

# **PHIL 365: Social and Political Philosophy**

## **Fall 2020**

### **Syllabus**

#### **Course Info**

**Course:** PHIL 365

**Title:** Social and Political Philosophy

**Class number:** 14482

**Instruction mode:** This is a Fully Online and Asynchronous class (FOA). These classes do not have a set meeting time. There are no on-campus meetings.

#### **Instructor Info**

**Instructor:** Mitchell Herschbach

**Instructor's email:** mitchell.herschbach@csun.edu

**Zoom Office Hours:** Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays 1:30– 2:30PM and by appointment

**Course website:** Canvas

#### **Prerequisites**

Completion of the Lower Division writing requirement; 3 units of Philosophy.

#### **Catalog Description**

A survey of classical and contemporary theoretical approaches in social and political philosophy. Covers such theories as anarchy, absolutism, liberalism, libertarianism, communism, communitarianism and socialism, as well as topics concerning justice, liberty, equality, pluralism and democracy. Regular written assignments will be required.

#### **Course Specific Goals and Objectives**

You will:

- Learn to identify, explain, analyze, and compare and contrast major questions, concepts, theories, and arguments in political philosophy
- Improve your ability to identify, explicate, and evaluate the thesis of a philosophical article, as well as the reasons a philosopher puts forward in support of her or his thesis.
- Improve your ability to write clearly, precisely, concisely, logically, and persuasively, including:
  - Improve your ability to clearly express what a philosopher's position is, as well as the reasons he or she gives in favor of it.
  - Improve your ability to clearly express their own position, as well as the reasons you have in favor of it.
  - Improve your ability to structure an essay so that its progression is logical and easy to follow.
- Improve your ability to diagnose the shortcomings and the strengths of another philosopher's position.
- Improve your ability to diagnose the shortcomings and the strengths of your own position, as well as learning how to bolster your own position with reasoned arguments.

#### **Required Course Materials**

- Textbook: Matt Zwolinski (2014). *Arguing about Political Philosophy* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Routledge ISBN 9780415535823.
- Additional readings and other materials posted on Canvas

#### **Course Requirements**

##### **1. Reading Responses (15%)**

You will start each module with a reading assignment. To show you're engaging with that text, you will submit a short reading response at the beginning of the week (by Monday night). These responses should be about 300-400 words in length, and will require you to give a very short summary of the text (a few sentences), and then offer some sort of reflection on what you found interesting, challenging, wrongheaded, or confusing about the text. More specific instructions will be posted on Canvas.

##### **2. Discussion Forum Participation (15% total)**

Discussion for this course will take place in discussion forums on Canvas. You will be randomly assigned to groups of about 6 students to discuss the material from that week's module. You will need to respond to the prompt I give you before you are able to see anyone else's posts. This initial post must be made by Wednesday

night. Once you make your post, you will need to respond to at least 1 of your group member's posts. A rubric will be posted to make clear what is expected from these posts and replies, and how they will be graded.

3. *Quizzes (30%)*

For each module you will have a timed quiz you must complete by the end of the week (Sunday night). The quizzes will test you on your understanding of the concepts, claims, and arguments found in the material for that week's module. The quizzes will largely be multiple-choice type questions, but may include questions requiring short written responses. I will drop your two lowest quiz scores.

4. *Papers (3 papers x 13.33% each = 40% total)*

You will write three papers roughly 4 pages in length. These papers will require you to analyze an argument from a course text, and evaluate it.

## Grades

Letter grades will be assigned using the plus/minus system, as follows:

A	=	93-100%	B+	=	87-89.9%	C+	=	77-79.9%	D+	=	67-69.9%	F	=	0-59.9%
A-	=	90-92.9%	B	=	83-86.9%	C	=	73-76.9%	D	=	63-66.9%			
			B-	=	80-82.9%	C-	=	70-72.9%	D-	=	60-62.9%			

I will assign no extra-credit work. There is nothing that you, individually or collectively, can do for extra credit.

## Expectations

I expect you to:

- Regularly log on to Canvas and check your CSUN email to check for new content and announcements
  - Canvas can notify you of announcements and updates to our course page. See this [guide to setting your Canvas notification preferences](#).
- Complete the required assignments on the schedule posted on Canvas
- Adhere to the following norms during online interaction with the instructor and your peers:
  - Presume positive intentions of your classmates
  - Approach disagreement with curiosity
  - Engage respectfully
- Use the group discussions to make relationships with your fellow students, so you can help each other study
- If you have any questions or problems:
  - Post questions to the Course Questions discussion forum.
  - Email me, meet with me on Zoom during office hours, or make an appointment to meet with me another time
  - Make use of other campus resources for additional tutoring and help:
    - For help with writing, contact the [University Writing Center](#)
    - [CSUN's Philosophy Department Tutoring](#) service may be able to help with 300-level courses like ours. See the instructions on their website about finding a tutor

## Policies

### *Special Accommodations*

If you have a disability and need accommodations, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD), and inform me as soon as possible of any accommodations they determine you are eligible for. The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684, <http://www.csun.edu/dres/index.php> NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2611, <http://www.csun.edu/ncod/>

If you would like to discuss your need for accommodations with me, please contact me to set up an appointment.

### *Academic Integrity*

Students are expected to conduct themselves in accord with university policies on Student Conduct and Academic Dishonesty, which are found in the University Catalog:

[Definition of Academic Dishonesty](#)  
[Penalties for Academic Dishonesty](#)

Cheating will not be tolerated, and any student who violates this policy will, at a minimum, earn a zero for the assignment; further punishment may include failing the class and being subject to further disciplinary actions from the University.

You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with these policies; ignorance is not an excuse. If you have any questions about these policies, feel free to contact me.

*Title XI: Sexual Misconduct Disclosures and Maintaining and Respectful Learning Environment*

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining a safe and respectful space to express their reasoned opinions. Professional courtesy and consideration for our classroom community are especially important with respect to topics dealing with differences in race, color, gender and gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, disability, and age.

In this course, the topic of sex (including sexual misconduct/sexual violence) may emerge either purposefully or inadvertently in readings, films, class discussions or other class materials. We recognize that such topics may be particularly upsetting for some survivors; we encourage all students to seek the support they need.

While making personal connections with the topics studied in any course can be a meaningful and important endeavor, please be aware of the following policy regarding confidentiality and disclosures of incidents of sexual misconduct/sexual violence.

As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help maintain a safe learning environment on our campus. In the event that you choose to write, speak, or otherwise disclose having experienced sexual misconduct/sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, and specify that this violence occurred while you or the perpetrator were a CSUN student, federal and state laws require that I, as a “responsible employee,” notify our campus Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will contact you to inform you of your rights and options as a survivor and connect you with support resources, including possibilities for holding accountable the person who harmed you. Know that you will not be forced to share information and your level of involvement will be your choice.

CSUN's Title IX Coordinator is:

Susan Hua  
University Hall, Room 285  
Phone: (818) 677-2077  
E-Mail: [susan.hua@csun.edu](mailto:susan.hua@csun.edu)

If you do not want the Title IX Coordinator notified, instead of disclosing the experience to me, you can speak confidentially with our Campus Care Advocate.

CSUN's Campus Care Advocate is:

Katie LaRue  
Klotz Student Health Center, Room 140G  
Phone: (818) 677-7492  
E-mail: [katelin.larue@csun.edu](mailto:katelin.larue@csun.edu)

## **Support for Students: Technology and Other Needs**

If you need a laptop, tablet, or other device loan for remote learning, or you need internet access, please consult the following link:

<https://www.csun.edu/it/device-loaner-program>

If you need other support, including food or housing resources, please consult the following link, which has information about services available to you as a student related to housing and food insecurity and mental health support:

<https://www.csun.edu/heart>



## Course Schedule

This schedule is tentative and subject to revision. The deadlines posted on Canvas constitute the official course schedule.

	Topics and Readings
Week 1 Mon 8/24 – Sun 8/30	<b>Module 0: Introduction to Course and Social/Political Philosophy</b>
Week 2 Mon 8/31 – Sun 9/6	<b>Module 1: Locke and the Social Contract</b> John Locke, "The State of Nature and the Law of Nature." Excerpts from <i>Second Treatise of Civil Government</i> (AAPP pp. 41-50)
Week 3 Mon 9/7 – Sun 9/13 <i>Mon 9/7: Labor Day holiday</i>	<b>Module 2: Utilitarianism and Justice</b> John Stuart Mill, "Justice and Utility." Excerpts from <i>Utilitarianism</i> (AAPP pp. 194-210)
Week 4 Mon 9/14– Sun 10/4	<b>Module 3: John Rawls' Theory of Justice</b> John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice," excerpts from <i>Theory of Justice</i> (AAPP pp. 211-237)
Week 5 Mon 9/21– Sun 9/27	<b>Module 4: Libertarianism</b> John Locke, "Property." Excerpts from <i>Second Treatise of Civil Government</i> (AAPP pp. 359-366) Robert Nozick, "The Entitlement Theory of Justice." Excerpts from <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> (AAPP pp. 394-407)  <b>Paper #1</b>
Week 6 Mon 9/28– Sun 10/4	<b>Module 5: Capitalism and Markets</b> Adam Smith, "The Wealth of Nations" (AAPP pp. 318-329)
Week 7 Mon 10/5– Sun 10/11	<b>Module 6: Marxism</b> Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto" (AAPP pp. 295-308) and "Critique of the Gotha Program" (AAPP pp. 309-317)
Week 8 Mon 10/12– Sun 10/18	<b>Module 7: Why Not Socialism?</b> G.A. Cohen, "Why Not Socialism?" (AAPP pp. 416-430)
Week 9 Mon 10/19– Sun 10/25	<b>Module 8: Universal Basic Income</b> Philippe Van Parijs, "A Basic Income for All" (AAPP pp. 431-441)
Week 10 Mon 10/26– Sun 11/1	<b>Module 9: Feminist Challenges to the Social Contract</b> Virginia Held, "Non-contractual Society: A Feminist View" (AAPP pp. 70-85)  <b>Paper #2</b>
Week 11 Mon 11/2– Sun 11/8	<b>Module 10: The Racial Contract</b> Charles Mills, Excerpts from <i>The Racial Contract</i> (AAPP pp. 86-108)
Week 12 Mon 11/9– Sun 11/15 <i>Wed 11/11: Veteran's Day Holiday</i>	<b>Module 11: Retributivism as Justification for Punishment</b> Herbert Morris, "Persons and Punishment" (PDF on Canvas)

<p>Week 13 Mon 11/16– Sun 11/22</p>	<p><b>Module 12: Justice Without Retribution: The Public-Health Quarantine Model</b> Greg Caruso, “Free Will Skepticism and Criminal Behavior: A Public Health- Quarantine Model”</p>
<p>Week 14 Mon 11/23– Sun 11/29</p>	<p><b><i>Thanksgiving Holiday</i></b></p>
<p>Week 15 Mon 11/30– Sun 12/6</p>	<p><b>Module 13: Prison Abolition and Restorative Justice</b> Angela Davis, <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i> (chapters 1 &amp; 6) Heather Strang &amp; Lawrence W. Sherman, “Repairing Harm: Victims and Restorative Justice”</p>
<p>Weeks 16-17 Instruction Mon 12/7- Tues 12/8 Final exams Wed 12/9 – Tues 12/15</p>	<p><b>Paper #3</b></p>