

Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Gateway

Fall 2017

Instructor

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Office Hours: Tues. (11a-12p), Wed. (2p-3p)

Meeting Details

Days: Tuesday, Thursday
Time: 9:30 – 10:45am
Place: Caldwell 105 (UNC)
Course: Econ/Poli/Phil 384.005

Course Description

This interdisciplinary course provides an overview of some core conceptual tools used to analyze issues at the intersection of philosophy, politics, and economics (PPE). We begin with game theory, devoting special attention to the prisoner's dilemma and its many incarnations in day-to-day life. We then consider the political significance of the prisoner's dilemma as it pertains to the justification(s) of private property, government intervention, and voting. We analyze the strengths and weaknesses of markets, trying to understand both why capitalism is so productive and yet why it is so heavily criticized. We consider what role (if any) the government ought to play in redistributing wealth and what justifications have been proposed for such policies. We then turn to public choice theory to investigate what policies we can reasonably expect governments to implement given the incentives politicians and voters face. We close by considering whether, to what degree, and why the government ought to intervene to protect its citizens from themselves (paternalism) or from others who would take advantage of them (exploitation).

Text

Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, (eds.) Anomaly, Brennan, Munger, Sayre-McCord

Expected Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- recognize and describe important positions in moral and political philosophy,
- read, comprehend, and critically engage texts from classical and contemporary philosophy, politics, and economics, and
- describe the strengths and weaknesses of markets and government intervention, and the conditions under which each succeed and fail.

Course Requirements

- Participation 10%
- Game Theory Quiz 10% Date: Thursday, Sep. 14 (in class)
- Take-home Exam 1 (5 pp.) 30% Due: Friday, Oct. 13 (11:59pm)
- Take-home Exam 2 (5 pp.) 20% Due: Thursday, Nov. 17 (11:59pm)
- Final Exam 30% Date: Tuesday, Dec. 12 (8:00am)

Participation

Participation begins by reading the assigned readings carefully. If no one reads, we've got nothing to talk about. Second, you'll have to contribute with questions or comments. Some people are shy. I get that. Such persons can rack up their participation points on the back half of the semester once they become more comfortable with the class setting. Still, everyone will have to open their mouths at some time—even the shy folks. But don't think quantity of comments is the only (or even the best) way to receive a good participation grade. Quality matters too. The best thing to do is strike a nice balance between quality and quantity. Sometimes you'll say stuff that doesn't quite make sense. That's fine. Philosophy is hard, and you're allowed to struggle a bit. It means you're trying. So contribute even if you're not 100% clear about what's going on. If, however, it's clear to me that you've given absolutely no effort to reading the material, then speaking up doesn't help you in the least.

Attendance

Attendance is expected. You can miss three (3) lectures without any penalty. Any absences beyond those four will result in a deduction of your participation grade.

Grading Scale

A: 94 - 100 A-: 90 - 93 B+: 87 - 89 B: 84 - 86 B-: 80 - 83 C+: 77 - 79
C: 74 - 76 C-: 70 - 73 D+: 67 - 69 D: 64 - 66 D-: 60 - 63 F: < 60

Office Hours & Accessibility

I'm happy to meet with you at any time to discuss assignments or simply to talk more about the topics of the class. Come to my office hours, or if those times don't work, email me to set up an appointment.

I'm committed to making class fully accessible regardless of disabilities. If I can do anything to help make the class more accessible to you, let me know, or (if you would prefer) have the Accessibility Office contact me on your behalf.

Plagiarism

Don't plagiarize. According to UNC, plagiarism is "deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise." If you quote something, you need to put it in quotes and cite it using whichever citation convention you like. If you use someone's ideas, you must cite them and put the idea in your own words. If you break these rules, deliberately or not, you'll go to Honor Court. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, talk to me.

Game Theory

- Week 1 Ross, ["Game Theory"](#), Sec. 1, 2
- Week 2 Ross, ["Game Theory"](#), Sec. 6
- Week 3 Hobbes, *Leviathan*
Mackie, "Ending Foot Binding and Infibulation"
Schelling, "Dynamic Models of Segregation"

Private Property

- Week 4 Locke, "Of Property"
Hume, "Of Justice and Property"
Schmidtz, "The Institution of Property"
[Planet Money: How Private Property Changed China](#)

Market Success and Failure

- Week 5 Smith, "Of the Division of Labor"
Read, "I, Pencil"
Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society"
[Planet Money: Kid Rock vs. The Scalpers](#)
- Week 6 Cowen, "Public Goods"
Friedman, "Market Failures"
Anomaly, "Public Goods and Government Action"
Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

Distributive Justice

- Week 7 Mill, *Utilitarianism*
- Week 8 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*

Week 9 Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

Week 10 Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?*

Public Choice Theory

Week 11 Buchanon, “Politics without Romance”
Downs, “An Economic Theory of Democracy”

Week 12 Huemer, “Why People are Irrational About Politics”
G. Brennan & Lomasky, “Is There a Duty to Vote?”
J. Brennan, “Polluting the Polls”

Liberty and Paternalism

Week 13 Mill, *On Liberty*
Dworkin, “Paternalism”
Conly, “Coercive Paternalism in Health Care: Against Freedom of Choice”

Markets in Everything: Drugs and Body Parts

Week 14 Miron, “The Economics of Drug Legalization and Prohibition”
DeMarneffe, “Against the Legalization of Drugs”
Huemer, “America’s Unjust Drug War”

Week 15 Caplan, “Organ Transplantation”
Dworkin, “Of Markets and Morals: The Case for Organ Sales”