or cell phones in class, unless needed for medical reasons. Flat devices, such as tablets, are permitted if you have purchased the literature required for class electronically. Please do not text under the table. Cell phones should be removed from tables. Failure to follow this policy will lead to unannounced assignments in class or loss of points (at the digression of the instructor).

## Class Attendance

As mentioned above, I do not employ in my classes a class attendance policy. Having said this, you should be aware that class attendance is very important. When engaging in a philosophical and humanistic dialogue it is necessary to be an active and present participant in the ongoing discussion. If you miss class please do not email me asking if you missed anything important. Every class is important. You should get a study buddy for the class; a student in class who will inform you of what you missed. If you miss a class you can come to

my office hours or make an appointment to discuss the material, providing you have read the material and you simply want to see if your understanding of the material is on target. Time in office hours will not be used to repeat the class lectures.

## Grading Criteria + Paper Writing Tips

Check out [this page for grading criteria, example of assignments, etc.](#)

## Online Research Sources

Unfortunately, some people think that the internet as such is a reliable source of information. If you decide to use online sources for additional information or your paper then do not just use one of the common internet search engines, such as Google; rather, use reliable academic sources, such as Britannica Online, or the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). The [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) isn't very good, but still acceptable. Check out MSU's [library resources](#)! And, as with other sources, you must cite any online sources to which you refer in your essay.

## Writing Center Information

MSU's writing center offers excellent help on all matters regarding writing and learning. Check the website at <http://writing.msu.edu> for an overview and hours. For more information, please call 517.432.3610 or send an e-mail to [writing@msu.edu](mailto:writing@msu.edu).

## Grief Absence Policy

I follow MSU's general grief absence policy, which can be found [here](#).

## Integrity of Scholarship and Grades (Plagiarism)

The following statement of University policy addresses principles and procedures to be used in instances of academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, and falsification of academic or admission records, herein after referred to as academic misconduct. [See General Student Regulation 1.00, Protection of Scholarship and Grades.]

## Academic Honesty

Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states that “The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” In addition, the (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: [www.msu.edu](http://www.msu.edu)) Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including but not limited to a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also <https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/>)

### Plagiarism, from the Ombudsman’s page

Plagiarism (from the Latin plagiarius, an abductor, and plagiare, to steal) is defined by the White House Office of

Science and Technology Policy on Misconduct in Research (take that!) as “... the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results or words without giving appropriate credit.”

#### Accidental or Unintentional

One may not even know that they are plagiarizing. It is the student’s responsibility to make certain that they understand the difference between quoting and paraphrasing, as well as the proper way to cite material.

#### Blatant

Here, students are well aware that they are plagiarizing. Purposefully using someone else’s ideas or work without proper acknowledgment is plagiarism. This includes turning in borrowed or bought research papers as one’s own.

#### Self

Turning in the same term paper (or substantially the same paper) for two courses without getting permission from one’s instructor is plagiarism.

### The Spartan Code of Honor

Student leaders have recognized the challenging task of discouraging plagiarism from the academic community. The Associated Students of Michigan State University (ASMSU) is

proud to be launching the Spartan Code of Honor academic pledge, focused on valuing academic integrity and honest work ethics at Michigan State University. The pledge reads as follows:

“As a Spartan, I will strive to uphold values of the highest ethical standard. I will practice honesty in my work, foster honesty in my peers, and take pride in knowing that honor is worth more than grades. I will carry these values beyond my time as a student at Michigan State University, continuing the endeavor to build personal integrity in all that I do.”

The Spartan Code of Honor academic pledge embodies the principles of integrity that every Spartan is required to uphold in their time as a student, and beyond. The academic pledge was crafted with inspiration of existing individual college honor codes, establishing an overarching statement for the entire university. It was formally adopted by ASMSU on March 3, 2016, endorsed by Academic Governance on March 22, 2016, and recognized by the Provost, President, and Board of Trustees on April 15, 2016.

## SIRS Evaluations

Michigan State University takes seriously the opinion of students in the evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction

and has implemented the Student Instructional Rating System (SIRS) to gather student feedback (<https://sirsonline.msu.edu>). This course utilizes the online SIRS system, and you will receive an e-mail during the last two weeks of class asking you to fill out the SIRS web form at your convenience. In addition, participation in the online SIRS system involves grade sequestration, which means that the final grade for this course will not be accessible on STUINFO during the week following the submission of grades for this course unless the SIRS online form has been completed. Alternatively, you have the option on the SIRS website to decline to participate in the evaluation of the course. We hope, however, that you will be willing to give us your frank and constructive feedback so that we may instruct students even better in the future. If you access the online SIRS website and complete the online SIRS form or decline to participate, you will receive the final grade in this course as usual once final grades are submitted.

## Social Media and Sharing of Course Materials

As members of a learning community, students are expected to respect the intellectual property of course instructors. All course materials presented to students are the copyrighted property of the course instructor and are subject to the following conditions of use:

1. Students may record lectures or any other classroom activities and use the recordings only for their own course-related purposes.
2. Students may share the recordings with other students enrolled in the class. Sharing is limited to using the recordings only for their own course-related purposes.
3. Students may post the recordings or other course materials online or distribute them to anyone not enrolled in the class with the advance written permission of the course instructor and, if applicable, any students whose voice or image is included in the recordings.
4. Any student violating the conditions described above may face academic disciplinary sanctions.

### Student Support Program (SSP)

Michigan State University is offering all MSU students access to counseling support 24/7/365 through My SSP: Student Support Program. My SSP is free to all MSU students. My SSP is confidential, and can help with:

- Adapting to new challenges
- Being successful at school
- Relationships with friends and family
- Practical issues with studying
- Stress, sadness, loneliness, and more

The My SSP professional counselors are available to help anytime, anywhere with:

- Immediate support by phone and chat
- Ongoing support by appointment via phone and video
- In addition, culturally relevant support is available in the language of the caller's choice.

There are multiple options for connecting with a My SSP counselor:

- Download the free My SSP app on Google Play or iTunes
- Chat online at <http://us.myissp.com>
- Call 1-866-743-7732
- From outside North America, call 001.416.380.657

### Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

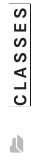
Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY)

### Drops and Adds

The last day to add this course is the end of the first week of classes. The last day to drop this course with a 100 percent refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). The last day to drop this course with no refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). You should immediately make a copy of your amended schedule to verify you have added or dropped this course.

### Note on Attendance

Students who fail to attend the first four class sessions or class by the fifth day of the semester, whichever occurs first, may be dropped from the course.



**CLASSES**