

PHILO 246

Political Philosophy

Tuesdays / Thursdays, 7:00 – 8:15 PM
505 Hunter West

INSTRUCTOR

Adam Etinson, Dept. of Philosophy, Hunter College, CUNY

Email: ae380@hunter.cuny.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00 – 4:00 PM; Office 1418HW;

COURSE DESCRIPTION

All human beings find themselves living under some form of political order, whether it is theocratic, democratic, or autocratic. We rarely *choose* the overall political order under which we live. And yet, all forms of political organization are in some sense *chosen*: that is, they are products of human creativity, understanding, and behaviour. This means that normative questions have a special salience in politics. Given that, unlike a law of nature, a political order can be changed or supplanted with enough human strength, ingenuity, and effort, it is natural to ask whether the status quo in politics lives up to our understanding of how things *ought to be*. Is our political order as good as it can be and, if not, how can it be improved? What normative values, ideas, and standards must a good government satisfy or respect? What does the best political society (perhaps a utopia) look like? These are some of the most basic questions of political philosophy.

This course will introduce students to a wide array of topics and issues in political philosophy. As it is an introductory course, a special emphasis has been placed on *breadth*. The student will come away with a broad competence in the core topics addressed by political philosophy. Some of these topics include: Whether there exists a genuine alternative to life under a political order of some form (Section I); how political authority and political obligations can be justified (Section II); whether democracy is the best form of government (III); what it means to respect the freedom and equality of citizens (Sections IV and V); whether liberalism is an inadequate political ideology (VI); how we should respond to cultural diversity in political governance and in moral argument (Section VII and IX); what human rights are (VIII); and, what application the idea of moral progress might have in the real world (Section X).

Although political philosophy can often seem abstract, throughout the course an effort will be made by the instructor to demonstrate the relevance of political philosophy to current events and political practice. Such topics are likely to include: The so-called Arab Spring, Québécois nationalism, party politics in the US and Canada, the plight of Native American peoples and

other ethnic minorities, the recent (and pending!) military interventions in Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and anti-gay laws in Africa, among many other topics.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course will offer students a chance to:

- (a) Become familiar with the basic concepts and preoccupations of political philosophy.
- (b) Learn to read and interpret primary and secondary source material in philosophy.
- (c) Improve their essay and critical writing techniques.
- (d) Engage in philosophical discussion and discourse, and relate it to their everyday lives.
- (e) Refine their presentation techniques.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(25%) Short essay: 3-4 double-spaced pages, due on the **13th of March**. On the 27th of February, students will be given 5-10 eligible short essay questions. The questions will draw on the topics and readings discussed in the first three sections of the course. And the student will be required to answer their chosen essay question in light of all of the readings associated with its topic, including supplementary readings. The essay will be assessed on the basis of its (i) clarity, (ii) effort, (iii) relevance to the chosen question, (iv) critical distance from the arguments of the discussed authors, and (v) its demonstration of familiarity with the relevant readings. The instructor will give students clear guidelines for writing essays at least a week before the short essay is due.

(35%) Final essay: 5-7 double-spaced pages, due on the **15th of May**. On the 1st of May, students will again be given 5-10 eligible final essay questions. The questions will draw on topics and readings included in the final two sections of the course. These questions are likely to be more ambitious than those provided for the short essay, in that they will require students to cover more material, and to make a distinct positive argument. The same standards of evaluation that applied in the short essay will apply here, but as this is a longer essay more emphasis will be placed on critical distance. If students wish, the instructor will be willing to consider original suggestions for a final essay topic and/or for final essay readings (although this must be done in advance of handing in the essay).

Note: Essays submitted late will be penalized by 1/3 grade per day (e.g. A- instead of A if the paper is one day late).

(20%) In-class Presentation: Each student is expected to deliver a 10-15 minute presentation on a scheduled class topic. Only one presentation will take place per class. Students are asked to present a section or portion of the assigned text(s) that they find interesting and compelling. They will be expected to offer (a) a concise summary of the arguments offered in that section of text, (b) clearly relate that argument to the course material in general, and (c) raise one or two critical questions about the arguments that they have presented. The main goal of these presentations is to give students practice in organizing material to be presented in front of a group.

Note: Students are urged to pick a date for presentation as early as possible, i.e., ideally during the introductory class session on January 28.

(20%) Class Participation: All students will be expected to ask questions and respond to questions posed by the instructor. The hope is that this will facilitate active and engaged class discussions of the course material. Students will be evaluated in accordance with their effort and engagement in class discussions. Basically: don't be shy. Classes are always more fun when there is lots of discussion.

PLAGIARISM

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and punishable by a variety of penalties, including failing grades, notation on a student's record, suspension, and expulsion. It should be noted that plagiarism detection services are available for use by faculty.

Please do not plagiarize. Any words or ideas that come from other sources must be properly credited. Documentation has at least three purposes: to give credit where it is due, as evidence that a reader can go and check, and to suggest sources of further information. If you use information or ideas from someone else in your paper, the sources must be cited even when they are not quoted directly. Failure to cite sources constitutes plagiarism and it is wrong whether it is intentional or unintentional. Any plagiarized coursework will automatically be assigned a grade of 0%.

COURSE MATERIALS

You must acquire the following three books at Shakespeare and Company Bookstore on 939 Lexington Ave:

MANDATORY TEXTS:

- (1) Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Revised Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Hereafter: *IPP*.
- (2) *Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), eds. Jonathan Wolff and Michael Rosen. Hereafter: *PT*.
- (3) Adam Swift, *Political Philosophy: A Beginners' Guide for Students and Politicians: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006). Hereafter: *PP*.

OPTIONAL TEXTS:

(a) Gerald Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

(b) Steven Lukes, *The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat* (New York: Verso Press, 2009)

All other recommended texts will be made available on Blackboard for download. They will also be made available, if the students wish, in the form of a printed course pack.

SYLLABUS

JANUARY

28 INTRODUCTORY CLASS SESSION

I. THE STATE OF NATURE

30 HOBBS AND LOCKE:

(1) *IPP*, pp. 1-23.

(2) *PT*, §1-3.

Supplementary Readings

(A) Sharon A. Lloyd, "Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy" in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2008), Sections 3, 4, and 5. (Available online.)

(B) Alex Tuckness, "Locke's Political Philosophy" in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2010), Section 2. (Available online.)

FEBRUARY

4 ROUSSEAU AND THE ANARCHISTS:

(1) *IPP*, pp. 24-33.

(2) *PT*, §4-10.

Supplementary Readings

(A) Joshua Cohen, "The Natural Goodness of Humanity" in *Rousseau: A Free Community of Equals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 97-130.

II. JUSTIFYING THE STATE

6 SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 34-48.
- (2) *PT*, §18-23.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Jeremy Waldron, “Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism” in *Liberal Rights: Collected Papers 1981-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 35-63.

11 UTILITARIANISM AND FAIRNESS:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 48-61.
- (2) *PT*, §24-27.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Steven Lukes, *The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat* (New York: Verso Press, 2009), pp. 41-115.

13 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE:

- (1) John Simmons, “Civil Disobedience and the Duty to Obey the Law” in *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), eds. R.G. Frey and C.H. Wellman, pp. 50-62.
- (2) *PT*, §30-33.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Kimberley Brownlee, “Conscientious Objection and Civil Disobedience” Forthcoming in *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Law*. Andrei Marmor (ed.)

III. DEMOCRACY

18 PLATO’S CHALLENGE:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 62-77.
- (2) *PT*, §34-35.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), Chs. 4 & 5.

25 ROUSSEAU AND THE GENERAL WILL:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 77-90.
- (2) *PT*, §36-39.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Joshua Cohen, "Democracy" in *Rousseau: A Free Community of Equals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 131-176.

27 GENERAL ISSUES:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 90-103.
- (2) *PT*, §40-48.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) *PP*, Ch. 5, pp. 179-222.

MARCH

IV. FREEDOM

4 THE HARM PRINCIPLE:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 104-128.
- (2) *PT*, §53-56

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Joel Feinberg, "Hard Cases for the Harm Principle", in *Social Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973), pp. 36-54.
- (B) Jeremy Waldron, "Mill and the Value of Moral Distress" in *Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1987, pp. 410-423.

6 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE LIBERTY:

- (1) *PP*, pp. 51-68, 77-89.
- (2) *IPP*, pp. 128-133.
- (3) *PT*, §49-52.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Lukes 2009, pp. 175-249.

11 TOLERATION:

- (1) *PT*, §57.

- (2) Jonas Proast, “The Argument of the Letter Concerning Toleration, Briefly Considered and Answered” in *Locke on Toleration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), ed. R. Vernon, pp. 54-66.
- (3) Karl Popper, “Toleration and Intellectual Responsibility” in *On Toleration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), eds. Susan Mendus & Dave Edwards, pp. 17-35.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Leslie Green, “On Being Tolerated” in *The Legacy of H.L.A. Hart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1-30.
- (B) *PT*, §58-60.

13 THE PUNISHMENT OF EVIL AND THE DEATH PENALTY:

- (1) Louis P. Pojman, “A Defense of the Death Penalty” in *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), eds. A.I. Cohen & C.H. Wellman, pp. 107-124.
- (2) Stephen Nathanson, “Why We Should Put the Death Penalty to Rest” in *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), eds. A.I. Cohen & C.H. Wellman, pp. 124-139.
- (3) *PT*, §70-72.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Terry Eagleton, *On Evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), “Introduction.”

V. JUSTICE

18 PRIVATE PROPERTY:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 133-143.
- (2) *PT*, §73-81.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Jeremy Waldron, “Property and Ownership” in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (2004), (Available online).

20 THE FREE MARKET:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 143-152.
- (2) *PP*, pp. 68-77.
- (3) *PT*, §82-86.

Supplementary Reading

(B) Richard E. Miller, “Capitalism and Marxism” in, in *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), eds. R.G. Frey and C.H. Wellman, pp. 62-75.

25 RAWLS AND NOZICK:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 152-176.
- (2) *PT*, §87-97.

Supplementary Reading

(A) *PP*, Ch. 1, pp. 9-49.

27 EGALITARIANISM:

- (1) *PP*, Ch. 3, pp. 91-132.
- (2) *PT*, §118-123.

Supplementary Reading

(A) Gerald Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

VI. LIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS

APRIL

1 FEMINISM:

- (1) *IPP*, Ch. 6, pp. 177-199.
- (2) *PT*, §11-17.

Supplementary Reading

(A) Jane Mansbridge and Susan Moller Okin, “Feminism” in, *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 2nd Edition, eds. R.E. Goodin, P. Pettit, T. Pogge, pp. 332-360.

(B) Martha Nussbaum, “Objectification” in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (1995), Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 249-291.

3 COMMUNITARIANISM:

- (1) *PP*, Ch. 4, pp. 133-177.
- (2) *IPP*, pp. 129-131.
- (3) *PT*, §115-117.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Michael Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self" in *Political Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1984, pp. 81-96.
- (B) Allen Buchanan, "Assessing the Communitarian Critique of Liberalism" in *Ethics*, Vol. 99, No. 4 (Jul., 1989), pp. 852-882.

8 CONSERVATISM:

- (1) Anthony Quinton and Anne Norton, "Conservatism" in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy: Second Edition* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), eds. Robert Goodin, Philip Pettit, and Thomas Pogge, pp. 285-311.
- (2) *PT*, § 112-114.

Supplementary Readings

- (A) Roger Scruton, "How I Became a Conservative" in *The Roger Scruton Reader* (London: Continuum, 2009), ed. Michael Dooley, pp. 3-19.

VII. CULTURE

10 MINORITY RIGHTS:

- (1) Joseph Raz, "Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective" in, *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 155-176.
- (2) Jeff Spinner-Halev, "Multiculturalism and its Critics" in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), eds. B. Honnig, J. Dryzek, & A. Phillips, pp. 546-563.
- (3) *PT*, §104-105.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Susan Moller Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 9-23.
- (B) Jeremy Waldron, "Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative" in *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), edited by Will Kymlicka, pp. 93-123.

24 NATIONALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM:

- (1) Samuel Scheffler, "Conceptions of Cosmopolitanism" in, *Boundaries and Allegiances* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 111-130.
- (2) David Miller, "Nationalism" in, *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), eds. B. Honnig, J. Dryzek, & A. Phillips, pp. 529-545.

Supplementary Reading

- (a) *PP*, pp. 168-174.
- (b) *PT*, §102-103, 107-108.

VIII. HUMAN RIGHTS

29 HUMAN RIGHTS:

- (1) James Nickel, "The Contemporary Idea of Human Rights" in *Making Sense of Human Rights: Second Edition* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), Ch. 1, pp. 7-21.
- (2) John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 78-82.
- (3) James Nickel, "Are Human Rights Mainly Implemented by Intervention?" in *Rawls's Law of Peoples: A Realistic Utopia?* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), eds. D. Reidy & R. Martin, pp. 263-277.

Supplementary Readings

- (A) *PT*, §136-140.

MAY

1 HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION:

- (1) John Stuart Mill, "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" in *Foreign Policy Perspectives*, No. 8, 1859, pp. 2-6.
- (2) Michael Walzer, "Self-Determination and Self-Help" in *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 2006) Fourth Edition, pp. 86-91.
- (3) Michael Doyle, "A Few Words on Mill, Walzer, and Nonintervention" in *Ethics and International Affairs*, 2009, Vol. 23, No. 4, pp. 349-369.

Supplementary Readings

- (A) Jeff McMahan, "Just War" in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy: Volume I* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), eds. T. Pogge, R. Goodin, P. Pettit, pp. 669-677.
- (B) Ian Hurd, "Bomb Syria, Even if it is Illegal" in *The New York Times*, August 27, 2013. (Online)

IX. META-ETHICS

6 REALISM, SCEPTICISM, AND RELATIVISM:

- (1) Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "Moral Realism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ed. D. Copp, pp. 39-63.

- (2) James Dreier, "Moral Relativism and Moral Nihilism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ed. D. Copp, pp. 240-265.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Susan Wolf, "Two Levels of Pluralism" in *Ethics*, Vol. 102, No. 4, July 1992, pp. 785-798.

8 MORAL ARGUMENT ACROSS CULTURES:

- (1) Martha Nussbaum, "In Defense of Universal Values" in *Women and Human Development: The Capability Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 34-59.
- (2) Chandran Kukathas, "Moral Universalism and Cultural Difference" in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), eds. B. Honnig, J. Dryzek, & A. Phillips, pp. 581-600.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) American Anthropological Association, "A Statement on Human Rights" in *American Anthropologist*, 1947, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 539-543.

X. HUMAN PROGRESS

13 MORAL PROGRESS:

- (1) Dale Jamieson, "Is There Progress in Morality?" in *Utilitas*, 2002, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 318-338.
- (2) *PT*, §127-135.

Supplementary Reading

- (A) Stephen Pinker, "The Rights Revolution" in *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), pp. 378-474.
- (B) John Tasioulas, "Consequences of Ethical Relativism" in *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1998, pp. 186-191.

15 COURSE CONCLUSION