

University of Victoria

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 533/633(S01)
CSPT 500/600 (S01)**

Boundaries, Borders, Limits

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This is an advanced graduate course on the politics of boundaries, especially boundaries that take the form of (geographical but also other kinds of) borders and (legal but also other kinds of) limits.

It is thus a course about distinctions, discriminations and classifications, not least among literatures seeking to understand the politics of boundaries, borders and limits. Or perhaps it might be better to say that it is a course about beginnings and endings, and the diverse ways in which claims to origin and destination are inscribed in boundaries, borders, limits, distinctions, discriminations and classifications.

Plato sought to cut nature at the joints; we tend to draw the line. We have drawn a line between nature and ourselves, and now find many of our most naturalized lines to be under erasure and subject to puzzling reinscription. The course is thus also conceived as an engagement with some exemplary and provocative literatures seeking to make sense of the consequent disorientation.

While it may draw upon a wide range of empirical material, the course will work primarily with questions about theoretical principle, and will assume a capacity for theoretical reasoning, broadly understood. The seminars in particular will focus on a narrow but exemplary range of topological forms and practices of distinction and discrimination that shape the politics of contemporary boundaries and the boundaries of contemporary politics. The question guiding these seminars will concern the different ways in which boundaries *work*, and the possibility of classifying different forms of boundary and the practices through which they are enacted. Particular attention will be paid to: the regulative ideal of the (Euclidean) straight line and the point enabling and disabling it; logics of marginality, exceptionality and alterity; claims about the presence/absence of boundaries under changing historical and structural conditions; and attempts to understand boundaries as somehow more complex than the regulative ideal of a straight line of zero width on and within which nothing happens. Attention will also be paid to some of the pervasive distinctions enabling various literatures on boundaries, including distinctions between form and substance, theory and practice, topology and sociology, and sovereignty and governmentality; and to the boundaries we presume in trying to compare different forms of boundaries and boundary practices.

While the course will focus on the *politics* of boundaries, it will be explicitly interdisciplinary in character: it will not assume much background in political science. However, it will assume a broad background in modern intellectual and cultural history as well as some familiarity with the main currents of contemporary social, political and cultural thought. Most scholarly conventions and academic disciplines, including political science, take boundaries more or less for granted, usually for understandable but also obviously contestable reasons. By contrast, many influential currents of critical thought for at least the past century have insisted that boundaries constitute and reproduce the substantive entities that are thereby taken for granted. Moreover, they have also insisted that what has come to be called "the modern" is characterized by very specific forms of boundary formation: practices that have been subjected to increasing critique on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Despite the continuing rhetorical force of claims that established boundaries are either here to stay or are about to disappear in some brave new global or cosmopolitan order (claims that are themselves understandable as an exemplary form of modern boundary practice), it seems reasonable to assume that the assumption that boundaries can be taken for granted, or simply stepped over, will be challenged by claims that boundaries are precisely what must be examined, and (re)politicized. This course is intended to explore what this might involve in terms of theoretical principle, with an eye on, or an ear open to many specific instances and trajectories that interest students in the class.

The course will begin with some introductory material in lecture form but then continue with a sequence of seminars, starting with the boundaries of modern subjectivities, both macro and micro. From there we will

consider patterns of enclosure, exceptionality, marginality, and various forms of politics “on” or “within” the line. Along the way, it will consider various theoretical figures, like Derrida and Bourdieu, as exemplars of what might be called topological and sociological modes of analysis.

Students will be expected to introduce specific seminar topics with a 10-15 minute presentation, including a two or three page summary of the problem being identified, the argument being made, the conclusion being reached, the implications for a broader understanding of how boundaries work (both in form and in practice), and the literature found to be most useful/provocative.

While I want the seminars to stay attuned to a common theoretically-oriented agenda, students will be encouraged to develop their research papers in whatever directions seem relevant for their own interests and expertise – subject to consultation, and as long as a theoretical problem is identified and an argument of some theoretical consequence is sustained. I am open to papers that are heavily empirical, rigorously abstract, or anywhere between these perhaps profoundly dubious options; and to papers that engage any recognised field of scholarship, from, just to tempt the fates, cosmologies to aesthetics. However, in order to help prevent mere term papers expanding into sufficient work for three lifetimes, I would like to receive from each student, by February 21, 2012, a one or two page paper-proposal, including a short bibliography.

Please note: Class presentations should not be early versions of a research paper, although they may address a similar thematic. Presentations are intended to facilitate, provoke and contribute to a collective discussion – to have a pedagogic function – and will be evaluated accordingly.

Course Requirements

Research paper (due April 10 th)	60%
Class presentation (oral and written):	20%
Class participation:	20%

Literatures

There is scarcely any theoretical tradition of contemporary political thought that does not engage with the politics of boundaries in some way. The significant exceptions tend to affirm either or both the established conventions of liberalism or the methodological presumptions of modern social science, although neither liberalism nor social science has been entirely disinterested in this topic. Even where boundaries are simply assumed, or a marginal concern, so to speak, it is usually not difficult to identify their presence, form, procedures and effects, as long as one is inclined to look for them – inclined to be critical, as Kant might still want to say. Consequently, no specific texts are assigned for this course. Students are expected to explore literatures that respond to their own specific interests.

Some may want to engage with contemporary figures like Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, Nancy, Bourdieu, and so on. Some may want to pursue the extensive literatures in geographical, biological, aesthetic and legal theories. Some may want to take a more historical route by engaging with the history of geometry, the emergence of Renaissance perspective, or figures like Descartes and Kant. Some may want to take more sociological directions and engage with the social constitutions of gender, or alterity, or liminality, or recognition, or danger, or race, or class, or nation, or liberty, and so on. Some may want to fixate upon some specific case or event and the literatures it has generated.

I am happy to recommend specific literatures and texts once I know what themes particular students wish to explore.

Course Outline

January 10. 1. Introduction

January 17. 2. Lecture: Boundaries, Borders, Limits

- the cut, the distinction, the discrimination; rather than the entity, the distinguished, the category, the judgement, the class, the subject, the object, the knower, the known, the friend, the enemy, and so on.
- dualism/duality; mutual constitution; dialectic; aporia

- boundaries: exemplary cases? mathematics, logics, biologies, ecologies, and so on
- borders: geographies, territories, frontiers, zones
- limits: states/laws and exceptions; economies/aesthetics and margins

- topologies: the regulative ideal of the line; Derrida, for example
- sociologies: logics of practice; practices of distinction; Bourdieu, for example

- classifications: logics and histories; Greeks and Christians, for example

- “modernity”: man/world; essentialism/nominalism; modern/non-modern; internal/external
- subjectivity: universals within particulars
- subjects, subjectivities, finitudes

- life/death; being/non-being; being/becoming; immanent/transcendent
- man/nature, nature/culture
- the past is a foreign country
- higher/lower, here/there, before/after

- point, line, plane, circle: modernity and the topology of the line
 - Euclid, Descartes, Kant and the politics of finitude: subjectivity and delimitation
 - perspective and representation: from Machiavelli to Hobbes
 - perspective and vision: Descartes, the I and the eye
 - the line and the circle: Bach and Mozart
 - the line and the triangle: Kant and Kant
 - the line and the point: Euclid and the end
 - the point and the line: the end and the beginning
 - the line v the point/circle: centre and margin
- zero: absence and foundation, Egypt and Greece
- grounding/orientation: the international date line, for example (see attachment).

- on the edge: the exception defines the norm, the margin defines the price, and the management of dissent trumps conformity to a norm: thus transgression, and the police
- in the middle: the middle defined by extremes; Aristotle, and liberalism

- the politics of the inter or the between: autonomous subjects v intersubjectivities
- boundaries/relations

(Highly) Selected Readings:

Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958) (Beacon Press, 1969).
 Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity* (California, 2007).
 Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (Zone Books, 1998).
 Peter E. Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Harvard, 2010).
 Pierre Hadot, *The Veil of Isis* (Harvard, 2006)
 Karsten Harries, *Infinity and Perspective* (MIT Press, 2001).
 Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (Routledge, 2007).
 Claudia Brodsky Lacour, *Lines of Thought: Discourse, Architectonics, and Origins of Modern Philosophy* (Duke, 1996).
 Didier Maleuvre, *The Horizon: A History of Our Infinite Longing* (University of California Press, 2011).
 Patrick Maynard, *Drawing Distinctions: The Varieties of Graphic Expression* (Cornell University Press, 2005).
 Dan Pedoe, *Geometry and the Liberal Arts* (Penguin, 1976).
 Nick Vaughan-Williams, *Border Politics: The Limits of Sovereign Power* (University of Edinburgh Press, 2009).
 R.B.J. Walker, *After the Globe, Before the World* (Routledge, 2009).
 Paolo Zellini, *A Brief History of Infinity* (Penguin, 2005).

January 24. 3. (Split) Subjectivities I: man v citizen.

the boundaries of liberalism: public/private; state/civil society.
 Subjects, citizens, humans: the aporetic structure of modern politics

Required reading: J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (1869).

January 31. 4. (Split) Subjectivities 2: alterity and recognition.

Herodotus/Hegel
 orientals and enemies
 enemies and barbarians

Required reading: Francois Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (California, 1988).

Recommended Reading:

Edward Said, *Orientalism*.
 Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*.
 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other*.

February 7. 6. Exceptions I: spatiotemporal

Schmitt/Benjamin, Schmitt/Kelsen

Recommended reading:

Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*
 Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence."
 Hans Kelsen, "The Differences Between National and International Law."
 Ian Hurd, "Is Humanitarian Law Legal?"

February 21. 7. Exceptions 2: temporospatial

Possible readings:

Constantine Fasolt, *The Limits of History* (University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (University of Pittsburg Press, 2009).

Louis Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment* (Minnesota, 2006).

February 28. 8. Enclosure

Locke/Marx/property

Bachelard/phenomenology/architecture

March 6. 9. Margins/exceptions

Gauss/Pareto: distributions/norms, topologies/statistics

Schmitt/Hayek: exceptions, states, markets

Required reading:

David Harvey, "The Spatial Fix: Hegel, von Thunen and Marx," *Antipode*, 13:3, 1981, 1-12.

March 13. 9. Balances: State Sovereignty and/or Popular Sovereignty

Liberty/security: in the name of terror

Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended."

March 20. 10. Contradictions and Aporias

sovereignty and the cartographic denial of contradiction

Democracy against representation: from antagonism to agonism?

March 26. 11. Organism/Environment

Darwin/Lamarck, for example

epigenetics

March 27. 12. The zone and the in-between: new border regimes?

sieves, gradients, disaggregations, dispersals

states of vulnerability