

PHIL 170: Social Ethics and Political Thought

Fall 2017
MW 9:05-10:20 a.m.
Murphey 105

Instructor: Macy Salzberger

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Caldwell 206B

Office hours: MW 10:35 a.m.-11:35 p.m.

Course Description: This course will serve as an introduction to some of the main topics in social and political philosophy. Questions to be discussed include: what justifies the state? How ought society to be organized? What obligations do we have as citizens? What obligations do we have to resist oppression? What permissions do we have when we live in an unjust society? The substantive goal of this course is to work toward familiarizing ourselves with many of the topics and positions within social and political philosophy, carefully evaluating the arguments given, and trying to develop rationally defensible positions of our own. The course requirements are designed with the intention of developing your ability to reason philosophically in conversation, in presentation, and in writing. Please note that this is a writing intensive course: your papers and forum posts will amount to over 10 (single-spaced) pages of writing by the end of the semester.

Required texts:

The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought edited by Andrew Bailey, Samantha Brennan, Will Kymlicka, Jacob Levy, Alex Sager, and Clark Wolf

Justice by Harry Brighouse

(not required but recommended) *Introduction to Political Philosophy* by Jonathon Wolff

These can be purchased in the student bookstore, or through online retailers (sometimes for a great deal less). All of the other readings will be provided to you on the Sakai site for this course.

Learning objectives:

- i. mastery of the material
- ii. the ability to reason philosophically
- iii. highly thoughtful and imaginative engagement with the issues
- iv. sympathetic and constructive engagement and/or disagreement with the arguments of your classmates and the authors you read
- v. clear presentation of your own arguments

Grading: 500 points possible (plus 12 extra credit points possible)

- 1) Attendance and participation: 75 points
- 2) Argument reconstruction: 15 points
- 3) Critical response papers: 150 points (50 and 100 points respectively)
- 4) Philosophy in life project: 150 points

5) Forum posts: 110 points

I rely on the standards set by the registrar in assigning letter grades to work. You can find the explanation of letter grades here: <http://registrar.unc.edu/academic-services/grades/explanation-of-grading-system/>

Scale:

F	D-	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
≤59	60	64	68	70	74	78	80	84	88	90	94	98

Argument reconstruction (15 points): The aim of this exercise is to help you develop your ability to read and reconstruct philosophical arguments. Prior to the assignment, I will take class time and assign readings to go over what makes for a successful reconstruction. For the assignment, I will identify a particular argument within the reading for you to reconstruct and ask you to turn in a reconstruction of *no more than one page single-spaced*.

Participation (75 points): You will attend every class, unless you have a good reason not to. If you anticipate missing class, write to me, explaining why, beforehand, understanding that I am a reasonable person, but that I also have responsibility to ensure that you are learning. Please note in that email whether or not you are requesting for your absence to be excused. Your first unexcused absence will not be penalized. Two points will be docked each for your second and third absence. Four points will be docked for your fourth and fifth. Your grade will be significantly affected if you accumulate more than five unexcused absences. The remainder of your participation grade will reflect your preparation and thoughtful participation in class. If you are not comfortable participating in class, I will count active, serious, charitable visits to my office hours toward your participation grade.

Since this is a discussion-based course, you are expected to be a regular participant in the discussion. However, the quality of your comments is far more important than the quantity of comments you make. So, to be a good participant in the discussion (and to be successful in the class) you will need to both come to class and carefully read the material assigned in advance.

To have fruitful class discussions, everyone must do the reading in advance. If you don't do the readings, you will be lost in class. If you don't come to class, you will be lost in the readings and assignments. So, arrive prepared and willing to engage. Without this preparation and willingness on your part, we will not be able to have the sort of productive class discussions that will enable you to succeed in and to enjoy this course.

In an effort to get more reticent students to engage in classroom discussion, I may cold call students based on what they have written on the discussion forum. This practice is not intended as a means of humiliating or "outing" students for not having done the reading. On the contrary, I will call on students whose discussion forum contributions I have found particular useful in guiding discussion, whose voices might not be otherwise heard without some form of cold-calling employed. In addition, I may occasionally

employ in-class writing assignments that I will collect and use in part to determine your participation grade.

Critical Response Papers (2 papers; 50 and 100 points, 150 points total):

You will be required to write two critical response papers on articles we cover in class. Each one should be between four and five pages long, double spaced. These are more formal writing assignments than your reading memos, but you may use one of your reading memos as a jumping off point for writing your critical papers. In these papers, you are expected to do something very specific:

1. Identify one important philosophical claim for which the author is arguing.
2. Reconstruct the argument that the author gives for this claim.
3. Critically evaluate the argument.

This can be done in a number of ways. You might criticize the argument given by showing

how the author's argument does not support the claim they are making, you might defend the

author's argument against someone else's criticism, you might revise the claim an author is making in light of objections to their argument. Whatever aim you set for yourself in your critical evaluation, you have to explicitly present reasons for the claims you make. In other words, you must present your own argument.

4. Explain the implications of your evaluation.

Given your evaluation of the author's argument, where are we left with respect to the issue

being discussed? Should we abandon the claim? Are there ways of strengthening the argument being evaluated? What are the broader implications of your evaluation? How might someone respond to your evaluation?

Your critical response papers are due *one week after* the article on which you are writing, with September 18th as the first possible deadline. This means that if you plan on writing on the article "Licensing Parents," you must turn in your paper one week after it is assigned in class. The only exception to this rule is if you would like to write on one of the readings from the first two readings, in which case you may also turn your paper in by September 18th. You may *not* write on the same reading as is assigned for the argument reconstruction except with special permission. The last day for submitting each critical response paper is listed on the schedule.

You must provide both a hard copy (prepared for blind grading) and a soft copy of your paper (emailed to me with document named as "PID-#of paper assigned."). An example document name would be something like, "906444444-3" where "906444444" refers to the student's PID and "3" signifies that it is the third paper for the course. Papers are due at the start of class on the due date. The weight of the papers increases throughout the course to give credit to students who have improved on their writing throughout the course. I will provide a grading rubric via Sakai.

What constitutes good writing for a philosophy course may be unlike writing for many other kinds of disciplines. Given this, I will dedicate class time to making sure that you have a good sense of what it is that I will be looking for in your papers.

Revise and Resubmit: You will be given the opportunity to revise and resubmit each paper *once* after you have received feedback from me. If you choose to revise and resubmit, you may turn in your second submission *no later than one week* after receiving feedback. The grade you receive on your resubmitted paper will replace the grade you received on your first submission. If you submit your paper on the last day for submission, your paper is not eligible for revise and resubmit except with special permission.

Discussion Forum (110 points total):

Forum memos: 11 posts, 8 points each, 88 points total

Forum discussions are intended as a way to develop the specific set of skills required for reading complex argumentative texts and to get you engaged with the material and each other outside of the classroom. We will discuss these skills at the beginning of the term and you will practice them by writing forum posts for each of the seven weeks for which they are assigned. For your forum memos, you will reflect philosophically on some component on the reading assigned, and in *no more than 500 words*. This might mean raising an objection, summarizing and clarifying some point that you took to be obscure, or providing some additional argument in support of a claim the author makes. The idea is for you to be engaging philosophically with the texts and with each other *before* you come to class. I will read each memo before our class meeting and use them to structure our discussion of the reading. If you write a memo and it's clear to me that you've made a good faith effort to carefully read and understand the article, you will get at least 7 points. If, in addition, you offer a cogent critical contribution- raise some objection or offer some support of your own that challenges or reinforces the author's argument- you will get 8 points. In the event of an *excused* absence, you may turn in a reading memo late without penalty, as long as I receive it within one week of the due date. *No late memos will be accepted otherwise.*

Half of you will be assigned to "Group A" and half of you will be assigned to "Group B." Group A is responsible for contributing a memo to the forum for Mondays' readings. Group B is responsible for contributing a memo to the forum for Wednesdays' readings. Members of Group A are required to submit their forum memo by *12:00 p.m. each Sunday*, the day before we're scheduled to discuss the relevant reading in class. Members of Group B are required to submit their forum post by *12:00 p.m. each Tuesday*, the day before we're scheduled to discuss the relevant reading in class.

Forum comments: 11 posts, 2 points each, 22 points total

We will also be practicing the skills for you to learn *from one another*. Toward that end, you should all be engaging with one another's ideas outside of class. Group B will be required to respond to (at least) one of Group A's memos *by the time we meet on the following Monday*. Group A will be required to respond to (at least) one of Group B's memos *by the time we meet on the following Wednesday*. If your comment demonstrates thoughtfulness, carefulness, and charity toward your classmate's ideas, you will get 2 points for that week's memo comment.

In either role, your post should demonstrate that you have read the material for the week and that you have exercised independent thought. Respectful disagreement is encouraged, but you should make sure that you have done your best to understand what the author has said before disagreeing. Disrespectful behavior, such as insults, aggression, or discrimination, will be penalized and subject to the Honor Code. I will provide a handout articulating the requirements and expectations of the forum posts on Sakai.

Your lowest grade for both memos and comments will be dropped.

Philosophy in Life Project (150 points):

One of the goals of this course is to help you develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which philosophical insights extend beyond the classroom. To serve this goal, you will be required to have a Philosophy in Life experience. For this course, the Philosophy in Life experience will take the form of a case study project and presentation, which you will do with your discussion group. Each group will choose a case study from contemporary politics and social life. You will use newspapers, articles, blogs, and scholarly articles to research your case study. You will also arrange an out-of-class experience that you yourself will design and execute, to help inform your philosophical thinking about the case. You will turn in both group and individual reflections on these experiences, and we will schedule a time for each group to present their learning to the class. The main objective of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to think carefully and critically about how your in-class learning applies to the real world. I will provide detailed guidance on this assignment in advance of the due date, and you will have plenty of time to ask questions. A grading rubric for this assignment will be provided via Sakai.

Extra Credit (12 points possible):

Throughout the course of the semester, I will identify a number of different events that serve to supplement and enrich your understanding of the course subject. You may receive extra credit for your attendance at two such events by attending, writing a 250 word summary of the event proceedings, and writing a 250 word critical reflection. If your extra credit assignment demonstrates reflective and thoughtful engagement with the extracurricular material, you will receive five points. However, you are not guaranteed five points simply by turning in 500 words, regardless of demonstrated thought and effort. While you are encouraged to attend more than two events, you will not receive extra credit for your attendance at more than two events.

You may also receive 2 points for introducing yourself during my office hours within the first two weeks of the semester. Please note that you will not receive any points for introducing yourself *after* the first two weeks of the semester.

Electronics policy: All electronics (laptops, iPads, cellphones) are prohibited in this class and must be put away and out of sight before class starts. You will leave a very bad impression by texting or fiddling with your phone in class. If you would like to request an exception, you must first discuss it with me.

Academic integrity and honor code: Be aware that academic dishonesty is a serious offense at UNC. All students are expected to adhere to the UNC Honor Code. Do make yourself familiar with the university's policies on plagiarism. It may be useful to take the UNC plagiarism tutorial:

<http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/plagiarism>. As your instructor, I am required to report any case of suspected plagiarism to the Honor Court (which I hear is pretty brutal. The minimum sentence is expulsion for a semester, even if you plead guilty).

The UNC Honor Code defines plagiarism as

“the *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”.

Some things that count as plagiarism:

1. Copying and pasting someone else's ideas without citation. Citations must include author's name and page number(s).
2. Paraphrasing someone else's ideas (for instance, ethical theories) without citation.
3. Unauthorized collaboration with others (students or otherwise). You are permitted to discuss with others, but all work that you turn in must be your own.

As the Office of Student Conduct stresses, plagiarism occurs in many forms and for many different reasons, and sometimes even when we are not aware of doing it. So please consult me if you are unsure or worried that something you have written may count as plagiarism, before it's too late!

Useful Resources

- **Your student rights and responsibilities** along with the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance can be found here: <http://studentconduct.unc.edu/students/rights-responsibilities>
- **The Writing Center** provides various services that can help you develop and perfect your writing skills. They also have great writing guides on their website. See especially the handout on writing a philosophy paper: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu>
- The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy ([online](#)) is an excellent resource.
- My [website](#) provides resources for writing a short philosophy paper.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

(**BA** refers to the *Broadview Anthology*, **IPP** refers to Wolff's *Introduction to Political Philosophy*, **B** refers to Brighouse's *Justice*, and all other readings can be found on Sakai)

Week 1: Introductions

Wednesday, August 23

Introductions and philosophical orientation

Do we need a state?

Week 2: The state of nature

Monday, August 28

BA 258-268, 276-278 (Hobbes, *Leviathan* 13-15.7, 17)

(Recommended: IPP 1-17)

Wednesday, August 30

BA 333-338 (Locke, *Second Treatise* 2-3), Jim Pryor's "Guideline on Reading Philosophy", The Writing Center's tips for argument reconstruction

(Recommended: IPP 17-23)

No forum post this week.

Week 3: Social contract

Monday, September 4: **NO CLASS**

Wednesday, September 6

Argument Reconstruction due.

BA 356-375 (Locke, *Second Treatise* 8-14), Aristotle argument reconstruction

(Recommended: IPP 34-48)

Week 4: Contract continued

Monday, September 11

BA 658-668 (Mill, *Utilitarianism* Ch 2-5)

(Recommended: IPP 48-55)

Wednesday, September 13

BA 403-412 (Hume, *Of the Original Contract*),

(Recommended: **IPP** 55-61)

Distributive justice

Week 5: Introducing justice
Monday, September 18
B, 1-30

First possible paper deadline.

Wednesday, September 20
Original position game (no new readings)

Week 6: Liberalism

Monday, September 25
BA 862-872, **B** 30-46

Wednesday, September 27
BA 872-890, **B** 46-66

Week 7: Libertarianism

Monday, October 2
Friedman selections, **B** 84-94

Wednesday, October 4
BA 907-924, **B** 94-104

Race, gender, and multiculturalism

Week 8: Gender justice

Monday, October 9
BA 954-966, **B** 142-159

Wednesday, October 11
Card, "Against Marriage and Motherhood."

Week 9: Gender and race

Monday, October 16
Brighouse & Olin-wright, "Strong gender egalitarianism"

Wednesday, October 18,
Mills, *The Racial Contract* Intro + Ch 1

Last day to submit Critical Response Paper #1.

Week 10: Racial injustice

Monday, October 23
Shelby, "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto," pp. 126-143

Wednesday, October 25
(ctd) Shelby, pp. 143-160

Preliminary group and individual reports due.

Week 11: Multiculturalism

Monday, October 30

BA 994-1010, B 105-119

Wednesday, November 1

Okin, "Is multiculturalism bad for women?"

Policy and practice

Week 12: Children's rights

Monday, November 6

McAvoy, Paula. "There are no housewives on Star Trek"

Wednesday, November 8

LaFollette, "Licensing Parents"

Week 13: Inheriting inequality

Monday, November 13

Moses, selections on affirmative action

Wednesday, November 15

Swift and Brighthouse, "Legitimate Parental Partiality"

No forum post this week.

Week 14:

Monday, November 20

TBD

Last day to submit Critical Response Paper #2.

Wednesday, November 22: **NO CLASS**

Presentations

Week 15: Presentations

Monday, November 27

Wednesday, November 29

Week 16: Presentations

Monday, December 4

Wednesday, December 6

EXAM: Final group and individual reports due.