

PHILOSOPHY 334/634: SOCIAL & POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Fall 2017

TR, 12-1:20pm

Baker Hall 235b

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:30-5:30pm & Wednesdays 1-2pm or by appointment

Baker Hall 155C

Course Description & Objectives

This is an advanced course in political philosophy. Political philosophers are interested in whether, and to what extent, government use of coercion can be justified. This question involves many facets, including what gives the government the legitimate authority (if any) to coercively enforce the rules, what limits there are (if any) to the legitimate kinds of rules the government can enforce (and why), what obligations (if any) the government has to the citizens that are governed by its rules, and what claims (if any) citizens of a state can make upon one another. This course provides a topical investigation of some subset of these questions, as well as the concepts that are often appealed to in political theory, such as “justice”, “equality”, and “fairness”. Readings will be comprised of classic and contemporary theorists from within the liberal political tradition as well as theorists critical of this tradition and its ability to live up to the lofty ideals it espouses.

This course aims to familiarize students with classic and contemporary questions in political philosophy. Students are expected to come away from the course with a broad understanding of some of the major debates in political theory as well as the tools to analyze ongoing debates within contemporary US politics regarding the appropriate way to organize our social and political reality. This course will be primarily conducted as a seminar (more below) and is intended to be discussion- rather than lecture-based. Course topics will vary from year to year.

Required Texts

All readings will be made available via Canvas.

Important Dates

Sept. 11: Drop deadline for tuition adjustment

Oct. 23: Mid-semester grades turned in

Nov. 6: Final drop deadline

Nov. 20: First paper due

Nov. 23: No classes; Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 27: Peer review due

Dec. 13: Final paper due

Course Requirements

The learning curve for reading and writing philosophical materials is steep, and early feedback will be important to you in improving your work. Homework assignments are structured to improve students' reading habits, analytical skills, and writing.

Homework and Short Response Pieces – 25%

Beginning the second week of classes, students will have a minimum of one homework assignment due each week. Assignment specifics will always be announced in class, and when relevant specifics posted to Canvas. Students are responsible for knowing what the assignment is each week. Some assignments will be built on or involve in-class activities. Students who miss a day of class with which a writing assignment is associated will not receive full credit for the assignment.

First Term Paper – 25%

*Each student will write a term paper of approximately 3000 words critically engaging with a topic relevant to the course. The term paper may be a more fully developed version of a short response piece, or an independent work. All term paper topics must be approved by me in advance. Further details about the term paper will be provided in class. Your first term paper is due no later than **12pm (noon) on Monday, November 20th.***

Peer Review – 10%

*Each student will be required to write a critical review and response to another student's first term paper. These reviews should critically but charitably discuss the paper under review, raise questions of interpretation, present worries and objections, and provide alternative possibilities. The goal of the peer review is to provide constructive criticism which will help the recipient to consider new objections and improve his or her work. Peer reviews are due no later than **12pm (noon) on Monday, November 27th.***

Second Term Paper – 30%

*Graded term papers with comments from both me and your peer reviewer will be returned to you by Monday, December 4th. Students will re-write their term papers in light of the comments received. Final papers are due no later than **10pm on Wednesday, December 13th.***

Attendance & Class Participation – 10%

10% of your grade consists of participation in in-class discussions of the readings and regular class attendance. You should attend each class ready to engage in discussion and critical assessment of the readings. See below for more details.

Students taking this course for graduate credit should see me to discuss course requirements.

Class Policies

Late Assignments

It is the responsibility of the student to have all assignments submitted no later than the assigned deadline, and all readings completed before the beginning of each class meeting. All late assignments will be penalized half a letter grade (5 points) for every day or portion of a day that they are late. **Writing assignments submitted more than 3 calendar days late will receive a 0. Papers submitted more than 7 calendar days late will receive a 0.** Requests for reasonable accommodation due to legitimate conflicts must be made in advance.

Attendance

Attendance is not taken, but a pattern of missed classes will be noticed and will impact your attendance and class participation grade. Missing a significant number of class meetings is also likely to impact your grade through your performance on class assignments. Students who miss class are responsible for discovering on their own or from classmates any material missed or changes to class assignments. **Emails requests from students asking what they missed during unexcused absences will be ignored.**

Participation

Philosophical inquiry is a joint endeavor, and the quality of the course will depend crucially on your thoughtful, considerate engagement with the readings and with each other. We will be discussing controversial topics about which many of you will have strong feelings. However our purpose in this class is to **move past feelings and opinions**, and to evaluate and provide **reasoned arguments** for and against various positions on these issues. **Disrespectful comments towards other students will not be tolerated.** Students should come to class having closely read and thought about all assigned materials. This requires, at a minimum:

- Determining the key point the author is trying to establish or criticize;
- Understanding why the author considers it to be important;
- Identifying the reasons the author gives in support of the conclusion; and
- Considering whether those reasons both (a) are true or correct, and (b) actually support the author's conclusion.

Students are encouraged to take notes while reading, and to come to class with questions about and criticisms of the readings.

Communication

Students are not always familiar with the norms governing professional correspondence. Please use the following resource to inform your understanding of what is expected from communications in a professional environment: <https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087#.gyje2zezg>. **Please note that I do not read or respond to student emails outside of normal business hours (i.e. if you email me in the evening, you will not receive a response until the next weekday morning).**

Grading

Grades are assigned on the following scale:

A	90-100	D	60-69.9
B	80-89.9	R/F	0-59.9
C	70-79.9		

While I recognize that grade inflation has generated the expectation that a “B” should be fairly easy to achieve, and an “A” not too hard, it is not the case that instructors are obligated to inflate grades. I also recognize that receiving a lower grade than one has come to expect can be traumatic. However, in this class grades mean what they are intended to mean. A “C” represents a satisfactory or average performance, and is nothing to be ashamed of. A “B” is a good performance, and something to be proud of. An “A” indicates outstanding or truly exemplary work. There is a steep learning curve to reading and writing philosophy effectively, which should provide you with strong incentives to work hard at the beginning of the semester and receive the kind of feedback you will need to excel in your paper assignments.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

Plagiarism refers to the use of any ideas or words from another person or source without appropriate citation. All sources used for course assignments should be appropriately cited, including information found on the internet, in course readings, or from class discussions. If you are unsure about whether or not to cite something, err on the side of caution. I have a zero-tolerance policy for cheating: **Any student found to have plagiarized on any assignment will receive a failing grade for the assignment, and at my discretion, for the entire course.** Additionally, all available institutional penalties will be sought.

Technology in the Classroom

I and your classmates put a great deal of time and effort into preparing for an interesting class discussion, and you are expected to do the same. When entering the classroom, please place your phone on “silent” and put it away for the duration of our meeting. If there is an urgent need to keep your phone on during a particular class period, please inform me at the beginning of class, sit where you can leave the room without distracting others, and keep your phone on vibrate. Students are permitted but strongly discouraged from using laptops during class. While typing is faster than writing for many of us, using a computer during discussion significantly distracts from what is going on and leads to disengagement from those around you. While some users can successfully use a computer without multitasking, most cannot – it is hard not to take a down moment to check your email or look at your calendar. But studies have shown that this kind of multitasking during class not only causes the computer user’s learning to suffer, but also that of the students sitting nearby who can see the screen.¹ Moreover, recent research has shown that students take better notes, and learn more, when they take notes via longhand instead of on a computer.²

¹ Sana, F., T. Weston and N. J. Cepeda (2013). "Laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers." Computers & Education 62: 24-31.

² Mueller, P. A. and D. M. Oppenheimer (2014). "The Pen is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking." Psychological Science 25: 1159-1168.

Videotaping and Audio Recording

Videotaping and audio recording are prohibited without the express written permission of the instructor.

If you have a disability and have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate. If you suspect that you may have a disability and would benefit from accommodations but are not yet registered with the Office of Disability Resources, I encourage you to contact them at access@andrew.cmu.edu.

Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking some time to relax. Also: make use of the resources available to you to manage the stresses and anxieties that we all experience sometimes. An important part of maturing is learning how and when to ask for help. Asking for help sooner rather than later can in many cases help to avert more serious crises. If you or anyone you know is experiencing anxiety or depression, I encourage you to seek support. You can contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) at [412-268-2922](tel:412-268-2922) or visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

Outline of Topics & Tentative Schedule of Readings

(All dates and readings are subject to change. You will always be informed of what to read for the next class at the end of the previous meeting.)

Aug. 29: Course introduction and overview

Please read before class:

Peggy McIntosh. (1989). "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." Peace and Freedom Magazine **1989**(July/August): 10-12.

Part I: White Ignorance & Epistemic Injustice

Aug. 31: White Ignorance

Charles Mills. (2007). White Ignorance. Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance. S. Sullivan and N. Tuana. Albany, State University of New York Press: 13-38.

Sept. 5: Maintaining & Managing Ignorance

Elizabeth V. Spelman. (2007). Managing Ignorance. Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance. S. Sullivan and N. Tuana. Albany, State University of New York Press: 119-131.

Sept. 7: Epistemic Virtues & Vices

José Medina. (2013). "Active Ignorance, Epistemic Others, and Epistemic Friction." *The Epistemology of Resistance*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 1.

Part II: What is (In)Justice?

Sept. 12: Racial Inequality in the US: History and Statistics

Selections from Elizabeth Anderson. (2010). "Racial Segregation and Material Inequality in the United States." *The Imperative of Integration*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, ch. 2. (read pp. 23 – bottom of 29)

Ta-Nehisi Coates. (2014). "The Case for Reparations." *The Atlantic*. June, 2014. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Sept. 14: Entitlement Theory

Robert Nozick. (1974). "Distributive Justice." *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York, Basic Books, ch. 7 section 1.

Sept. 19: Self-Ownership

G.A. Cohen. (1995). "Self-Ownership, World Ownership, and Equality." *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, ch. 3.

Sept. 21: Two Principles of Justice

John Rawls. (1972). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, ch. 1, §§1-4; ch. 2, §§11-13, 17; ch. 3, §§24-26.

Sept. 26: Two Principles of Justice, cont'd.

Rawls, cont'd.

Sept. 28: Luck Egalitarianism

Elizabeth Anderson. (1999). "What is the Point of Equality?" *Ethics* 109(2): 287-337. **Read pp. 287-307.**

Oct. 3: Democratic Equality

Elizabeth Anderson. (1999). "What is the Point of Equality?" *Ethics* 109(2): 287-337. **Read pp. 308-337.**

Oct. 5: Oppression

Iris Marion Young. (1990). "Five Faces of Oppression." *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, ch. 2.

Oct. 10: Racial Inequality

Christopher Lebron. (2014). "Equality from a Human Point of View." *Critical Philosophy of Race* 2(2): 125-159.

Part III: Responsibility & Structural Injustice

Oct. 12: The Basic Structure as Subject

John Rawls. (1993). *Political Liberalism*. New York, Columbia University Press, Lecture VII §§1-5

John Rawls (2001). *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, §§15-16.

Oct. 17: The Basic Structure & Personal Responsibility

G.A. Cohen (1997). "Where the Action is: On the Site of Distributive Justice." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 26(1): 3-30.

Oct. 19: Personal vs. Social Responsibility

Iris Marion Young. (2011). "From Personal to Political Responsibility." *Responsibility for Justice*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 1.

OCT. 24: DISCUSSION OF TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT; NO READING. ATTENDANCE MANDATORY.

Oct. 26: The Basic Structure & Structural Inequality

Iris Marion Young. (2011). "Structure as the Subject of Justice." *Responsibility for Justice*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 2.



Oct. 31: Personal Responsibility & Social Injustice

Tommie Shelby. (2007). "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35(2): 126-160.

NOV. 2: WRITING WORKSHOP, NO READINGS. ATTENDANCE MANDATORY.

Nov. 7: The Social Connection Model

Iris Marion Young. (2011). "A Social Connection Model." *Responsibility for Justice*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, ch. 4.

NOV. 9: WRITING WORKSHOP, NO READINGS. ATTENDANCE MANDATORY.

Part IV: Freedom & Domination

Nov. 14: Negative Liberty

Selections from John Stuart Mill. (1859). *On Liberty*.

Nov. 16: Positive Liberty

Selections from Isaiah Berlin. (1969). "Two Concepts of Liberty." From *Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Nov. 21: Freedom To Do vs. Freedom To Be

Jeremy Waldron. (1991-92). "Homelessness and the Issue of Freedom." *UCLA Law Review* 39: 295-324.

NOV. 28: IN-CLASS PEER REVIEW, NO READINGS. ATTENDANCE MANDATORY.

Nov. 30: Freedom as Non-Domination

Farrelly, Colin. (2004). "Introduction to Republicanism." *Political Theory: A Reader*, ed. C. Farrelly. SAGE Publications. 147-150.

Pettit, Philip. (2004) "Freedom as Anti-Power." *Political Theory: A Reader*, ed. C. Farrelly. SAGE Publications. 151-158.

Dec. 5: Vulnerability and Domination

Garrau, M. and C. Laborde (forthcoming). Relational Equality, Non-Domination, and Vulnerability. *Social Equality: Essays on What It Means to be Equals*. C. Fourie, F. Schuppert and I. Wallimann-Helber. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Dec. 7: Overflow Day/Semester Review & Recap

No new readings.