

PHIL 449 – Political Philosophy

Trimester 2, 2023 | Mondays 15:10–17:00 |

Office Hours: Mondays 17:15–19:00 (or by appointment)

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The Course

In this course we will discuss a broad range of perspectives within the subfield of political philosophy. Each week, we will consider a set of arguments advanced by contemporary thinkers representing a particular political ideology (with a particular focus on liberalism, its radical descendants, and its critics). Our aim in class is to reconstruct these arguments and critically assess them. You will then be asked to engage with the philosophers we read by developing your own sustained arguments about the topics we have covered.

Classes

Class will be held on Mondays from 17:15 until 19:00 in KK204. **At least 24 hours prior to each class** you should type one question about the readings (along with your name) into a Google doc that I will share with all of you. This question should not duplicate an already-submitted question.

Classes will be discussion-driven, and attendance is strongly recommended. Recordings of the class will be made available online along with any other relevant materials.

Assignments

You will be asked to complete:

- Five four-sentence papers (see accompanying handout) worth 20% of the final grade. Each submission will critically discuss one of the assigned readings, where you decide which readings to discuss. The papers must each discuss a different reading and must be submitted at least 24 hours prior to the class where the reading will be discussed. **At least two four-sentence**

papers must be submitted prior to the mid-trimester break. If you do not want yours discussed in class, please write “opt out” at the bottom of your submission.

- One shorter essay (1,000-1,500 words) worth 35% of the final grade. Due by August 18, 2023.
- One longer essay (2,500-3,000 words) worth 45% of the final grade. Due by October 13, 2023.

These assignments will all be submitted to me via email. Four-sentence papers should just go in an email body and essays should be attached as Word documents.

I reserve the right to not accept late assignments. Extensions on the longer essays will be granted if (a) you have a good reason for needing one and (b) it leaves me with sufficient time to grade your assignment.

Democracy in the Classroom

In this course, students are given the final say regarding all matters that pertain to its content and structure (grading excluded, unfortunately). You are free to propose any changes to the course that you would like (e.g., changing what we read), with a class vote then determining if those changes are adopted. Any proposed changes to the course must be announced one week prior to a vote to allow for adequate time for discussion. Anyone who wants to propose a change should email me before class so that I can announce it.

Plagiarism and ChatGPT

Everything that you turn in should be written by you without consulting any resources beyond the assigned readings and me. No credit will be given for an assignment found to contain any copied or paraphrased material. The use of ChatGPT and other LLMs is particularly discouraged, as (a) it will keep you from practicing the skills you are trying to develop, (b) they produce tedious writing that’s annoying to encounter when marking, and (c) they can be unreliable when it comes to doing the kind of reasoning that is crucial in philosophy essays (see below).

JW There are a number of word puzzles that involve a farmer needing to cross a river with multiple animals (wolf, sheep etc.), who for various reasons can't be on the same boat with each other. Please come up with a totally new farmer and animal puzzle, and also provide the solution

AI Sure, here's a new farmer and animal puzzle:

A farmer needs to cross a river with three animals: a chicken, a goat, and a fox. However, the boat is small and can only hold one animal at a time, and the farmer cannot leave the goat and the chicken **or the goat and the fox alone together** on either side of the river. How can the farmer get all three animals safely to the other side of the river?

Solution:

1. The farmer takes the chicken across the river first, **leaving the goat and the fox on the original side.**
2. The farmer returns to the original side of the river and takes the goat across the river.
3. The farmer then takes the chicken back to the original side of the river.
4. The farmer takes the fox across the river.
5. Finally, the farmer returns to the original side of the river and takes the chicken across.

At the end, all three animals and the farmer have safely crossed the river.

How many times does the letter "n" appear in the word "mayonnaise"?

AI The letter "n" appears 4 times in the word "mayonnaise".

Can you list each of them

AI Sure, the letter n appears in the following positions in the word 'mayonnaise':

1. mayonnaise
2. mayonnainse
3. mayonnaine
4. mayonnaisne

Readings

All readings will be supplied electronically via Talis. The schedule of readings is as follows:

July 10 – Utilitarianism

Peter Singer – “Famine, Affluence, and Morality.”

July 17 – Liberalism

John Rawls – *A Theory of Justice*, excerpts.

Martha Nussbaum – “Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism.”

July 24 – Libertarianism

Robert Nozick – *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, excerpt.

Jessica Flanagan – “A Libertarian Approach to Medicine.”

Javier Hildago – “The Libertarian Case for Open Borders.”

July 31 – Socialism

G. A. Cohen – *Why Not Socialism?*

S. M. Love – “Socialism and Freedom.”

August 7 – Marxism

Nancy Holmstrom – “Exploitation.”

G. A. Cohen – “Forces and Relations of Production.”

Vanessa Wills – “Marxism and White Privilege.”

August 14 – Left-Libertarianism

Alan Gibbard – “Natural Property Rights.”

Michael Otsuka – “Self-Ownership and Equality: A Lockean Reconciliation.”

September 4 – Anarchism

Jesse Spafford – “Social Anarchism and the Rejection of Private Property.”

Jessica Flanagan – “Anarchism and Redistribution.”

September 11 – Conservatism

John Kekes – *A Case for Conservatism*, Chs. 1-2.

Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke – “Conservative Critiques.”

September 18 – Nationalism

Margaret Moore – *The Ethics of Nationalism*, Ch. 1.

David Miller – “Immigration, Nations, and Citizenship.”

September 25 – Multiculturalism

Will Kymlicka – “Justice and Minority Rights.”

Sarah Song – *Justice, Gender, and the Politics of Multiculturalism*, Ch. 2.

October 2 – Communitarianism

Michael Walzer – “The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism.”

Charles Taylor – “Atomism.”

October 9 – Feminism

Ann Cudd – “Oppression by Choice.”

Susan Moller Okin – “Vulnerability by Marriage.”