

Political Philosophy

Spring 2019

Instructor

Eric Sampson

Email: trae@live.unc.edu

Office: Caldwell 210D

Office Hours: T (3:30-4:30), R (12:30 – 1:30)

Meeting Details

Days: T, R

Time: 11:00am – 12:15pm

Place: Wilson 128

Course: Phil 370.001

Course Description

Political philosophy explores the nature and justification of government. Should there even be a government? If so, why? What is it for? Who should rule and why them rather than others? What should the government have control over and what should it stay out of? What justifies the government in telling me how to live and what reason do I have to comply with its demands? Which economic and political institutions lead to human flourishing and which ones don't? The authors we read in this course will be among the most influential in all of western philosophy: Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill, John Rawls, Robert Nozick, and G.A. Cohen. After getting a grip on the history of political philosophy, we'll close by considering three contemporary political issues of recent interest: immigration, gun control, and an issue of the class's choosing.

Texts

- [*Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*](#), ed. Steven M. Cahn (ISBN: 9780190201081)
- [*Why Not Socialism?*](#), by G.A. Cohen
- All other texts will be available on Sakai under the "Resources" tab.

Course Requirements

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| • Participation | 10% | |
| • Reading Quizzes | 15% | |
| • Exam 1 (5 pp.) | 25% | Due: Sunday, Feb. 17 (11:59pm) |
| • Exam 2 (in class) | 25% | Date: Thursday, March 28 (in class) |
| • Exam 3 (5 pp.) | 25% | Due: Monday, April 29 (11:59pm) |

Participation

Participation begins by reading the assigned readings carefully. If no one reads, we have nothing to talk about. Second, you'll have to contribute to class discussion by asking questions or making comments. Some people are shy. I get that. Shy people can either rack up their participation points on the back half of the semester once they become more comfortable with the class setting, or by coming to office hours, or by chatting with me about course material over email or after class. Making lots of comments in class is not 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. It means you're trying. So contribute even if you're not 100% clear about what's going on.

Attendance

Attendance is expected. You can miss three (3) meetings without any notice and without penalty. Each absence beyond those three will result in a 2-point deduction from 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.

Tentative Course Schedule

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| Week 1 Jan. 10 | What's Political Philosophy? (no reading) |
| Week 2 Jan. 15, 17 | Plato: Intro (pp. 1-4), <i>Crito</i> (pp. 22-30) Aristotle: Intro (pp. 137-41), <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (pp. 142-53) |
| Week 3 Jan. 22, 24 | Hobbes: <i>Leviathan</i> (pp. 319-32) Locke: <i>Second Treatise of Civil Government</i> (Chs. 1-2, 7-9) <u>The Declaration of Independence</u> |
| Week 4 Jan. 29, 31 | Locke: <i>Second Treatise of Civil Government</i> (Ch. 5) Rousseau: <i>Of the Social Contract</i> (pp. 437-43) |
| Week 5 Feb. 5, 7 | Hume: <i>Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> (pp. 470-87) Smith: <i>The Wealth of Nations</i> (pp. 492-506) |
| Week 6 Feb. 12, 14 | Marx: <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i> (pp.701-08) Marx: <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (pp. 714-37) |
| Week 7 Feb. 19, 21 | Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> (pp. 741-47) Mill: <i>On Liberty</i> (Sakai) |
| Week 8 Feb. 26, 28 | Rawls: <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (pp. 917-31) |
| Week 9 Mar. 5, 7 | Nozick: <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> (pp. 957-67) Huemer: "The Problem of Authority" (Sakai) |
| Week 10 Mar. 19, 21 | Cohen: "Robert Nozick and Wilt Chamberlain..." (Sakai) Cohen: <i>Why Not Socialism?</i> |
| Week 11 Mar. 26, 28 | Young: "Five Faces of Oppression" (pp. 1058-70) Exam 2 (in class on Mar. 28) |
| Week 12 Apr. 2, 4 | Huemer: "Why People are Irrational About Politics" (Sakai) Brennan: <i>Against Democracy</i> , Ch. 1 (Sakai) |
| Week 13 Apr. 9, 11 | Huemer: "Is There a Right to Immigrate?" (Sakai) Wellman: "Immigration & Freedom of Association" (Sakai) |
| Week 14 Apr. 16, 18 | McMahan: "Why Gun 'Control' Is Not Enough" (Sakai) Huemer: "Is There a Right to Own a Gun?" (Sakai) |
| Week 15 Apr. 23, 25 | Topic of Your Choice: Drug Legalization, Affirmative Action, Organ Markets, Prostitution, Sweat Shops, Paying Reparations, Torture, Price-Gouging, Capital Punishment, Is There a Duty to Vote? |