

PHILOX 220-1: History of Political Philosophy
Spring 2019
TuTh 4:00-5:15
Language Hall 101

Professor Rebekah Spera

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Office: Whatcoat Building, Office #3

The Whatcoat building is attached to the
Oxford College Mail Center on Whatcoat Street
(across the street from the U.S. Post Office).

Office Hours:

Tuesday & Thursday 1:00-2:00
(Or by appointment)

Required Texts:

Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts. 3rd Edition. Ed. Steven M. Cahn. (ISBN 978-0-19-020108-1)

All other required reading will be available under the “Files” tab in Canvas

“From these things therefore it is clear that . . . man is
by nature a political animal, and a man that is by nature
and not merely by fortune citiless is either low in the
scale of humanity or above it . . . Why man is a political
animal in a greater measure than any bee or any
gregarious animal is clear. For nature, as we declare,
does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the
animals possesses speech.”

-Aristotle, *Politics* 1.253a

Trans. Rackham

Humans, to paraphrase Aristotle, are political animals, and the study of social and political philosophy is, fundamentally, the study of how human life ought to be organized. This class is designed to give the student a broad introduction to the way philosophers have approached this topic, from ancient writings on the life in the *polis*, through modern liberal political philosophy, up to theories of power in the mid-20th century. In this semester, we will be grappling with both theoretical and practical questions that we face as political animals today, such as: What is the origin of the state? What is the guarantor of political authority? Where do rights come from, and who is entitled to rights? What would a just political order look like? What, after all, is justice in the first place?

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to provide students with an overview of the history of political philosophy and as well as to help them develop their ability to question both their own presuppositions and those of others.

Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student will have learned to:

- Understand the basic technical terminology of political philosophy
- Grasp the development of Western political thought from Ancient Greece to the mid-20th century
- Recognize and understand different philosophical theories on questions of the state, human rights, and justice
- Parse and evaluate arguments, both their own and those of others
- Reflect on their own presuppositions and viewpoints critically
- Articulate their own philosophical positions rigorously and respectfully
- Write clearly and effectively about philosophical issues

Course Policy

Participation & Classroom Etiquette:

Philosophical inquiry requires that the student both spend time alone reading, writing and thinking and that they engage in conversation with others. This class will require not only that the student read carefully and write thoughtfully, but also that they be both physically and mentally present for every class. The class will be partially conducted as a lecture and partially as a conversation, and every student will be expected to contribute cogently and respectfully to class discussion. While active participation comes more naturally to some individuals than others, one of the skills the student will cultivate throughout the semester is the capacity to express their own thoughts verbally, an ability that will be helpful both in and out of the classroom.

Tardiness is disrespectful both to the instructor and other students, and if a student is consistently tardy it will affect their participation grade. The student should come prepared to every class with a notebook and the required text(s).

The use of electronic devices is not permitted in the classroom, and this includes using electronic devices for notetaking. Since some of the texts will be pdfs, the student must either print the readings or have an e-reader (no laptops or phones). I recommend investing in either a three-ring binder or folder to keep the texts organized.

The reason for the ban on electronics isn't just that I am a fuddy-duddy (though I am a bit) but because I understand that, regardless of good intentions, the ever-present temptation to check social media or surf the web during class can overcome even the most virtuous among us. Additionally, studies have shown that students retain more in classes when they take notes by hand. I may, however, grant exceptions on an individual basis if a student arranges to meet with me to discuss why they need to use their laptop/tablet in class to succeed in the course. Cell phones must be turned off in class and stowed out of sight.

Failure to comply with these policies will affect a student's participation grade.

Attendance:

For the reasons sated above, attendance is required.

That being said, life can be unpredictable and things happen. Because of this the student is allowed a maximum of two absences for any reason with no questions asked. Once this maximum has been reached, additional absences will detract from the student's grade on the following scale (note: the numbers listed here are absences beyond the two allowed absences, so two absences below means four total absences - two freebies and two additional absences):

2-4 absences: -1.5% from the final grade for each absence

5-6 absences: 3.0% from the final grade for each absence

7-8 absences: 4.5% from the final grade for each absence

9+ absences: a final grade of F for the course

Absences will only be excused in cases of religious holidays and university-sanctioned activities (e.g., out-of-town debate club tournaments, presentations at academic conferences, &c. warrant excused absences; leaving town early to get an extra few days during break or scheduling time to do work for other classes do **not** warrant excused absences). However, **the student must notify me of the dates they will be absent for these reasons *in advance***. If the student fails to notify me in advance, the absences will not be excused.

Note: disability-related attendance accommodations can only be provided with documentation from the Office of Accessibility Services. See “Disability and Access” for more details about how to get accommodations.

Midterm & Final Exam

These tests are designed to ensure that the student has understood and retained the basic concepts in the class. Study guides will be provided in advance, and both will be closed- book. The final exam is not cumulative. **The exam date is scheduled for Wednesday, May 1st from 9:00-12:00.**

Readings:

This will be a reading-intensive course, and the student is expected to have completed the reading for every class. Many of the texts will be philosophically dense and challenging, demanding slow and careful reading. Part of being adequately prepared for class entails having spent time and care to digest the readings.

Discussion Board Posts:

The student must participate in an online discussion board on the course’s Canvas page. Each Sunday before every class, students will be required to write a 1-2 paragraph response to the reading due on Tuesday and post it to Blackboard **no later than 11:59 PM on Monday. Students will not receive any credit for late responses.**

These reflections should be a thoughtful engagement with some aspect of the reading the student found particularly interesting, troubling, or confusing. The short responses are meant to encourage students to engage with the readings and to come to class prepared to make good contributions to class discussion. As such, the student is free to use these reflections any way they like, with the following provisions:

The response must engage with some specific aspect of the text

The response is a response to a particular text or texts; it is not simply a space for the student to talk about anything they like. In other words, the response must be on the topic of one of the issues raised in the reading.

The response must not be merely (or primarily) a summary of the reading

The response is not a place for you to merely rehearse what you have already read; you must primarily be presenting your own thoughts and your own ideas.

The response must explain and not merely assert

*While these responses are open to a variety of approaches, whatever you choose to say in these spaces must be explicated and, in some cases, substantiated by argument or supporting evidence. For example, if you wish to disagree with an author’s point, you must not merely say, “X is wrong about Y”; you must give at least a preliminary explanation of **why** you think this author is wrong. Similarly, if you wish to say that you had difficulty following the reading this week, you cannot merely state “This text was confusing and I didn’t understand it at all”; instead, you need to say what, particularly, confused you and why. Similarly, just saying you liked or disliked the readings isn’t enough—you also need to say a bit about why you liked or disliked the reading and what particularly stood out to you.*

Additionally, the student will be asked to write comments on at least two peer responses every week **no later than Friday at 11:59PM.**

The responses are meant to provide material for class discussion and will be graded as either acceptable or unacceptable. The instructor will not provide feedback on the blog entries except in instances where a response is marked “unacceptable.”

Papers:***Short Papers 1, 2 & 3:***

Three short essay assignments ranging from about 2 to 3 pages each to ease the student into writing academic philosophy.

Final Paper:

For the final paper the student may choose to respond to prompts which will be given or may write on a topic of their choice (pending instructor approval). The final paper length will be about 7-10 pages.

All papers are to be submitted printed out and stapled, with the student's name on every page and a word count on the last page. All sources must be properly cited – if there are questions or concerns about how to cite texts, the student should feel free to ask the instructor or contact the Writing Center. Requests for extensions must be submitted least a week prior to the due date of the paper and will be given at the instructor's discretion.

E-mail Policy:

Students should feel free to contact the instructor via e-mail with questions they have about the course material, and the instructor will respond within a 48 hour period. Please use the e-mail address provided on the syllabus.

Please note that all substantial questions about exams and papers must be e-mailed to me at least 48 hours before the exam takes place/the paper is due. Additionally, if the student has missed classes, it is not appropriate to ask the instructor about the material covered during their absence. Instead, they should contact a fellow student and request copies of their notes.

Grade Distribution:

Discussion Board Posts & Comments:	15%
Papers:	
Short Papers 1, 2, & 3:	21% (7% each)
Final Paper:	20%
Participation:	10%
Midterm Exam:	17%
Final Exam:	17%
Attendance: See “Attendance” policies above	

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

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated; students must adhere to the Honor Code of Oxford College. All violations will be reported to the Honor Council, in accordance with the Code. Infractions of the Honor Code include plagiarism, cheating, seeking or giving unauthorized assistance, and lying related to academic matters. Further information on Honor Code infractions and procedures are available in the Oxford College Student Handbook, and online:

http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success-student-honor-code/index.dot

Should a student have a question about permissible behavior or academic integrity, they may contact me.

Inclusivity & Civil Discourse in the Classroom

Oxford College of Emory University's ideals of inclusivity require that we foster an environment where people of diverse backgrounds, identities, abilities, and ideologies are affirmed, respected, and seen as a source of strength; where we strive to learn together, and ultimately thrive communally. If we at all fail to support these ideals, then we encourage discussion towards improvement, and we hope that this statement affirms your right to seek those discussions via dialogue with faculty, staff, your peers, and the use of the "Speak Up!" system when needed.

We believe the manner in which we interact with each other is critical to cultivating and maintaining a meaningful and effective intellectual environment. We encourage a climate of respect and inclusiveness that welcomes and embraces community members with diverse backgrounds and life experiences. We deliberately seek multiple perspectives and support the free and open exchange of ideas and civil discourse. We affirm the inherent dignity in all of us and we strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by respect for each other. Our community can only continue to thrive when we approach each conversation with an open mind and when each member can contribute fully.

Disability and Access:

If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this semester, we encourage you to contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) to learn more about the registration process and steps for requesting accommodations at oas_oxford@emory.edu.

If you are a student that is currently registered with OAS and have not requested or received a copy of your accommodation notification letter, please notify OAS immediately. Students who have accommodations in place are encouraged to coordinate sometime with me during the first week of the semester to communicate your specific needs for the course as it relates to your approved accommodations. Accommodations are not implemented until the instructor is provided an accommodation letter and discusses the accommodation plan for this course face to face with the OAS student. **In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, students must contact OAS and complete the registration process.** Faculty may not provide disability accommodations until an accommodation letter has been processed; accommodations are not retroactive. All discussions with OAS and faculty concerning the nature of your disability remain confidential. Contact OAS for more information at (770) 784-4690 or oas_oxford@emory.edu. Additional information is available at the OAS website at equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access_

Religious Holidays:

I am happy to accommodate students' academic needs related to religious holidays. However, please make every effort to notify me about your religious holiday needs within the first two weeks of the semester. [If you need guidance negotiating your needs related to a religious holiday, the College Chaplain, Rev. Lyn Pace, \[ppace@emory.edu\]\(mailto:ppace@emory.edu\), Candler Hall 202, is willing and available to help.](#)
[**Please be aware that Rev. Pace is not tasked with excusing students from classes or writing excuses for students to take to their professors.](#)

Class Schedule:

*Note: Schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.
The student will be notified of any alterations in advance.*

Week 1: Ancient Greece (Justice and the City-State)

Tu 1/15 Introduction: Is it better to be just than unjust?
Th 1/17 Plato, *The Republic*
Book II 368b-377b (pp. 59-66); Book III 412b-417b (pp. 66-70)

Week 2: Ancient Greece (Justice and the City-State)

Note: First Discussion Post Due Monday by 11:59PM

Tu 1/22 Plato, *The Republic*
Book IV 419e-434c (pp. 70-76); Book VIII 543a-545c (pp. 110-111); 557a-568c (pp. 119-129)

Note: Add/Drop Ends Tuesday, January 22nd

Th 1/24 Plato, *The Republic*
Book IX (pp. 129-136)

Week 3: Ancient Greece (Justice and the City-State)

Tu 1/29 Aristotle, *Politics*
Book I Ch. 1-2 (pp. 165-168) & Book III Ch. 1-5 (pp. 181-187)
Th 1/31 Aristotle, *Politics*
Book III Ch. 6-13 (187-196)

Week 4: The Middle Ages (Social Order & Cosmic Order)

Tu 2/5 Al-Farabi, *Book of Aphorisms of the Statesman*
Aphorisms 1-32 (pp. 11-28); Aphorisms 57-67 (pp. 37-44)
Short Paper 1 (Summary) Due
Th 2/7 Al-Farabi, *Book of Aphorisms of the Statesman*
Aphorisms 88-96 (pp. 57-64)

Week 5: The Renaissance (The Art of Governance)

Tu 2/12 Machiavelli
The Prince Ch. VIII -XVIII (278-287)
Th 2/14 Machiavelli
The Prince Ch. XIX-XXV (287-291)

Week 6: The Modern Era (The State of Nature & the Social Contract)

Tu 2/19 Hobbes
Leviathan Introduction (pp. 312-313); Ch. 13-15 (pp. 319-330)
Th 2/21 Hobbes
Leviathan Ch. 17-29 (pp. 330-343)

Week 7: The Modern Era (The State of Nature & the Social Contract)

Tu 2/26 Locke
Second Treatise of Government Ch. I-VI (pp. 365-374);
Th 2/28 Locke
Second Treatise of Government Ch. VII- IX (374-379; Ch. XIX (pp. 389-393)

Week 8: The Modern Era (The State of Nature & the Social Contract)

Tu 3/5 Rousseau
Discourse on the Origin of Inequality First Part (pp. 422-428)
Th 3/7 Rousseau
Discourse on the Origin of Inequality Second Part (pp. 428-437)

Short Paper 2 (Comparison) Due

Note: Last Day for Partial Withdrawal is March 8th

Week 9: Spring Break (The State of Nature)

Tu 3/12 No Class—Spring Break

Th 3/14 **No Class—Spring Break**

Week 10: The Long 19th Century (Rights and Wrongs)

Tu 3/19 **Midterm Exam**

Th 3/21 Wollstonecraft
 Vindication of the Rights of Women Introduction, Chapter I, & Chapter IX

Week 11: The Long 19th Century (Rights and Wrongs)

Tu 3/26 Marx
 Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (pp. 701-708); Additional Readings TBA

Th 3/28 Marx
 Additional Readings TBA

Week 12: The Long 19th Century (Rights and Wrongs)

Tu 4/2 Douglass
 “The Constitution of the United States: Is it Pro-Slavery or Anti-Slavery?” & “The Constitution and Slavery”

Third Short Paper (Argument) Due

Th 4/4 Du Bois
 From *The Souls of Black Folk*: “Of Our Spiritual Strivings”; “Of the Meaning of Progress”

Note: One-Time First-Year Student Withdrawal Deadline is April 5th

Week 13: Currents of Thought in the 20th Century (Anarchism)

Tu 4/9 Rucker
 “Anarchism: Its Aims and Purposes”

Th 4/11 Goldman
 “Woman Suffrage”

Week 14: Currents of Thought the 20th Century (Explaining Totalitarianism)

Tu 4/16 Arendt
 The Origins of Totalitarianism Ch. X-XII (pp. 845-852)

Th 4/18 Arendt
 The Origins of Totalitarianism Ch. XIII (pp. 852-856)

Week 15: Currents of Thought in the 20th Century (Rethinking Power)

Tu 4/23 Foucault
 Power/Knowledge (pp. 974-982—up to the “fourth methodological precaution”)

Th 4/25 Foucault
 Power/Knowledge (pp. 982-987)

5/1 (Wednesday) FINAL EXAM 9:00-12:00

FINAL PAPER DUE DATE TBA