**Pols 431: Politics of Postmodernity and its Critiques:**

**Post-Truth**

**Fall 2020**

***(Draft syllabus – course readings are subject to change)***

**Instructor:** Zeynep Gambetti

**Class hours:** ThFF 434

This course intends to explore the notion of “post-truth” that has become popular in recent years. Contesting the facile and extremely superficial explanation that consists in deriving “post-truth” from the cultural or epistemological relativism associated with the (equally superficial) notion of “postmodernism”, we will reflect upon the technical, economical and political transformations that have contributed to the fragmentation of experiences and public spaces. We will determine whether “post-truth” denotes a plurality of truths, whereby perspectival differences are acknowledged, or whether it denotes a new form of dogmatism that denies the intricate relationships between mind and matter, individual and society, agency and structure. To this end, we will single out neoliberal capitalist accumulation processes, internet technologies and populist discourses, and attempt to establish their impact on our notions of self and world.

**Course format:**

This is an online course that involves active student participation. Some lectures may be pre-recorded, but the majority of classes will be interactive. Attendance is required and 3 unjustified absences will amount to an F from the course. The grades will be individual grades, not P/F.

**Course requirements:**

Reading weekly material before attending class is absolutely necessary. The lectures will cover the main points, but the material is too complex to grasp without careful reading.

1. Presentations (30%): Students will pair up and choose one or more topic of contemporary relevance to illustrate the weekly readings in 20 minutes and open up the discussion in the second half of the course. The presentation must aim at developing the concept of post-truth. The class will be responsible for asking questions and contributing to enhancing the discussion.
2. Write-up (20 %): The students will refine these presentations and hand them in to me the following week. I should be able to see the specific contribution of each student to the write-up.
3. Term Project (50%): At the end of the course, each student will be asked to write a term project on empirical examples of post-truth, using the theoretical readings as interpretative supports. The papers will not exceed 12 typewritten pages with 1½ spacing. *A paper writing guideline will be distributed separately.*

**REQUIRED READINGS (*to be revised before classes begin)***

**Part 1: Pre-history of Post-Truth**

**Totalitarian and post-totalitarian society**

Week 1:

Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics” in *Between Past and Future*, New York, Penguin Books, 1993, p., 227-264.

Hannah Arendt, “Lying in Politics”, *Crises of the Republic*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972, p. 1-47.

Week 2:

Leo Löwenthal and Norbert Guterman, *Prophets of Deceipt*, NY: Harper & Bros, 1949, Chp. 3: “A Hostile World”

Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, chp. 4: “Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”

**Image, simulacra, spectacle**

Week 3:

Guy Debord, “Separation Perfected”, *The Society of the Spectacle*, New York, Zone Books, 1994, p. 12-24.

Jean Baudrillard, “Simulacra and Simulations” in *Selected Writings*, ed. M. Poster, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988, p. 166-184.

**Discipline and security**

Week 4:

Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power", *Power/Knowledge*, New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980, p.109-133

Michel Foucault, “25 January 1978 lecture”, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-1978,* Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 55-86

**Capitalism, schizophrenia and control**

Week 5:

Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, *October*, Vol. 59, Winter 1992, p. 3-7.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “The Civilized Capitalist Machine”, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p. 222-240

**Part 2: Beneath Post-Truth**

**Neoliberalism and financialization**

Week 6-8

David Harvey (2006), “Neo-liberalism as creative destruction”, *Geogr.Ann.*, 88 B (2): 145–158.

Wendy Brown, “American Nightmare. Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism and De-Democratization”, *Political Theory*, Vol. 34(6), 2006, p. 690-714.

Edward LiPuma and Benjamin Lee, “Financial derivatives and the rise of circulation”, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 34(3), 2005, p. 404-427.

Maurizio Lazzarato, “Understanding Debt as the Basis of Social Life”, *The Making of the Indebted Man*, Los Angeles, Semiotext(e), 2012, p. 13-36

Ayla Özhan Dedeoğlu & İpek Kazançoğlu, “The feelings of consumer guilt: A phenomenological exploration”, *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, Vol. 11(3), 2010, p. 462-482

Paul Langley, “Uncertain Subjects of Anglo-American Financialization”, *Cultural Critique*, 65, Fall 2007, pp. 67-91.

Elton G. McGoun, “Hyperreal finance”, Critical Perspectives on Accounting, Vol. 8, 1997, 97-122.

**Internet and virtual communication**

Week 9-10

Jason Hannan, “Trolling ourselves to death? Social media and post-truth politics”, *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 33(2), 2018, p. 214-226.

David Beer, “Power through the algorithm? Participatory web cultures and the technological unconscious”, *New Media and Society*, Vol. 11(6), 2009, p. 985-1002.

Brett Caraway, “Audience labor in the new media environment: A Marxian revisiting of the audience commodity”, *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 33(5), 2011, p. 693-708.

Ergin Bulut & Erdem Yörük, “Digital Populism: Trolls and Political Polarization of Twitter in Turkey”, *International Journal of Communication*, Vol. 11, 2017, p. 4093-4117.

**Populism, authoritarianism, polarization**

Week 11-12

Michael Higgins, “Mediated populism, culture and media form”, *Palgrave Communications*, Vol. 3(3), 2017.

Adam Klein, *Fanaticism, Racism and Rage Online. Corrupting the Digital Sphere,* Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, Chp 3: “Hate Speech in the Information Age”, p. 25-39.

Zafer Yilmaz, “The AKP and the spirit of the ‘new’ Turkey: imagined victim, reactionary mood, and resentful sovereign”, *Turkish Studies*, 18(3), 2017, p. 482-513