

PHILOSOPHY 334: SOCIAL & POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Fall 2016

TR, 12-1:20pm

Baker Hall 235b

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Office Hours: Mondays 1-2pm & Tuesdays 4:30-5:30pm

Baker Hall 155C

Course Description & Objectives

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 systematic investigation of such 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.

Required Texts

All readings will be made available via Canvas.

Important Dates

Sept. 12: Drop deadline for tuition adjustment

Sept. 29: First exam

Oct. 20: Second exam

Oct. 24: Mid-semester grades turned in

Nov. 7: Final drop deadline

Nov. 24: No classes; Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 15: Final exam 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.

Short Writing Assignments – 40%

Students will be given 8 short writing assignments (6 substantive; 2 goals related) over the course of the semester. Writing assignments are exercises in both exposition and analysis. They will be graded based on students' ability to present (in their own words) the arguments from the readings and to construct arguments of their own defending one or another of conflicting positions.

Exams – 50%

*There will be two in-class exams and a take-home final. Students will be provided with all exam questions in advance. All exams will be closed-book. The first exam will be in class on **September 29** and will be worth 15% of your final grade. The second exam will be in class on **October 20** and will be worth 15% of your final grade. Final exams will be take-home and will be due no later than **11:59pm on Thursday, December 15**. Final exams will be worth 20% of your final grade.*

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. 10% of this portion of your grade will come from your syllabus quiz on the second day of class.

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. Final exams 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 on a Friday evening, you will not receive a response until Monday 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

Videotaping and Audio Recording

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

If you wish to request an accommodation due to a documented disability, please see me and contact Disability Resources at access@andrew.cmu.edu or 412-268-2013 as soon as possible.

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.

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 30: Course introduction and overview

Please read before class the following four articles:

Travis Rieder, "Is the 'lesser of two evils' an ethical choice for voters?":

<https://theconversation.com/is-the-lesser-of-two-evils-an-ethical-choice-for-voters-63738>

"Noam Chomsky's 8-point Rationale for the Lesser Evil Presidential Candidate":

<http://www.alternet.org/election-2016/noam-chomskys-8-point-rationale-voting-lesser-evil-presidential-candidate>

John H. Boyer, "You Don't Need to Vote for the Lesser Evil":

<http://thefederalist.com/2016/08/18/you-dont-need-to-vote-for-the-lesser-evil/>

W.E.B. duBois, "Why I Won't Vote": [http://www.hartford-](http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/298.html)

[hwp.com/archives/45a/298.html](http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/298.html)

Part I: The Social Contract

Sept. 1: *The Duty to (dis)Obey*

Socrates. *Crito*.

Martin Luther King. (1963). "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

Sept. 6: *The State of Nature & The Social Contract, Part I*

Selections from Thomas Hobbes. (1651). *Leviathan*.

Sept. 8: *The Fool & The Prisoner's Dilemma*

Gregory Kavka. (1986). "Cooperation in the State of Nature." *Hobbesian Moral and Political Theory*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, ch. 4.

Sept. 13: *The State of Nature & The Social Contract, Part II*

Selections from John Locke. (1689). *Second Treatise of Government*.

Sept. 15: *Against the Social Contract, Part I*

Virginia Held. (1987). "Non-Contractual Society: A Feminist View." From *Science, Morality, and Feminist Theory*, eds. M.P. Hanen & K. Nielsen. Calgary, University of Calgary Press.

Sept. 20: *Against the Social Contract, Part II*

Selections from Charles Mills. (1997). *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

Interlude: Immigration

Sept. 22: *Immigration, Part I*

Christopher Wellman. (2008). "Immigration and Freedom of Association" *Ethics* 119(1).

Sept. 27: *Immigration, Part II*

Shelley Wilcox. (2014). "Do Duties to Outsiders Entail Open Borders?" *Philosophical Studies* 169(1): 123-132.

SEPT. 29: EXAM #1

Part II: What Does it Mean to be Free?

Oct. 4: Negative Liberty

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

Oct. 6: Positive Liberty

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

Oct. 11: Freedom To Do Something vs. Freedom To Be Somewhere

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

Oct. 13: Review and/or Overflow Day

No new readings.

Oct. 18: 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.

OCT. 20: EXAM #2

Part III: Justice & Equality

Oct. 25: Equality of Opportunity

No new readings.

Oct. 27: Entitlement Theory

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

Nov. 1: Self-Ownership

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

Nov. 3: What is Justice?

No new readings.

Nov. 8: 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.

Nov. 10: Two Principles of Justice, cont'd.

Rawls, cont'd.

Nov. 15: Equality & Social Justice

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

Nov. 17: Oppression

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

Nov. 22: Racial Inequality

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

***** Nov. 24: No Class Meeting, Thanksgiving Break*****

Part IV: Responsibility & Structural Injustice

Nov. 29: Personal vs. Social Responsibility

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

Dec. 1: The Basic Structure & Structural Inequality

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

Dec. 6: Personal Responsibility & Social Injustice

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

Dec. 8: The Social Connection Model

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