

80-135: Introduction to Political Philosophy

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Office Hours: by appointment.

Description:

This is an introductory course in political philosophy, intended to acquaint you with aspects of a few areas of western political thought. It will not be possible to proceed very systematically. If you feel you need to fill in some background in order to follow the reading, please consult the excellent online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, which will get you up to speed on most subjects without much pain, and in relatively little time.

Although this course will focus on the liberal tradition in political philosophy, we begin with a classic of illiberal political thought: Plato's Republic. The vivid contrast of the Republic will bring into focus subsequent work in the liberal, or "social contract" tradition including Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Rawls. Later, we introduce critiques and responses to classical liberalism, including left-wing critiques from socialist, feminist and anti-racist theorists and right-wing critiques from conservatives and anti-enlightenment, or "proto-fascist" thinkers. We will finish the course with a series of relatively contemporary readings in the ethics and efficiency of markets. Where possible, we will enrich the material with insights from game theory and voting theory.

This course is concerned with questions such as: what are the origins of legitimate political authority? In what relation ought the individual stand to the state? What makes a distribution of goods and labor in society just? Ought there to be private property, and how can it be justified? How are liberal ideals to be reconciled with a history of white supremacy and male domination? What is the relationship between the efficiency of markets and their ethical and political justification?

Course Requirements:

There will be reading assigned for every class meeting. I will generally provide you with the materials, but if there is some difficulty please make an effort to find the reading yourself. Reading materials will be posted on Box. It is MANDATORY that you complete this reading before the meeting of the class. You are expected to contribute to class discussion – I will not be lecturing the entire time. For every class meeting, you are required to post on the class spreadsheet one discussion, or comprehension question about the reading. This can be a question like: "I think the state of nature is ambiguous in Locke: is it meant to be a historical state or just a tool for theorizing?" or "Why does Rawls think we should employ worst-case reasoning behind the veil of ignorance?" It can be a genuine request for clarification on some point, or a broad open-ended question for class discussion. This will be worth 10% of your final grade. For each question you fail to submit, I will subtract a point from the full 10. Please send these questions to me **no later than 9AM** the morning of the class that the reading is due. These are meant to give me a sense of how you are dealing with the material, and to give you a sense of what your classmates are thinking about the readings.

There will be three writing assignments. The first, which will be due on **Jun. 5th** will be an analysis of one of the assigned readings. It should be 500-700 words (about 1-2 pages, double-spaced). The second, which will be due **Jun 16th**, will be comparison paper where you discuss the perspectives of 2 authors, comparing and contrasting their views on some issue. It should be 600-900 words (about 2-3 pages, double-spaced). The third, which will be due on **Jun 29th**, will be a longer paper in which you make your own argument concerning a topic we have discussed in class. It should be 1400-1600 words (about 5-6 pages, double-spaced). A rough outline of this final paper will be due **Jun 22nd**, approximately a week before the final draft. The outline itself will not be graded, but the grade of the final paper will be reduced by a full letter grade if the outline is not received on time. Detailed instructions for these assignments will be handed out in class, about a week ahead of time.

Grading:

Reading responses: 15%

Class participation: 15%

First essay: 20%

Second essay: 20%

Third essay: (argument): 30%

Missing class and late assignments:

I recognize that occasional problems associated with illness, family emergencies, job interviews, other professors, etc. will inevitably lead to legitimate conflicts over your time. If you expect that you will be unable to turn in an assignment on time, or must be absent from a class meeting, please notify me (either in class or via email) in advance and we can agree on a reasonable accommodation. Otherwise, your grade will be penalized.

Academic Integrity:

It is the responsibility of each student to be aware of the university policies on academic integrity, including the policies on cheating and plagiarism. This information is available at <https://www.cmu.edu/academic-integrity/>.

(Plato's Illiberal State)

Tue, May 23 — First Day of Class.

Wed, May 24 — Plato's Republic Book I

Thu, May 25 — Plato's Republic Book II

Fri, May 26 — Plato's Republic Book III

Mon, May 29 — Memorial Day. No Class.

Tue, May 30 — Plato's Republic Book IV

*Wed, May 31 — Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies. Chapter 7
Thucydides, Pericles' Funeral Oration.*

Thu, June 1 — Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies. Chapters 9, 10.

(Liberalism: Foundations and Elaborations)

Fri, June 2 — Hobbes, Leviathan Ch. 13, 14.

Hume, Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals.

Mon, June 5 — Locke, Second Treatise of Civil Government Ch. II-V.

Tue, June 6 — Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality.

Wed, June 7 — Rawls, "Justice as Rational Choice Behind a Veil of Ignorance".

Thu, June 8 — Morreau, "Arrow's Theorem" Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Fri, June 9 — Sen, Utilitarianism and Welfarism.

Mon, June 12 — Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia. Excerpts.

(Liberalism: Critiques and Challenges)

Tue, June 13 — Okin, Justice, Gender and the Family. Excerpts.

Wed, June 14 — Mills, The Racial Contract. Excerpts.

*Thu, June 15 — Marx & Engels, Communist Manifesto chapter 1
Rosa Luxemburg, "The Socialization of Society"*

Fri, June 16 — Marx, Capital. Chapter 10.

Mon, June 19 — Berlin, "The Counter-Enlightenment".

Tue, June 20 — Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair. Excerpts.

(Markets)

Wed, June 21 — Buchanan, Ethics, Efficiency and The Market. Excerpts.

Thu, June 22 — Buchanan, Ethics, Efficiency and The Market. Excerpts.

Fri, June 23 — Satz, "Liberalism, economic freedom, and the limits of markets"

Mon, June 26 — Class cancelled.

Tue, June 27 — TBD

Wed, June 28 — TBD

Thu, June 29 — TBD