

**CURRICULUM VITAE**  
**December 2006**

**A. RECORD**

**1. Name: JON SIMONS**

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**3. Present appointment:**

Associate Professor, Department of Communication and Culture, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.

**4. Previous appointments:**

2002-2006: Associate Professor in Critical Theory, Department of Critical Theory and Cultural Studies, University of Nottingham

1995-2002: Lecturer (Assistant Professor), Postgraduate School of Critical Theory, University of Nottingham.

1993-95: I held concurrent part-time lectureships (adjunct professorships) in the Department of Political Science, Hebrew University; Department of Political Science, Tel Aviv University; Gender Studies Programme, Hebrew University; and The Seminary of Judaic Studies, Jerusalem.

1992-93: Visiting Fulbright Scholar, Department of Government, Harvard University.

## 5. Qualifications:

1989-93: Ph.D. in Political Science, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

1985-88: M.A. in Political Science, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

1979-82: B.A. in Politics and Modern History, University of Manchester.

## 6. Research fellowships and awards

**British Academy** overseas conference grant: “American Political Science Association,” 2004.

**British Academy** overseas conference grant: “History, technology and identity: after Foucault,” 2000.

Arts and Humanities Research Board (**AHRB**) research leave award: “Political Thought in the Age of Images.” Salary costs to provide cover for one sabbatical semester, matched by university study leave, 1999.

3 year **British Council** research grant in my capacity as Co-ordinator of a Higher Education Link between the University of Nottingham and the University of Indonesia for a project on “Social Justice, Political Justice, Cultural Justice, Gender Justice,” 1998-2001.

International collaborator for a research project on “Political Communities” directed by Professor Fumio Iida, Department of Political Science, Kobe University, Japan, funded by the **Matsushita International Foundation** (1998). I was invited to make three paper presentations in Japan together with two colleagues from the United States (Professor Stephen Macedo and Professor Nancy Rosenblum).

**British Council** and University International Office funding for academic visit to Jakarta, July 1997.

**Fulbright** Postdoctoral Research Fellowship and **Lady Davis** Postdoctoral Fellowship, 1992-1993. The fellowships provided me with funding for my position as Visiting Fellow, Department of Government, Harvard University.

**Israeli Council for Higher Education, Planning and Grants Committee**, Doctoral Scholarship, 1990-92. Award for fees and maintenance.

## 7. Prizes

1993: Bloomfield Prize for outstanding doctoral dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

1989: Israel Political Science Association prize for outstanding M.A. thesis.

## **B. RESEARCH**

### **1. PUBLICATIONS AND RESEARCH ACTIVITY:**

#### BOOKS

*Foucault and the Political* (Routledge: London, 1995. Reprinted 1996 and 2000).

Reviews of the above have appeared in:

*History of the Human Sciences* 8(4), 1995: “accessible, comprehensible and genuinely interesting.”

*Bibliographie de la philosophie* 42(1) 1995.

*Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* No.3 1996, pp. 593-4.

*Political Studies* 44(4) 1996: “lucid survey of Foucault’s work.”

*History of the Human Sciences* 9(2), 1996: “excellent introduction to Foucault’s work and its significance.”

*Political Studies* 45(2) 1997, pp. 402-3: “Simons succeeds with admirable clarity in presenting a comprehensive account.”

*Sociology* 30(2) 1996, pp. 406-7: “a particularly important study ... imaginative yet accessible ... notable for its originality and clarity.”

*Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 44(2) 1996, pp. 320-2.

*International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 5(2) 1997, pp. 337-8: “Simons has a subtle and sophisticated clarity of exposition ... an excellent account of Foucault’s work.”

*Philosophy Now* 21, Summer/Autumn 1998, pp. 38-9: “major and substantial achievement.”

*Political Theory* 28(5), October 2000, pp. 675-689: “It is the merit of Simons’s book not only to reconstruct in general terms Foucault’s oppositional critique ... but also to throw light on his affirmative theorization.”

*Politics and Aesthetics: Style, Emotion and Mediation* (Edinburgh University Press and New York University Press, forthcoming. Manuscript to be submitted in 2006/7).

## EDITED VOLUMES

*Images: A Reader* (co-edited with Sunil Manghani and Arthur Piper) (Sage: London, 2006).

*Justice, Democracy and Ethnicity* (in Indonesian) (co-edited with Nuri Soeseno, University of Indonesia) (Mizan Press, Bandung, Indonesia, forthcoming. Contributions are currently being translated).

This volume is the outcome of a 3-year British Council funded academic link project with the University of Indonesia. I have written two essays: “How Universalist is Democratic Theory?” and “Justice and Cultural Difference.”

*Contemporary Critical Theory: From Lacan to Said* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

This is a companion volume to *From Kant to Lévi-Strauss* (see below). For this volume I wrote the Introduction and the chapter on Foucault.

*Culture, Theory and Critique* Vol. 44, No. 1 (2003). I edited a special issue on ‘Images and Text’ and wrote an introduction to the issue.

*From Kant to Lévi-Strauss: The Background to Contemporary Critical Theory* (Edinburgh University Press, 2002).

For this volume I wrote the Introduction, introductions to each chapter, two chapters (on “Kant” and “Nietzsche”), and co-authored a chapter (on “Weber”).

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO BOOKS

“From Visual Literacy to Image Competence”. In James Elkins (ed.) (Routledge: London, forthcoming).

“The Radical Democratic Possibilities of Popular Culture”. In Lars Tønder and Lasse Thomassen (eds.) *On Radical Democracy: Politics Between Abundance and Lack* (Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 149-66.

“Televisual Popular Politics: Diana and Democracy”. In John Hall, Blake Stimson and Lisa Tamiris Becker (eds.) *Visual Worlds* (Routledge: London, 2005), pp. 44-55.

“Popular Culture and Mediated Politics: Intellectuals, Elites and Democracy”. In John Corner and Dick Pels (eds.) *Media and the Restyling of Politics* (Sage: London, 2003), pp. 171-89.

“El sujeto del feminismo y la representación de las mujeres.” In Fabricio Forastelli and Ximena Triquell (eds.) *Las Marcas del Género: Configuraciones de la Diferencia en la Cultura* (Centro de Estudios Avanzados, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba: Córdoba, 1999), pp. 85-94.

“The Critical Force of Fictive Theory: Jameson, Foucault and Woolf.” In Iain MacKenzie and Shane O’Neill (eds.) *Reconstituting Social Criticism* (Macmillan: London, 1999), pp. 83-102. Also published in Ahmad Sahal, Ayu Utami, Eko Endarmoko and Sitok Srengenge (eds.) *Utan Kayu: Tafsir Dalam Permainan* (Yayasan Kalam: Jakarta, 1998), pp.1-24.

“Foucault’s Mother.” In Susan Hekman (ed.) *Feminist Interpretations of Foucault* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), pp.179-209.

#### ARTICLES IN REFEREED JOURNALS

“Governing The Public: Technologies Of Mediation And Popular Culture.” *Cultural Values* Vol. 6, Nos. 1&2 (2002), pp. 167-81.

“Aesthetic Political Technologies.” *Intertexts* Vol. 6, No.1 (2002), pp. 74-97.

“Democracy is a Failure Worthy of Infinite Repetition.” *Critical Horizons* Vol. 2, No. 1 (2001), pp. 127-48.

“Politics and Truth: Immanence, Practice and Constellations.” *Social Epistemology* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2001), pp. 43-58.

“Postmodern Paranoia? Pynchon and Jameson.” *Paragraph*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2000), pp. 207-221.

“Spectre over London: *Mary Poppins*, Privatism and Finance Capital.” *Scope* (July 2000), <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/journal/articles/mary-poppins/htm>.

“Knowing and Doing, Scepticism and Coherence.” *Political Theory*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (April 2000), pp. 273-278.

“Ideology, Imagology and Critical Thought: The Impoverishment of Politics.” *Journal of Political Ideology* Vol. 5 No. 1 (2000), pp. 81-103.

“Modernist Misapprehensions of Foucault's Aesthetics.” *Cultural Values*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2000), pp. 40-57.

“The Aestheticization of Politics: An Alternative to Left-Modernist Critiques.” *Strategies*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1999), pp.173-190.

“The Exile of Political Theory: The lost homeland of legitimation.” *Political Studies*, Vol. 43, No.4 (1995), pp. 683-697.

“Embodying Spirits of Resistance.” [with Paul Routledge, 50% share] *Society and Space*, Vol. 13 (1995), pp. 471-498.

“From Resistance to Poaesthetics: Politics after Foucault.” *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1991), pp. 41-55.

“Rationalities of Government and Peace: Israeli Thought on the Arab Israeli Conflict.” *Millennium*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (September, 1991), pp.143-153.

#### JOURNAL ARTICLES

“The Dialectics of Diana as Empty Signifier.” *Theory & Event* Vol. 1 No. 4 (1997).  
[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory\\_and\\_event](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event)

“Beyond Sisterhood and Racism, in the Borderlands: A Response to Rabinowitz.”  
*Te'oriah U'bikoret*, No.7 (Winter, 1995) (in Hebrew), pp. 20-29.

#### DICTIONARY AND ENCYCLOPAEDIA ENTRIES

“Israel.” In *Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, ed. Joel Krieger (Oxford University Press: New York, 1993) [with Baruch Kimmerling, 50% share] pp. 476-8.

#### CONFERENCE PAPERS

\* Indicates that a paper was or will be published, generally after revision and sometimes under a different title.

##### **(i) Papers delivered after peer review of abstract**

“Democratically Aestheticised Politics,” *American Political Science Association* Annual Meeting, Chicago, 31 August – 2 September 2007.

“Rehabilitating Affect: Neuroscience And Political-Cultural Theory,” *From the Brain to Human Culture: Intersections between the Humanities and Neuroscience* conference, Bucknell University, April 20-22, 2007.

“The Science of Emotions: ‘Elite Popularisations’ in Print Media.” *National Communications Association*, San Antonio, 16-19 November 2006.

“The Power of Political Images.” *American Political Science Association* Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, 31 August – 3 September 2006.

“From Visual Literacy to Image Competence.” First International Conference on Visual Literacy, University College, Cork, 14-16 April 2005.\*

- “The Radical Democratic Possibilities of Popular Culture.” *American Political Science Association* Annual Meeting, Chicago, 2-5 September 2004.\*
- “Emotions and Political Judgement.” *Politics and the Emotions* conference, Centre for Critical Theory, University of West England, 16-18 April 2004.
- “The Public sees itself in the Mirror: Populist Media and Popular Protest.” *British Political Studies Association*, Leicester, 17 April 2003.
- “Visual and Verbal Political Styles: Diana and Deliberation,” *Canadian Political Science Association*, Toronto, 29-31 May 2002; and *Visual Worlds* Conference, UC Davis, 25-28 October, 2001.\*
- “Images, Ideographs and Critique.” *International Social Theory Consortium*, Annual conference, University of Sussex, 5-8 July 2001.
- “Technologies of Government and Communication.” *Finding the Political* conference, Goldsmith’s College, January 26, 2001.\*
- “Critical Images as Critical Theory.” *Social Theory 2000* conference, University of Kentucky, Lexington, May 11-14, 2000.
- “Aesthetic Political Technologies.” Conference on *History, Technology, and Identity: After Foucault*, University of South Carolina, March 16-18, 2000.\*
- “The Politics of Difference and the Impossibility of Justice.” Conference on *Nationalism, Identity, Minority Rights*, University of Bristol, September 16-19, 1999.\*
- “Secular Truth and Secular Politics.” *American Political Science Association* annual meeting, Atlanta, 2-5 September 1999.\*
- “The Impossible Universality of Democracy.” Conference on *Deconstruction Reading Politics*, Staffordshire University, July 26-29 1999.\*
- “Subject, Action, Scepticism and Coherence.” *Northeastern Political Science Association*, Boston, November 12-14 1998.\*
- “Democracy, Deliberation and Imagology.” Saintsbury Conference on *Rewriting Democracy: Postmodern Cultural Politics*, Edinburgh University, November 6-8 1998.\*
- “The Aestheticization of Politics: An Alternative to Left-Modernist Critiques.” *Western Political Science Association*, Los Angeles, March 20-22 1998.\*

“From Ideology to ‘Imagology’: The aestheticization of political thought.” *American Political Science Association Annual Meeting*, Washington D.C., August 28-31, 1997.\*

“Subverting the Space of Mothering: a Strategy for Feminist Resistance.” Conference on *Geographies of Domination/Resistance*, University of Glasgow, September 19-21, 1996.\*

“The Critical Force of Fictive Theory.” Conference on *Reconstituting Social Criticism*, Queen's University of Belfast, June 28-30, 1996.\*

“Postmodern Paranoia? Foucault and Pynchon on Power.” Symposium on *Interrogating Paranoia*, Chelsea College of Art and Design, June 15, 1996.\*

“Fictive Theory as Critical Theory? Jameson, Pynchon, Foucault and Woolf.” The International Workshop on *Contemporary Models of Critique in Society, Science and the Arts*, Tel Aviv University and the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, May 13-16, 1996.\*

“The Representation of Women: Post-colonial feminism in an Israeli context.” Conference on *Feminist Thought and Research in and about Israel*, Tel Aviv University, March 29-31, 1995.\*

“The Lament of Political Theory: A Tale of Exile and Homeland.” *New York State Political Science Association meeting*, Hunter College, March 1993.\*

## **(ii) Invited presentations**

“The Public Sees Itself in *The Mirror*: Popular Media as Technologies of Democratic Government.” Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Department of Political Science, 30 March 2005.

“Comments for Roundtable on Aryeh Botwinick’s *Skepticism, Belief and the Modern*.” *American Political Science Association annual meeting*, Atlanta, 2-5 September 1999.

“Aesthetics and Politics: Rhetorical Approaches.” *Theory, Culture and Society* seminar, Nottingham Trent University, 30 June 1999.\*

“The Aestheticization of Politics.” Kobe University, 23 June 1998 and International Christian University, Tokyo, 19 June 1998.\*

“Ideology, Imagology, and Critical Thought.” Waseda University, Tokyo, 20 June 1998.\*

“Foucault’s Aesthetics of Existence: Modernist Misapprehensions and Nietzschean Alternatives.” Manchester Centre for Political Thought, Conference on *Nietzsche and Foucault*, 13 March 1998.\*

“Critical Social and Political Theories.” A series of six lecture-seminars, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Indonesia, July 1997.

“Fictive Theory as Critical Theory? Jameson, Pynchon, Foucault and Woolf.” Department of Politics, University of Newcastle, November 25, 1996 and Ben Gurion University, Israel, May 1997.\*

“The Exile of Political Theory: Lost Homelands and Nomadic Sojourn.” Department of Government, Harvard University, May 1993.\*

### (iii) International research workshop papers

“Justice and Heterogeneity.” Workshop on *Social Justice and Social Movements*, University of Indonesia, March 22-23 1999.\*

“Democracy is a Failure Worthy of Infinite Repetition.” Workshop on *Democracy and Legitimacy*, University of Nottingham, December 11-13 1998.\*

“The Subject of Feminism and the Representation of Women.” Workshop on *Gender (The Very Idea)*, University of Nottingham, November 13-14 1997.\*

### SCHOLARLY EDITORIAL WORK

Co-editor (with Dr Simon Tormey, School of Politics, University of Nottingham) of a series published by Manchester University Press, *Re-appraising Political Theory*. Approximately 15 books will be commissioned over a five-year period, beginning in 2004-5. Four titles have already been commissioned.

Member of editorial board of *Culture, Theory and Critique*. I have helped transform *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, published by the University of Nottingham, into a new journal published by Taylor & Francis since 2002. I edited a special issue of the journal on *Images and Texts* that appeared in 2003 and an open issue in 2005.

I have refereed papers submitted to the journals: *Theory & Event*, *Foucault Studies*, *Political Studies*; *Theory, Culture and Society*; *History of the Human Sciences*; *European Journal of Political Thought*; *Cultural Values*; and *Iyyun*, as well as manuscripts for *Routledge* and *University of Illinois Press*. I have written book reviews for *Post-Structuralism and Radical Politics Newsletter*, *Political Studies* and *Modern and Contemporary France*.

### CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

2003: I was one of the academic convenors of an international conference on ‘Image and Critique’ held in the University of Nottingham 13-14<sup>th</sup> September 2003. The conference, which was co-sponsored by the Postgraduate School of Critical Theory and the Nottingham Institute for Research into Visual Culture (NIRV), was partly funded by the British Academy.

1998-2001: As part of a three-year project I organised in Nottingham an international research workshop each year attended by Indonesian colleagues:

March 2001: *Gender Justice and Democracy: Women and Democratisation in Comparative Perspective*.

March 2000: *Regional, Religious and Ethnic Conflicts*.

December 1998: *Democracy and Legitimacy*.

## **2. RESEARCH INTERESTS AND PLANS**

### **(a) Intellectual Development and Interests**

During my undergraduate studies in Politics and Modern History, and on through my master's degree in Political Science, my main area of interest was political theory. In addition to a solid grounding in the history and concepts of political thought, I was also fascinated by the methodological issues involved in the 'scientific' study of society, thereby developing an interest in the philosophy of science. I was able to bring together the latter with my major field of interest by writing a doctoral thesis on the political thought of Michel Foucault, whose works on the history of the human sciences are integral to his theoretical outlook and social analyses. During my doctoral research on Foucault, particularly in relation his later work, I became intrigued by philosophical aesthetics and its relevance to political analysis. The thesis also encouraged me to extend my knowledge of continental philosophy, not only with the thinkers in the background of Foucault's writing (especially Kant and Nietzsche) but also the broader field of poststructuralist and postmodern thought. In addition, through Foucault's work I developed interests in identity politics, queer theory and sexualities, and cultural politics in general. Extending my doctoral research, I established my expertise on Foucault with a well-received book as well as a book contribution, a journal article and several book reviews. My research interests subsequently expanded to cover not only poststructuralist political thought more generally, but also the relations between political theory, epistemology, aesthetics and, most recently, the media. In my investigations of contemporary political aesthetics or style and political communication I have also engaged with current work in verbal and visual rhetoric.

Towards the end of my master's studies and thereafter I also immersed myself in the rich and vibrant area of feminist political theory, especially in so far as it developed themes and trends in poststructuralist theory. I have published essays that deal with feminist issues in relation to Foucault but also more general issues of identity politics. The latter issue was at the centre of my involvement in the international collaboration with colleagues from the University of Indonesia in a joint project on political, social, gender and ethnic justice.

Following my appointment as lecturer in Critical Theory at the University of Nottingham in 1995 I again expanded my area of expertise to cover as much as possible of that transdisciplinary field. This has led me to appreciate the literary and cultural aspects and ramifications of continental thought, but also to be aware of the importance of the political and philosophical understanding for the former. I would characterise my current work both as culturally attuned political theory and as politicised cultural theory. Given the overlap between certain aspects of British cultural and media studies, and contemporary American critical communication

and rhetorical theory, I believe that my interests would be recognised to belong to the field of rhetoric and public culture.

Currently, my theoretical work is focused on “the image” and democracy, demonstrating clearly the link between my political and cultural interests. Images are the issue at the confluence of arguments in critical political theory against the aestheticization of politics, the mediatization of politics, and the cognitive impoverishment of politics. These criticisms demonstrate deep misgivings in intellectual culture about the mediated (as well as commodified) character of popular culture. My project is to outline an approach to political thought that demonstrates the political, ethical and cognitive potential of the aestheticized (including the rhetorical) dimension of mediation, arguing that critical thought is conducted by means of images as well as words. A participatory and democratic politics is not foreclosed by political mediation, as mediation (or contemporary rhetoric) is the condition of active political life in contemporary democracies. Media technologies are political technologies that govern democratic publics by means of popular styles and are therefore internal to the political spaces of the modern democratic polity. Political and cultural images do not offer inherently ideological, distorted or simplified understanding of society, and hence are not foreign to rational reflection, since images play a huge role in human cognitive and cogitative (and rhetorical) processes and are as vital and as apt for critical awareness as verbal argument.

In order to give some substance to these theoretical considerations I intend in the future to apply them to the currently global issue of refugees. Negative images of refugees (as scroungers, “bogus” asylum seekers, or even terrorists) seem to resonate more easily with most Western democratic publics (and their senses of national identity) than “positive” images of refugees as victims of persecution. Critical and cultural theories can explain why this is the case, but I hope to be able to use my “image theory” to show how critique can work by means of “critical images” that are condensations of complex configurations of thought, affect and cultural belief.

#### **(b) Research achievements**

My research interests have been developed through 30 different paper presentations at conferences, workshops and other institutions. Nearly all of the papers presented have been published, generally after revision, resulting in 11 published and 3 forthcoming book contributions as well as 16 journal articles. My research has also been published through a monograph, 2 edited volumes and a forthcoming anthology. I have been awarded a British Arts and Humanities Research Board research leave grant, participated in two funded international research projects, and organised three international research workshops. My expertise in political theory has been recognised by my being invited to become co-editor of a new series in that field published by Manchester University Press.

The journal articles I have written were praised by peers who reviewed the proposal for my next book (see below). One reviewer wrote that: *arguments from the book have already been rehearsed in the scholarly literature over the last couple of years to significant effect such that there is a group of academic colleagues already eagerly awaiting the author's attempt to synthesize his innovative ideas in monograph form.* Another stated that: *Having read ... some of the articles that will constitute parts of the book, I can report that Simons has a sure command of the primary and secondary literature and that he writes in a cogent and crisp style.*

## **(b) Forthcoming book projects**

*Politics and Aesthetics: Style, Emotion and Mediation* (Edinburgh University Press and New York University Press, manuscript to be submitted in 2008).

The book I am writing currently argues for a recuperation of aesthetics in critical political theory, which has generally been antipathetic to the aestheticization of politics, as in Benjamin's famous "sound bite." Such antipathy can be traced back to Plato, but is best conceived in modern terms through the Kantian tripartition of faculties, translated into Weber's cultural value spheres. The book therefore argues that only a non-Kantian notion of aesthetics can inform critical political theory's return to aesthetics. In contemporary terms, anti-aestheticism translates into a disdain for images, myths and symbols, and in condemnations of contemporary "designer" and "mediatized" politics. Anti-aestheticism is expressed through (i) an epistemological (but also ethical) complaint about the illusionary nature of aestheticized politics in which style replaces substance, as false, simplified "beautified" representations of social reality; (ii) an ethical (but also epistemological) complaint that aestheticized politics and thought appeal to emotion and the senses rather than universal reason; (iii) a political economic complaint (which is also epistemological and ethical) that aestheticized politics conforms to the aestheticized everyday life of commodified, consumer capitalism, and thus that aesthetic political thought is ideological. In the first three chapters of the book, these arguments, which appear in less systematic form in individual theorists, are rebutted, in an attempt to undo the "bad image" that aesthetic politics have on the Left. My counter-argument is that the problem is not that politics is aestheticized, but the ways in which it has been aestheticized.

In its current form, critical political theory is alienated from the aesthetic (or rhetorical) aspects of politics, which is one of the reasons why it is unable to connect to its potential constituencies, and hence to put theory into democratic practice. Instead, the book will outline an approach to political thought that demonstrates the political, ethical and cognitive potential of the aestheticized (and rhetorical) dimension of politics, arguing that critical thought must itself be aesthetic. The grounds for this argument are threefold: (i) politics and political theory is necessarily rhetorical and stylistic; (ii) politics and political judgement are necessarily emotional; (iii) politics is aesthetically created and produced

human reality. The book argues that a vibrant, democratic politics is not foreclosed by aesthetic politics and thought. Rather, aesthetics is the condition of active democratic political life and a critical citizenry.

The book proposal was well-received by the peer reviewers, one of whom wrote that: *I have no doubt that this book will constitute a highly original and compelling contribution to the fields of political philosophy and cultural studies.* Another wrote: *Simons's book ... breaks new grounds in Critical Theory.* The book is based on several of the papers I have published as journal articles or contributions to edited volumes in recent years.

### (c) Future research projects

#### *CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL THEORY: FROM AGAMBEN TO ŽIŽEK*

I have plans with Edinburgh University Press to edit another volume about contemporary critical theorists. The book aims to provide students and other readers with an accessible, introductory understanding of key figures in contemporary critical theory. It is designed as a sequel to the volumes *From Kant to Lévi-Strauss: The Background to Contemporary Critical Theory* and *Contemporary Critical Theorists: From Lacan to Said*. It is expected to cover the following theorists: Laclau and Mouffe; Slavoj Žižek; Gayatri Spivak; Giorgio Agamben; Judith Butler; Alain Badiou; Donna Haraway; Homi Bhabha; Jacques Rancière; Bruno Latour; Antonio Negri; Cornelius Castoriadis; Zygmunt Bauman; Paul Virilio; Green theory.

#### *IMAGES STUDIES PROJECT*

I received, along with two other co-applicants, £5,000 from the University of Nottingham's Humanities Research Centre fund for interdisciplinary initiatives to establish an image studies network that examines the production and interpretation of images through the arts and sciences. The basic ambition of the project is to bring together disparate groups of researchers from both humanities and science disciplines, who are already working within the university on image-related projects. The network provides a forum for addressing a range of shared preoccupations, including:

- The development and impact of new imaging technologies
- The prevalence of images in contemporary culture
- The relevance of context for the public understanding of images
- The political and ideological function of images
- The growing importance of 'visual literacy'.

I intend to establish a similar network at IU Bloomington, and to collaborate with Professor James Elkins, Art Institute of Chicago, to develop a Midwest Image Studies Network.

### *IMAGES OF REFUGEES: POLITICS, MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC*

This project will work from the theoretical premises established in the book I am currently writing as well as additional papers about media, politics, epistemology and images, by focusing on political and media images of refugees. The media often claim to speak on behalf of public opinion, representing a variety of views from humanitarian advocacy of refugees to outright racism. Central to the media's representations of public opinion are images of refugees, visual, verbal and ideographic, which are condensed into specific images such as that of the "bogus asylum seeker" or "the victim of war." The mediated political debate about refugees is thus conducted by means of images as a contest to secure hegemony for one or more images. The project look at the ways in which political claims are produced and disseminated in the mediated public sphere, examining such claims in rhetorical, aesthetic, ideological and epistemological terms, especially by assessing the cogitative and epistemic value of those images. The project will move beyond a model of 'negative' and 'positive' images competing for hegemony, suggesting instead that "critical images" can effectively challenge hegemonic ones when they are part of complex configurations of cognition, affect, mediation and cultural dissemination. The project will thereby contribute further to the development of a political-cultural theory appropriate to contemporary mediated politics and popular culture.

## **C. TEACHING**

\* indicates that the class is team-taught.

### 1. UNDERGRADUATE CLASSES

#### 2007-8: Image Cultures

It is often said that we live in an 'image culture', but what precisely is meant by that? Is it the same as 'visual culture'? This course offers an interdisciplinary and historical context for understanding contemporary Western 'image culture' by addressing the notion of the 'image' in a wide range of its theoretical, critical and practical contexts, uses and history. Images are objects of study in disciplines from art history to neuroscience, from political science to cultural studies. The ubiquity of visual imagery is only half the story of contemporary image culture, given that there is a whole family of graphic, optical, perceptual and mental imagery. We thus need an appreciation of dreams, fantasies, memories, literary images, metaphors, ideas and sense impressions, as well as corporate, political, personal, bodily and commodity images.

## 2006-8: Words and Images in Politics and Culture (Senior Seminar in Communication and Culture)

Much scholarship about democracy argues that its political discourse is sustained by the reasonableness of public, verbal argument and debate, known as deliberation. Frequently, deliberation is thought to be undermined by visual (or audio-visual and multi-media) forms of political discourse. The course assesses the strength of these arguments by reframing them in terms of an ongoing ideological contest between words and images in Western culture. We ask what is at stake in the contemporary dispute between words and images, in respect of assertions that we live in a predominantly visual culture.

## 2006-7: Public Culture and Popular Culture

The course examines the extent to which contemporary public culture is dominated by or shares the forms of popular culture. At stake in this question is whether perceived shortcomings in popular culture (as commercialized and commodified, trivial, dumb-downed, sensationalist, seductive) undermine the scope and quality of democratic discourse and politics. Public culture is characterised in relation to the notion of the public sphere, the institutional settings of political activity, the mediated character of large-scale political discussion and the forms of public space. Popular culture is characterised in relation to folk, 'local' and 'grass roots' culture, contemporary mediated and commercialised forms, in culture and entertainment industries. The key questions posed are the extent to which democratic political culture is governed by the norms and practices of popular culture (in formal political settings as well as electioneering), and whether (and as a consequence) democratic politics is undermined by cultural populism, overly theatrical, turned into a spectacle, or reduced to a simulacrum of democracy.

## 2000-06: Introduction to Postmodernism

The class introduces step by step the elusive and unstable phenomenon called "postmodernism". By working through specific examples of postmodernism in architecture, visual art, film, ideas, literature, and TV, the class examines the varieties of postmodernism that are features of contemporary culture. In each case, the class asks what identifies the example as "postmodern" and how it reflects its broader context. The class also addresses the question of whether postmodernism is a "structure of feeling".

## 1995-98: Multiculturalism: Issues and Challenges

The class examines multiculturalism in Britain and the U.S. through film (*Do the Right Thing; My Beautiful Laundrette*) and literature (*Buddha of Suburbia*). The module also addresses key issues such as Muslim headscarves in French schools

and affirmative action on U.S. campuses. Multiculturalism poses certain challenges and problems to society. Is there a danger of fragmentation in the face of which core values must be asserted authoritatively (Bloom), or do demands for recognition from others presuppose shared horizons of significance (Taylor)? What is the meaning of equality in multicultural society (Young)? What is the significance of identity for the struggle of oppressed groups for equality (hooks)?

1994-95: Radical Democratic Theory  
1993-98: Contemporary Feminist Theory  
1993-95: Foucault as a Political Thinker  
1991-92: Contemporary Feminist Theory  
1989-92: History of Political Thought

## 2. GRADUATE CLASSES

2007-8: Images and Critique In Public Culture

The course examines and assesses some contemporary critical thought about images, especially the role of images in politics. Rather than only pursuing various strategies for the critique of images that have become familiar as ideology critique, the course explores the possibility of thinking critically through images. It studies different types of images (in advertising, film, television, history and politics) through a variety of theoretical approaches (Marxist ideology critique, Benjamin's dialectics, semiotics, psychoanalysis, visual culture and rhetoric, and neuroscience). The course also addresses the following questions and issues: whether all types of images can be considered as a category; the relation between the visual and the verbal; the non-visual as well as visual character of images; the pertinence of iconoclastic hostility to images in society and politics; and the potential for critical thought by means of images. The course opens by problematizing the conception of images as only visual, leading to a deeper examination of the relation between words and images in democratic culture. It then examines the view that images ideological and hence a problem for politics and society, before turning around the opening negative assessment of images by looking at the ways in which media images might provide critical insight or induce critical thinking. We move on to some considerations of the imagistic nature of human thinking drawn from contemporary history of art, cognitive and neuroscience.

2006-7: Aestheticized Politics: Postmodernism and Democracy (Research Seminar in Rhetoric and Public Culture)

Critical political theory has generally been antipathetic to the aestheticization of politics, as in Walter Benjamin's famous 'sound bite' about the fascist aestheticization of politics. Such antipathy can be traced back to Plato, but is best conceived in modern terms through the Kantian tripartition of faculties, translated into Weber's cultural value spheres, which is adapted by Jürgen Habermas. In

contemporary terms, the Left's anti-aestheticism translates into a disdain for images, myths and symbols, and in condemnations of contemporary 'designer' and 'mediatized' politics (shared with other liberal political commentators, such as Daniel Boorstin). Using Habermas, David Harvey and Terry Eagleton as examples, the course examines the contemporary association of aestheticized democratic politics with postmodernism, and in particular with commodified culture. We then look at Benjamin's own argument that concerned the phantasmagoric dream-world of commodities in modernity. This analysis might allow us to consider other forms of aesthetic experience such as enchanting, mimetic, sensory relation to commodities. Wolfgang Iser's work on postmodernism and aestheticization also opens up the range of meanings to aesthetics to include non-Kantian definitions that might be more appropriate to the conduct of democratic politics. In particular, by working through some positions of cultural pessimists (e.g. Adorno, Jim McGuigan), and populists (e.g. John Fiske, John Hartley) in cultural studies, as well as some mediating positions (notably Stuart Hall) we will explore the potential for popular aesthetics to provide the cultural resources for democratic politics.

#### 2000-04: Social and Political Theories\*

The class provides an introduction into social and political critical theories. It traces the development of such theories from Marx, to neo-Marxism, the Frankfurt School and its contemporary successors (Habermas). The module then confronts these traditions with more recent critical theories that focus on issues of gender, race and ethnicity, i.e. feminism and postcolonialism.

#### 2000-06: Thought, Image, Critique

The class offers an introduction to the nascent interdisciplinary field of image studies, by examining different types of images (in advertising, film, art, television, history and politics) through a variety of theoretical approaches (Marxist ideology critique, Benjamin's dialectics, psychoanalysis, semiotics, art history and neuroscience). The class addresses the following questions and issues: whether all types of images can be considered as a category; the relation between the visual and the verbal; the non-visual as well as visual character of images; the pertinence of iconoclastic hostility to images in society and politics; and the potential for critical thought by means of images. The class opens with the view that images are a problem for politics and society (Debord, Habermas, Boorstin), before turning around the opening negative assessment of images by looking at the ways in which media images can provide critical insight (DeLuca, Shapiro). We problematize the conception of images as only visual (W.J.T. Mitchell), turn to art history to look at images as puzzles and the pleasures that images bring (James Elkins, Mieke Bal, Barthes), ending with some considerations of the interface between art history and neuroscience (Zeki, Damasio).

#### 2000-06: Postmodernisms\*

The class addresses the elusive and unstable concept of postmodernism by

examining it in terms of postmodern thought in the realms of social and cultural theory, and philosophy. The first seminars will assess attempts to theorize and characterize the postmodern as a sociological, economic, cultural or intellectual condition (Jameson, Harvey, Bauman, Lyotard). Then the class will examine the differences and similarities between thinkers whose work is considered to be postmodern (Lyotard, Baudrillard, Foucault, Deleuze & Guattari, Rorty and feminism) by looking at themes such as power, knowledge, desire and critique.

#### 2000-04: Tradition of Critique\*

Contemporary theorists write against the background of an intellectual tradition of critique that characterised the European Enlightenment. This series of lectures surveys that tradition, addressing the key thinkers and themes that constitute the philosophical background to today's critical theorists, knowledge of which is often assumed by contemporary thinkers. I deliver the lectures on Kant, and Nietzsche. The class has proved popular with graduate students from across the campus, and has been adopted by the University's Graduate School for its program for all PhD students.

#### 2000-01: Postcolonialisms\*

#### 1996-98: Social and Political Theories\* Tradition of Critique\*

#### 1996-98: Political Theory and Identity

Identity issues have forced themselves into contemporary political thinking because of two developments: multiculturalism in Western democracies and the resurgence of nationalism in Eastern Europe. The module focuses on the different ways in which issues of identity have become central to contemporary political theory. Examples of post-Marxist (Laclau and Mouffe, Paul Gilroy), feminist (Catherine MacKinnon, Nancy Hartsock, Norma Alarcón, bell hooks), communitarian (Charles Taylor), psychoanalytic (Žižek, Kristeva) and postmodern political theory (Foucault, Butler, Connolly) will be discussed. The seminars will study how these theories deal with issues of social solidarity, nationalism, coalition politics and the recognition or affirmation of cultural and gender difference.

#### 1996-98: Postmodernisms

#### 1995-96: Modernism and Postmodernism\* Poststructuralism\* Political Theories\* Cultural Difference\*

#### 1994-95: The Sources of Feminism

#### 1993-95: Postmodernism

### 3. METHODS OF TEACHING

(a) General Practices

My teaching stresses active student involvement and independent thinking by means of seminar participation, small group work within seminars, as well as student presentations to the class. Films, novels and both still and moving images are integrated with theoretical texts as the basis for discussion. I use formal lectures where appropriate for the provision of a framework for discussion. Informal techniques, such as simulation games, dynamic discussion processes and improvised presentations are a regular aspect of my pedagogy.

For the “Thought, Image, Critique” module I have devised a series of class exercises that involve the students abilities to generate and create as well as interpret and analyse images. For example, in the first seminar on political images students in small groups produce the concept for a political campaign that they “pitch” to the rest of the group, with quite startling results.

(b) Teaching technology

I make extensive use of Indiana University’s Oncourse facility for communicating with students, posting lecture outlines and summaries of student discussions in class, as well as displaying reading and other materials used for class.

4. EVIDENCE OF TEACHING PERFORMANCE

a) Student Assessment

Student assessment of all the modules on which I have taught has ranged between “good” and “excellent”. In addition to the aggregated numerical scores, four open questions are included in each evaluation form to collect qualitative data. A very brief summary of those comments suggests that undergraduates particularly enjoy the opportunity to learn and engage in informed discussion about topics of current interest to their experiences. Graduates appreciate the range and intellectual depth of material covered in modules, as well as the creativeness of seminar work.

b) External Examiners’ Reports

External examiners (peers from other universities who assess the standard of courses relative to British national standards) have commented as follows on the Critical Theory MA course of which I have been director from 1995-2005:

*This MA provides an excellent grounding for students intending to pursue research in literature, cultural studies, film or social theory. There are very few MAs with as strong a theoretical focus and the Nottingham MA addresses the needs of its students well ... The MA offers a challenging and coherent programme of study.*  
(Final report, 1994-7).

*I was impressed by the conception, framing and organization of this course and the high quality of the candidates ... Programme objectives are clearly defined, and the course is well resourced ... I found that all candidates had achieved an impressively high standard in a difficult subject ... The consistently high standard achieved by candidates is I think a clear reflection of the quality of the teaching and the organization of the course. (Annual report, 1997).*

The external examiner for the new MA in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory remarked that:

*This MA has an impressively broad and ambitious curriculum covering the key issues in Cultural Theory and Cultural Studies. Its aims and objectives are clear. The content of the modules is well structured and should enable students to achieve the objectives.* (Annual report, 2002).

## 5. RESEARCH SUPERVISION

### (a) Masters dissertations

As I was the director of Masters studies in Nottingham, I supervised a large proportion of the dissertations written by MA students each year, across a range of subjects. In 2003-4 I supervised dissertations on the following topics:

Luana Caputo – *Images of Violence and Violent Images*

Amanda Davis – *Toward a Contemporary Aesthetics*

Hazel Li – *Men's Body Images: The Case of Hong Kong*

Kirsty Jamieson – *Representations of Women in Advertisements: Ideology and Resistance*

Arif Mahmoud – *The Contemporary Court Jester: The Simpsons*

Jovita Shek – *A Foucauldian Analysis of the Role of Universities*

Haruyo Tsumagari – *Female Body Image and Practice*

### (b) PhD Research supervision topics

2005- Kezia Picard – *Foucault's Reception in the Disciplines: Subjectivity and Authority* (official supervision ended in 2006 when I left Nottingham, but I continued as an external adviser).

2004-6 (part-time from 2005) Mohammed AbuElmeaza – *Edward Said in Postcolonial Literature and Politics* (supervision transferred to another member of in 2006 when I left Nottingham).

2001-6: Arthur Piper – (part-time until 2004) *Images and Visuality: Cultural Theory, Philosophy and Neurobiology* (AHRB funded).

2001- (co-supervised, part-time until 2005): Francesco Proto – *Architecture as Mass Culture: Icon and Image* (AHRB funded).

2000-5: Sunil Manghani – *The Fall of the Berlin Wall: Image, Text and Visuality* (AHRB funded).

2000-2004 - Trudie Ferrada – *Homage to Truth: Truth and Literature in the Spanish Civil War.*

1998-2003: Stevie Schmiedel – *Contesting the Oedipal Legacy: Deleuzean vs Psychoanalytic Feminist Critical Theory.*

1996-99: Ben Franks – *Contemporary British Anarchism.*

1995-2003: Larry Brown (part-time, co-supervised) – *Rorty and Humanism.*

1995-7, 2003-4 (currently suspended): John Ellis (part-time, co-supervised) – *Arendt and Contemporary Political Issues*

## 6. READING GROUPS

1996-9: Organiser “Truth and Truth Tellers” student-faculty study group on epistemology.

2000-2: Participant in “Urban and Visual Studies” reading group.

2003- Participant in “Culture, Science and Technology” reading group.

## D. ADMINISTRATION

### 1. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

#### (a) COURSE ORGANISATION AND PREPARATION

1995- 2005 **MA in Critical Theory**

2001- 2005 **MA in Cultural Studies and Critical Theory**

2003- 2005 **MA in Critical Theory and Politics**

2003-4 **MA in Modern Languages and Critical Theory**

My responsibilities for the courses include:

- Inter-school coordination. As the course is taught by an interdisciplinary team, my task involves coordinating approximately 15 teaching staff from 5 different Schools (American and Canadian Studies, English, Modern Languages, Humanities, and Politics), as well as some external lecturers and research students.
- Admissions tutor.
- Personal tutor for all students on courses (approximately 25 each year).
- Examinations and student records.
- Publicity and marketing.
- IT provision and Web pages (until 1999).
- Course review and teaching quality assessment.
- Chair of departmental forum for postgraduate taught and research students.
- Library contact.
- Coordination with other Schools for: **MA in Modern Languages and Critical Theory** (since 2001); **MA in Politics and Critical Theory** (1998-2003); **MA in Architecture and Critical Theory** (since 1995).

#### (b) OTHER SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

- 2002: Organisation of faculty and PhD student research workshops.
- 1995-2000: Visiting speaker series including international scholars attracting a regional audience. Visitors included: Luce Irigaray, Griselda Pollock, Alex Callinicos, Zygmunt Bauman, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Stephen White, Terry Eagleton, Chris Norris.

- 1998-99: Organisation and chairing of School's seminar for research students.

## **2. COMMITTEES**

- 2001-5: School of Modern Languages, Learning and Teaching Committee
- 2000-02: University Postgraduate Studies Committee, including:
  - PSC Taught courses working group
  - PSC Programme specifications working group
  - Postgraduate appeals
- 1995-2005: Arts Faculty Library Users Group

## **3. EXTERNAL EXAMINING**

2000-04: Nottingham Trent University. BA Humanities and Social Theory subject (Department of English and Media Studies).

## **OTHER**

### **JOURNALISM**

1994-5: Columnist for *Jerusalem Post*.

### **SUMMARY**

In summary, my curriculum vitae demonstrates:

- A rising trajectory of intellectual innovation and productivity in interdisciplinary research, focused on the interface of political theory and cultural theory.
- Rigorous teaching of an academically demanding subject in a way that ensures maximum student involvement.
- Effective and responsible leadership, organisation and enhancement of an interdisciplinary graduate teaching program.
- Successful administration of academic programmes as well as broader involvement in university administration.