

Peter Steinberger
Robert H. and Blanche Day Ellis Professor of Political Science and Humanities
Reed College

I am a political philosopher. I joined the Reed faculty in 1977, and I continue to teach full-time. However, I will be on sabbatical for the '25-'26 academic year

My principal professional commitment is to **teaching**. For several years now I have offered a rotating series of three upper division courses. One of these is entitled "'Being and Time' and Politics," where the full semester is devoted to reading the entirety of *Being and Time*. I think Reed is actually one of the few undergraduate institutions where that would be possible, owing to the particular nature of our students. My students struggle with the text at first, but by the middle of the term they have become reasonably fluent readers of Heidegger (in translation), and many of them produce terrific papers. I dislike Heidegger intensely, but I adore his book, and it is a great pleasure to see students engage with it seriously, competently and with obvious excitement. My course entitled "Judgment" begins by asking students to read Plato's *Gorgias* and parts of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, after which we engage in detail the two central texts of the semester: Kant's Third Critique and Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. We end up reading various essays by Fish, Dworkin, Oakeshott, Habermas, Arendt and others. My course on "Hegel and Marx" focuses on the *Philosophy of Right*, which we read in its entirety, along with the usual canonical texts by Marx. It's a course that I have taught for many years indeed, and its alums have included people like Julia Adams (sociology, Yale), Peter Gordon (history, Harvard), Jody Hoffer-Gittel (business, Brandeis), and Liz Wingrove (political theory, Michigan), among many others.

In addition to these upper-division courses, I teach "Humanities 110" every year. This is a single, full-year course with a common syllabus taught by 25 faculty members from a variety of disciplines and required of all first-year students at Reed. The course and the requirement have been in continuous existence since 1943, though the syllabus has changed over the years. In recent years, we have spent four weeks on ancient Egypt, nine weeks on Greece from Homer to Plato, six weeks on Mexico from the conquest in 1521 to the massacre in Mexico City in 1968, and seven weeks on the Harlem Renaissance, ending with Ellison's fabulous *Invisible Man*. While this is not the syllabus I would have chosen – I preferred the year-long Greece/Rome syllabus that we used to offer – I nonetheless love teaching the course. The materials are wonderful and the inter-disciplinarity is important, stimulating and excellent for our students. However, beginning in Fall '26, the syllabus will change quite substantially.

My **research** focuses on a range of issues in political philosophy, though from a single overall perspective. I am the author of (so far) eight books, two published by reputable presses (SUNY, Polity) and six by world-class presses (Yale, Chicago, Columbia and Cambridge). I have published about thirty articles in learned journals, including five articles in the *American Political Science Review* and a total of eleven in the "Big Three" of political science (*APSR*, *JOP*, *AJPS*), along with articles in a number of other serious scholarly journals. My general interest essays have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Christian Science Monitor* and other publications, though for a variety of reasons I stopped doing that kind of writing a while back. It is important to note that I have a pretty clearly defined theoretical

position, one that I have pursued, though with increasing self-awareness, for quite some time. I am a rationalist, but of a certain kind. I embrace a type of coherentist, internalist and holist view that might be associated with certain post-Kantian traditions, as represented by, arguably, philosophers of the Pittsburgh school. One could say that my overall project has been to bring philosophical materials of that kind to bear on issues of political thought, and my particular focus has increasingly been on the foundational role of implicit – as opposed to express or tacit – belief in constituting the “ground” of political judgment and action. I’m inclined to say that my work has always been somewhat orthogonal to the dominant trends in political theory which are not especially favorable to rationalism in any form.

My career has also included significant commitments to **administration**. For thirteen years (1997-2010) I was Reed’s Dean of the Faculty. At Reed, the Dean of the Faculty is the chief academic officer and second operating officer of the institution – in effect, vice president for academic affairs – and serves as President in the President’s absence. Along these lines, I also served for one complete year (2001-02) as Acting President of the College. During my time as Dean, I taught one or another course every year. I love the College, and it was a pleasure to be able to serve it in an administrative capacity.

Finally, in terms of **service** per se, I am past-President of the Western Political Science Association. (I also subsequently chaired WPSA’s Executive Director search committee, the success of which is suggested by the fact that the person we hired is still Executive Director, sixteen years later.) I was a member of the Trust and Development Board of the American Political Science Association, which is responsible for managing APSA’s endowment. Since 2005 I have been a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Review of Politics*. I am also a frequent referee for most of the discipline’s major journals. For eleven years I was a Trustee of the Catlin Gabel School, the principal college-prep school in the Pacific Northwest. (I also subsequently chaired Catlin’s Head of School search committee, the success of which is suggested by the fact that the person we hired has only just announced his retirement after twelve years of distinguished service.) I continue my own long-time service on Catlin’s Audit and Risk Management Committee.

As should be apparent, I am deeply grateful to have been a faculty member at Reed. As an institution of higher education, I believe it is probably *sui generis*, and in very good ways. It has certainly afforded me a career many times more rewarding than I ever would have anticipated.