

Manfred Henningsen

Polsc. 610

Political Theory & Analysis

Spring 2014

Bus Ad C10

Th 5:00-7:30

1) Description:

Since Samuel Huntington published in 1993 his paper on “The Clash of Civilizations?” a debate has been going on about the meaning and political implications of his prediction. We will talk about the Huntington debate, yet go beyond the controversy he provoked and focus on scholarly inquiries that have revisited the origins of the civilizations whose existence Huntington had taken for granted.

We will begin our discussions with a fresh look at the understanding of modernity and use Peter Wagner’s book *Modernity* (Polity, 2012). Wagner wants to get away from a Western-centered understanding of modernity and connect a plurality of modernities with the plural field of historical civilizations.

The topics of the plural field of civilizations have been discussed for quite some time in scholarly circles without reaching the level of Huntington’s notoriety. An almost complete menu of issues becomes explored by a large group of international scholars from various disciplines in the volume *The Axial Age and Its Consequences* (Harvard, 2012) edited by Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas. The essays in the book will be the center of the course. Louis Herman’s *Future Primal* (New World Library, 2013) will fill in the missing link to the primary societies of the pre-Axial Age and their lasting impact on modern sensibilities.

In addition we will discuss Aya Saraswati’s book on *Seeing Beauty, Sensing Race* (UH Press, 2013), which offers a fascinating new reading of the pre-colonial and post-contact perception of human difference. The concluding text, *Power and the Past* (Georgetown, 2010), confronts “collective memory and international relations” in Europe, America and Asia.

2) Required Texts:

Peter Wagner, *Modernity* (Polity);

Robert N. Bellah/Hans Joas (eds.), *The Axial Age and Its Consequences* (Harvard);

Louis Herman, *Future Primal* (New Word Library);

Aya Saraswati, *Seeing Beauty, Sensing Race* (Hawaii);

Langenbacher/Shain (eds.), *Power and Past* (Georgetown).

3) Requirements:

Students have to write a paper (10 to 15 pages) that is connected with one (or more) of the required text for this class. The paper should explore topics like modernity, the Axial Age, civilization, the non-Western notion of color, the variety of historical memory, the future of the primal, etc.

In addition to the paper, students should introduce books or sections of books to the class.

4) Calendar of the Class:

1/16 General Discussion

1/23 The Concept of Western Modernity (Wagner, *Modernity*);

1/30 Alternative Versions of Modernity (Wagner, *Modernity*);

2/6 The Axial Age (Bellah/Joas, p. 1-188);

2/13 The Axial Age: The Comparative Perspective (Bellah/Joas, p. 191-273);

2/20 The Axial Age: Destructive Possibilities (Bellah/Joas, p. 277-334);

2/27 The Axial Age: Revaluations and Perspectives on the Future (Bellah/Joas, p. 337-467);

3/6 The Future of the Primal (Herman, *Future Primal*);

3/13 Louis Herman

3/20 The Pre-Colonial Color Code (Saraswati, *Seeing Beauty, Sensing Race*);

4/3 Continuation

4/10 Memory and Politics (Langenbacher/Shain, *Power and the Past*);

4/17 The Anthropology of Evil (James Davis, *Evil Men*);

4/24 Student Papers

5/1 Student Papers