

PHILOSOPHY 335/635: SOCIAL & POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Fall 2019

TR, 12 - 1:20pm

Baker Hall 235a

Dr. Danielle Wenner (she/her)

dwenner@andrew.cmu.edu

Office Hours: T4:30-5:30pm; W2-3pm & by appt

Baker Hall 155c

Sam Kang, grader (she/her)

soomink@andrew.cmu.edu

Office hours: M3:30-5:30pm

Doherty Hall 4301a

Course Description & Objectives

Broadly speaking, political philosophers are interested in whether, and to what extent, government use of coercion can be justified, and how formal social and political institutions should be structured in order to be legitimate. Social philosophy encompasses these political questions, but also looks at how individuals should live together and how individual behaviors can impact not only state institutions but also more informal social norms and institutions.

This is an advanced course in social **and** political philosophy, aimed at providing students with an in-depth familiarity with classic and contemporary questions both theoretical and applied. The course is topical, and course topics vary from year to year. Typically 4-5 topics are covered in a term. Previous years' topics have included the nature and value of freedom, social contract theory, racial and epistemic injustice and the nature of white ignorance, sexism and the nature of misogyny, the intersecting concepts of justice and equality, structural injustice, responsibility for injustice, and immigration.

Students are expected to come away from the course with a strong understanding of some of the major debates in social and political theory as well as the theoretical tools to analyze ongoing debates in contemporary US and global politics regarding the appropriate way to organize our social and political reality. This course is primarily conducted as a seminar and is discussion- rather than lecture-based.

Required Texts

All readings will be made available via Canvas.

Important Dates

Sept. 9: Drop deadline for tuition adjustment

Oct. 21: Mid-semester grades turned in

Nov. 5: Final drop deadline

Nov. 18: First paper due

Nov. 25: Peer review due

Nov. 28: No classes; Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 11: 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. If you are struggling with written assignments, make use of either my or the grader's office hours.

Homework and Short Response Pieces – 25%

Over the course of the semester, there will be several short writing assignments. Assignment specifics are posted on Canvas. Students are responsible for knowing about class assignments. Note that assignment due dates vary by day of the week. Students who are unable to complete short writing assignments by the assigned time will be granted reasonable extensions, provided that an extension is requested in advance.

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 writing assignment, 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 18th**. Students who are unable to meet this deadline will be granted a reasonable extension, provided that an extension is requested in advance.*

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 their work. Peer reviews are due no later than **12pm (noon) on Monday, November 25th**. Peer reviews will be discussed with paper authors in class on **Tuesday, November 26th**. Note that this is the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Students not in attendance for that discussion will receive an automatic 20% deduction on their peer review grade.*

Second Term Paper – 30%

*Graded term papers with comments from both me and your peer reviewer will be returned to you by Monday, December 2nd. Students will re-write their term papers in light of the comments received. Final papers are due no later than **10pm on Wednesday, December 11th**. Students who are unable to meet this deadline will be granted a reasonable extension, provided that an extension is requested in advance.*

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. Class meetings will frequently involve in-class activities. All students begin the term with full (10 points) participation grade. Any in-class activity that is missed or which a student cannot contribute to due to failure to do the assigned reading results in an automatic deduction of 1 participation point. Participation points can also be lost due to patterns of absenteeism.

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 calendar day or portion of a calendar day that they are late. **Short 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 will be granted but 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 a class day on which an in-class activity is conducted will have one point automatically deducted from their participation grade. Students who miss class are responsible for discovering on their own or from classmates any material missed or changes to class assignments. **Email requests from students asking what they missed during unexcused absences will be ignored.**

Participation

Philosophical inquiry is a joint endeavor, and the quality of this 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(s) the author is trying to establish or criticize;
- Understanding why the author considers it/them to be important;
- Identifying the reason(s) the author gives in support of the conclusion; and
- Considering whether those reasons are both (a) true or correct, and (b) actually in support of 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 written 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 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.

Disability Accommodations

Students with disabilities are legally entitled to reasonable accommodation to ensure equal access to education. If you have a disability and have an accommodation 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.

The ADA defines a disability as a medical condition that substantially limits one or more life activities – including things like walking, sleeping, taking care of yourself, learning, and regulating your emotions – or major bodily functions. If you have a medical condition, *including mental health conditions*, that significantly interferes with your schoolwork, you probably qualify. You do not need to disclose your condition to your instructors to receive accommodations.

Some students will need accommodations in college who did not need them before. 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. It is important to reach out sooner than later, as most accommodations are only forward-looking modifications to class expectations, rather than mitigating low grades you may have already received.

More generally: take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding excess substance use, 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 you need.

I am committed to providing students with equal access to this class. If you are struggling – whether because of a medical condition or otherwise – please come talk to me. It is an expectation in my classroom that both students and I see everyone as a whole person. Self-care is valid and important work, and should take priority over this class. You cannot pour from an empty cup. Prioritize caring for your health, both physical and mental.

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.)

Part I: Debates About Free Speech

Aug. 27: Course introduction; Campus Free Speech

Neil Levy. "Why no-platforming is sometimes a justifiable position." Available at:

<https://aeon.co/ideas/why-no-platforming-is-sometimes-a-justifiable-position>

Eric Heinz. "Israel, no-platforming – and why there's no such thing as 'narrow exceptions' to campus free speech." Available at: <https://theconversation.com/israel-no-platforming-and-why-theres-no-such-thing-as-narrow-exceptions-to-campus-free-speech-76907>

Aug. 29: Freedom of Speech and Conscience

John Stuart Mill. ([1859] 1991). "Freedom of Speech and Conscience" (*On Liberty* ch. 2). *On Liberty and Other Essays*. Ed. J. Gray. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Sept. 3: Propaganda and Shared Reality

Jason Stanley. (2018). "Unreality." *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them*. New York, Random House, ch. 4.

David V. Johnson. (2019). "How do we pry apart the true and compelling from the false and toxic?" Available at: <https://aeon.co/ideas/how-do-we-pry-apart-the-true-and-compelling-from-the-false-and-toxic>

Sept. 5: Power Differentials in the Regulation of Speech

Laura Beth Nielson. (2012). "Power in Public: Reactions, Responses, and Resistances to Offensive Public Speech." *Speech & Harm: Controversies Over Free Speech*, eds. Ishani Maitra & Mary Kate McGowan. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 148-173.

Sept. 10: Speech and Harm

Lynne Tirrell. (2012). "Genocidal Language Games." *Speech & Harm: Controversies Over Free Speech*, eds. Ishani Maitra & Mary Kate McGowan. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 174-221.

Part II: What is (In)Justice?

Sept. 12: Entitlement Theory

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

Sept. 17: Self-Ownership

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

Sept. 19: 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. 24: Two Principles of Justice, cont'd.

Rawls, cont'd.

Sept. 26: The Nature of Egalitarianism

Thomas Scanlon. (1996). "The Diversity of Objections to Inequality." *Lindley Lecture, University of Kansas*. Sections I & II only.

Oct. 1: The Nature of Egalitarianism, cont'd

Samuel Scheffler. (2003). "What is Egalitarianism?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 31(1): 5-39.

**Oct. 3: DISCUSSION OF TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT; NO READINGS.
ATTENDANCE MANDATORY.**

Oct. 8: 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.

Oct. 15: 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.

Oct. 17: 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.

Oct. 22: Epistemic Virtue & Vice

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

Oct. 24: WRITING WORKSHOP, NO READINGS. ATTENDANCE MANDATORY.

Part III: Responsibility & Structural Injustice

Oct. 29: 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. 31: 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.

Nov. 5: Personal vs. Social Responsibility

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

Nov. 7: The Basic Structure & Structural Inequality

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

NOV. 12: WRITING WORKSHOP, NO READINGS. ATTENDANCE MANDATORY.

Nov. 14: Structural Injustice & Personal Responsibility

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

Nov. 19: The Social Connection Model

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

Part IV: Freedom & Domination

Nov. 21: Negative Liberty

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

NOV. 26: IN-CLASS PEER REVIEW, NO READINGS. ATTENDANCE MANDATORY.

Dec. 3: Freedom To Do vs. Freedom To Be

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

Dec. 5: 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.