

Course Outline

School / Portfolio: Faculty of Education and Arts

Course Title: NEOLIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS

Course ID: SOCPH3400

Credit Points: 15.00

Prerequisite(s): (BAFND1001 and BAFND1004 and PHILO1002 and BAFND1002 OR LITCI1000)

Co-requisite(s): Nil

Exclusion(s): Nil

ASCED Code: 090301

Program Level:

AQF Level of Program						
	5	6	7	8	9	10
Level						
Introductory	■	■	■	■	■	■
Intermediate	■	■	■	■	■	■
Advanced	■	■	✓	■	■	■

Learning Outcomes:

Knowledge:

Enhance students' understanding of the history, practices and discourses associated with

- K1.** neoliberalism and address why it has become so dominant today, whose interests it promotes and which groups in societies are searching for alternative worldviews to limit its influence.
- K2.** Introduce students to the key theoretical critiques of the neoliberal tradition.

Skills:

- S1.** Foster students' ability to understand contrasting theoretical paradigms in neoliberal thought through close readings of texts.
- S2.** Foster students' ability to understand and critically analyze the political, social, economic and cultural contexts in which neoliberalism operates, through independent research and the use of relevant secondary literature.
- S3.** Support students' development of critical analytical skills, argumentation skills, oral and written communication skills, and effective research methods.

Application of knowledge and skills:

- A1.** Further develop students' sense of responsibility for their own learning.
- A2.** Further develop students' skills and confidence in making articulate and well-informed contributions to debates concerning neoliberalism.

Course Content:

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SOCPH3400 NEOLIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS

What is neoliberal thought, what are neoliberal policies, and what are the major critiques that have been levelled against neoliberalism? These are the questions we will explore in this course, focusing both on the primary texts that are generally associated with neoliberalism (e.g., F.A. Hayek and Milton Friedman), as well as the most important critical attacks on neoliberalism (e.g. David Harvey, Naomi Klein, Noam Chomsky, Wendy Brown, James Ferguson, etc.) The focus of this course is thus the theory and practice of neoliberalism in historical and contemporary contexts. We will be considering the dominance of neoliberalism as an ideology, as a set of policies and a form of governance, one that generates contradictions and space to consider emerging and possible alternatives.

Neoliberalism is a more contemporary adaptation of a historical form of liberalism associated with the emergence of capitalism and liberal democracy in the 17th and 18th centuries. As the dominant global ideology today, neoliberalism has enormous impact on our lives, providing a framework for such policies as lower taxes, deregulation of the economy, privatization of public enterprises involved in such services as water, hydro and transportation, once considered the mainstay of the public service sector. Broadly speaking, it advocates economic efficiency through free markets, a smaller role for governments in the economy, consumer sovereignty, trade liberalization and a borderless world for capital investments as multinational corporations seek to expand the sphere of their operations and influence. It has resulted in the proliferation of free trade agreements and a body of world rules, and a shift towards open regionalism and a more globalized world economy.

All of this raises questions about the role of the state in shaping social and economic policy and the future of democratic accountability when states seem to be losing the autonomy to make key decisions that affect their citizens. In that regard, it has generated challenges from groups in society disadvantaged by the policies it inspires. The growing inequalities in national and world economies that coincide with neoliberal policies, and the concerns around environmental degradation arising from the emphasis on economic growth, have led to the emergence of anti-globalization movements that are challenging the dominance of neoliberalism. Drawing on historical critiques of capitalism, they are suggesting alternative ways of organizing the economy and society that are more environmentally benign, provide more sustainable social and economic development and promise more democratically accountable decision making in national and international politics.

This course will be of interest to students concerned with the impact of political and economic principles on human and environmental systems, and with understanding the contemporary global upsurge of challenges to neoliberal policies and practices.

Values and Graduate Attributes:

Values:

- V1. Foster a critical awareness of the theoretical assumptions, arguments and positions that underpin neoliberalism.
- V2. Create respect for the procedures of disciplined questioning and argumentation, with specific reference to debates in the field of neoliberal thought.
- V3. Empower students by providing them with a variety of perspectives on and critical approaches to neoliberal issues, events and situations.

Graduate Attributes:

Attribute	Brief Description	Focus
Continuous Learning	Students will continuously develop skills in comprehension, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and creative thinking	High
Self Reliance	Students will build on their skills in continuous learning, personal organisation, communication, independent thinking, initiative, and creativity	High

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Attribute	Brief Description	Focus
Engaged Citizenship	Students will enhance their skills in both critically analysing and contributing to arguments concerning the status of neoliberalism	High
Social Responsibility	Students will work to gain the skills and confidence needed to understand and engage effectively in debates concerning neoliberalism	High

Learning Task and Assessment:

Assessment Task	Assessment Type	Weighting
Understanding of the theoretical materials covered in the first part of the course, and the ability to express this understanding clearly and concisely.	Short Answer Reading Exercise.	20-30%
Analysis and research, and the ability to present this analysis in the form of an extended argumentative essay.	Major essay.	40-50%
Oral presentation of ideas pertinent to one weekly topic.	Tutorial presentation.	15-20%
Contribution to class activities and discussion and demonstrated ability to discuss philosophical texts and ideas in a clear and rational manner.	Tutorial attendance and participation.	10-15%

Adopted Reference Style:

Chicago