

**St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo
Department of Sociology and Legal Studies**

SOC 355J 001

POWER AND PARENTING

Winter 2019

Tuesday 11.30 am – 1.50 (ish) pm, SJ2 2003

Instructor Information

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Course Description

In this course we are going to locate the topic of power and parenting within a broader concern of **the problem of the human condition**. The course will begin developing this problem by using Hannah Arendt's work in this area. The focus throughout the course will be on the problem of the tension between human finiteness and the requirements of acting in the world. Acting well (e.g. parenting) requires both knowledge and power but, as finite beings, humans are neither all knowing nor omnipotent. There is a fundamental and ineradicable tension between the condition of being human (finiteness) and the requirements of action (knowledge and power). The course will spend the first few weeks developing Arendt's understanding of our modern predicament, particularly with regard to the problem of action and individuality. Then we will show that this predicament requires rethinking the meaning of power and action.

We will then proceed to address the case of parenting in order to understand what this problem means for modern times. We will address different versions of parenting and different relations to parenting in terms of an interest in developing a strong relation to this tension between action and its requirements. In the process, the Socratic position of the interrelation of action, theory and ethics, will be developed. Because we are dealing with a problem of the human condition, we will also use examples of bourgeois life, technology, cultural change, etc.; along the way we will draw on the theories of Hobbes, Parsons, Giddens, Foucault, Blum and McHugh, and Gadamer. For the most part, parenting will be the case to which we will continue to return as we seek to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the solutions that this problem of human limitation collects. It will be argued that the action (parenting) and self-reflection on action are best understood as ethical enterprises.

Overall, the class will proceed through a lecture/discussion format that seeks to develop the problem and various responses to this problem as addressed in the texts. The dialectical hermeneutic procedure of moving from the specific (e.g., an example of a parenting practice) to the universal (e.g., historical and contemporary conceptions of power), back to the specific and back again to the universal, will be experienced throughout the course. As such, unlike other courses, this course may not stick with its pre-organized structure. Rather, the particular interests of the class participants will influence the direction of the movement of understanding. If necessary and desirable, we will stay with some readings longer and drop later readings.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Because, in principle, pedagogy is privileged over contractual relations, this outline is as much a proposal as a contract. As with my other courses, the fundamental intellectual interest concerns the issue of how we collectively understand and change ourselves. In particular, we will be concerned with the problem of speaking well and acting well, both with regard to the question of parenting and with our own talk and action in class. Be prepared to have your own assumptions disturbed, to be required to question what you take for granted, and fundamentally, to think about and take responsibility for your own talk. **As a nurtured Socratic perplexity (aporia) is part of the experience of learning, you will need to be able to sustain your spirit despite at times feeling you do not know what is going on nor where the course is headed.**

The Course will develop critical thinking on our contemporary era in the following ways.

- A. Look at the world and human affairs in new ways
- B. Understand the differences between labour, work and action
- C. Understand the importance of coming to terms with the limits of human action
- D. Understand the unique socio-historical situation of contemporary parenting and its implications for power
- E. Understand an interconnection between power, wisdom and ethics
- F. Understand parenting as a case study to address and examine D and E.

Required Text

- H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*: University of Chicago Press, 1958. (On reserve in SJU Library and for sale at Campus Bookstore)
- K. Bonner, *Power and Parenting: A Hermeneutic of the Human Condition*: Macmillan Press, London/St. Martin Press, Inc., New York. 1998. (On reserve and e-book available through SJU library)

Readings Available on LEARN

- Other Readings made available on LEARN
- K. Bonner, *Power and Parenting: A Hermeneutic of the Human Condition*: Macmillan Press, London/St. Martin Press, Inc., New York. 1998. (On reserve and e-book available through SJU library)

Course Requirements and Assessment

Assessment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Mid-term exam	Feb 12	30%
Take-Home Paper/Exam	April 2	50%
Online Assignment (5 Response to Readings = 5%, 10 Response to Responses = 5%)	Ongoing	10%
Participation (including in-class responses)		10%
Total		100%

Online Assignments

Response to Readings

Over the course of the term, each student will respond to 5 questions posed online (as a guideline you should do 2 before Winter Break and 3 after Winter Break). These responses should be approximately 200 words in length. The questions will be based on the theories, readings, concepts, as they apply to the concept of power and action as they apply to the modern situation of parenting. All 5 are worth a total of 5%. The questions will be posted by the day after the class (Wednesday) and the **response is due on the following Sunday by noon**. This is a completion exercise and students receive 5% for completing all 5 (1% each).

Response to Responses:

Students are also required to respond to another students' response once a week. You must do 10 responses, ideally 5 before and 5 after Winter Break and they must be a paragraph in length (80 words approximately). **These are due on Monday by noon**. These are completion assignments and you will get 5% for completing all 10 responses (.5% each).

Class Participation involves occasional In-Class Responses.

In-Class Responses – You will write a couple of paragraphs (no more than one page) **in class** on a question posted before the class. You get you to discuss the question with a partner in the class and I will pick them up at the end. These will be used as attendance and participation markers. These are ways of encouraging and assessing participation, which is why I focus on them being completed in class.

Participation is graded based on four criteria: attendance, class participation in discussion, online discussion and discussion response papers. Attendance: periodic attendance checks will be tracked through the in-class exercises. In order to succeed in this course you need to do the readings, participate in class, write clearly and submit assignments on time. An overarching criterion is development in the course. By development here I mean a commitment to engaging the material. If you demonstrate development in the course through increased participation in class and improved discussion responses this is graded more favourably than a contribution that wanes throughout the term. **Effectively, if you attend and participate well, your grade will reflect the highest mark you have received in a graded assignment. If it is average, it will reflect your average grade; if low, it will reflect your lowest grade or even less.**

Course Outline / Class Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings Due
1	January 8	Introduction/Outline/Focus The Hermeneutic Approach and Arendt's The Human Condition	Reading: Power and Parenting (pp. 1- 3, 151– 154) The Human Condition (vii – xx)
2	January 15	The Human Condition and the three dimensions of the Active Life: Labour, Work, Action	'The Human Condition': 1 –21
3	January 22	The Public and the Private Realm	'The Human Condition': 22 – 38
4	January 29	The Public and the Private – Rise of the Social	'The Human Condition': 38 – 58
5	February 5	Parenting: Action Vs. Role	Bonner's E Reserve Paper
6	February 12	In-Class Exam- (possible Movie shown)	
7	February 19	Reading Week	
8	February 26	The Problem of Contemporary Parenting as a Problem of Power in the Modern Age.	'Power and Parenting': 1 – 23
9	March 5	Parental Power and the human condition: A theoretic story of modern parenting: learning to live with irreversible and unpredictable consequences.	'Power and Parenting': 24- 47
10	March 12	Tragedy, Comedy and Wisdom in Parenting and Power: The challenge and choice	'Power and Parenting': 47 – 57
11	March 19	Hobbes and Modern Power: Becoming a Super Parent	'Power and Parenting': 58 – 82
12	March 26	Foucault and Bourgeois Power: The rise of method in society and in parenting	Power and Parenting': 83 – 100
13	April 2. Take Home Exam Distributed	Practical reasoning, Parenting Effectiveness Training and the ethics of Authority	Power and Parenting': 101 – 117

Student interest and the emerging course conversation may require the introduction of new material, spending more time with existing material or even returning to material covered earlier. The outline, therefore, is as much a proposal as a contract.

Late Work

Late Penalty on Take home exam - 5% (out of 100%) per day including weekends

Attendance Policy

Attendance is essential in this course and it will be taken into account in participation.

Important Information

Academic Integrity: To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Federated University and Affiliated Colleges are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

[Academic Integrity Office \(UW\)](#): A resource for students and instructors.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the [St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline](#). For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 71 \(Student Discipline\)](#).

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Students who decide to file a grievance should refer to [University of Waterloo Policy 70 \(Student Petitions and Grievances\)](#). For more information, students should contact the Associate Dean of St. Jerome’s University.

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline or University of Waterloo Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) if a ground for an appeal can be established. In such a case, read [St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals](#).

Note for Students with Disabilities: The [AccessAbility Services \(AS\) Office](#), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.