
POLSCI 175 – Introduction to Political Philosophy

Duke University | Summer Session II 2020

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Office Hours: (On Zoom, all times are EST)

Tuesday: 10AM – 10:30AM | Wednesday: 5:40PM – 6:40PM | Friday: 5PM-6PM

Course Description: This course is an introduction to central ideas in Western political philosophy. Topics discussed will include, among other things, law and morality, capitalism and freedom, theories of property, the nature of government, the basis of political authority, economic and social inequality, theories of justice, and libertarianism vs. egalitarianism. Authors read will include Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Bentham, Mill, Nozick, and Rawls.

Warning: This course will be largely **reading-based**. (See the reading schedule below for details.) While the exact amount of pages per session varies, some readings are denser than others, and understanding philosophical texts often requires you to read them multiple times. Also keep in mind that this is a somewhat condensed course (a semester condensed into 6 weeks). Therefore, in general, you should expect to spend about **1 – 2 uninterrupted hours per class session** on the reading. (Note: Doing the readings is **absolutely essential**, since you will receive **exams** based on the readings. More information on exams below.)

Course Goals:

1. You will gain a broad knowledge of many of the central texts and ideas of Western political philosophy. These ideas are highly influential – they have directly shaped, and continue to shape, the way we think about politics, government, and society. They are also deeply challenging, and you will be required to evaluate several competing ideologies and come to your own conclusions. By the end of the course you will hopefully be able to engage political issues as a citizen from a more critical and informed standpoint.
2. You will learn to **read**: As has already been mentioned, this course is reading-based. Some of the texts we read will be highly abstract. Also, many of the texts for this course are taken from primary sources and are therefore written in styles that are somewhat foreign to contemporary readers. Having to read these passages slowly and carefully will teach you to extract the main ideas out of what are sometimes dense and unfamiliar texts.
3. You will learn to **write**: A good philosophy paper is clear, easy to follow, and straight to the point. Thus, in this class, you will learn to phrase your ideas as clearly as possible, structure your paper coherently, and avoid unnecessarily complicated and confusing language. This is an extremely versatile skill to have, and will be very helpful for you in the future.
4. Most importantly, you will learn to **think**: You will learn how to raise questions about views you are unfamiliar with or disagree with. You will also be confronted with challenging and interesting questions that require you to think critically about your *own*

views and argue rigorously for those views based on *reasons* and *evidence*. Finally, you will be taught how to communicate those views clearly and persuasively to others.

This class is not just for political science or philosophy students; being able to **read, write, speak** and **think** *logically* and *clearly* are skills that transfer to almost any part of life and any academic field. (That is why philosophy students are among the very highest scorers on the LSAT, GRE, GMAT, and in med-school admissions.)

Textbooks and Readings: The following are the textbooks we will be using, and can be found inexpensively on Amazon:

- [*Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*](#) by Michael Sandel
- [*Justice: A Reader*](#) by Michael Sandel
 - (A link to the reader on Google Books is [here](#).)

In the interests of accessibility, I will be making **all readings available online**. (Go to the class in Sakai then go to Resources>>Course Readings.) I personally find it very helpful to have physical copies, but even if you do not buy them I highly recommend that, if possible, you print out any readings I upload electronically, so that you can have a physical copy to read, highlight, take notes on, refer to in discussions, etc.

Course Format: This online course largely will be based around readings, pre-recorded lectures, and class discussions on Zoom. I will also try to have frequent office hours.

Lectures This course will be taught asynchronously, so that students impacted by the recent Covid-19 disruptions will find the course accessible. My plan is to record and post on Sakai daily **lectures** that primarily discuss and elaborate on concepts from the readings for the next day. I will generally post lectures the day before. So, for example, if the readings for July 2 are from Chapter 2 of *Justice*, then I will try to post the lecture for those by the morning or early afternoon of July 1. Although these lectures are not given during our official course meeting time, **it is required** that you watch them, and I will assume you have.

Class Discussions We will have optional **class discussions** the next morning, from 10:30AM-11:15AM. These will be through Zoom, and I will send out a link via e-mail. (If you do not receive a link or have trouble getting in, just message me.) My normal plan for these is that I will give a brief 10-15 minute refresher on the material from the lecture/readings, and then we will have some group discussion where students can grapple with and ask questions about the arguments and theories we are considering. (This is usually pretty fun.)

Again, these class discussions are optional, but I **strongly recommend** you come and participate: For one, I guarantee you will do better on your assignments; and secondly, there **is a participation grade** for this course, and although there are other ways to satisfy this requirement, participating in class discussion sessions is the easiest way to do so. (And do feel welcome to come even if you don't have any questions yourself, and just want to listen!)

Office Hours On most days, I will have some office hours. Unlike the discussion sessions, you can come at these times and ask about **basically anything**: Any questions you still have about the lecture or readings of course, but also any questions about assignments, course logistics, grades, help with homework/exams, or even more general questions about philosophy, political science, academics, etc. Basically anything. You can ask me my favorite color, what I think about Kant's theory of the categorical imperative, my take on the shape of the earth, or even my opinion on the merits of stevia vs. Splenda, whatever. (However, ask at your own peril. No guarantees that my answers will be informative, reliable or prudent.)

Note: Everyone is welcome to come to office hours. In particular, you are very welcome to come to office hours even if you did not come to the class discussion, or even if you can only come for part of the time. You are also welcome to join if you don't have a question and just want to listen. (That applies to discussion sessions too.)

Grade Breakdown:

- **Participation:** 15%
- **Paper 1:** 15% [Due 7/13]
- **Exam 1:** 20% [Due 7/27]
- **Paper 2:** 20%
- **Final Exam:** 30%

Participation Breakdown: Participation is an important part of your grade. It is also one of the easiest ways to get points, so I encourage you to actively participate.

The policy for participation is very simple, and if you keep track of yourself you can calculate it precisely. All you have to do is keep track of which dates you participated. **There are only four possible participation grades:** A+, C+, F+, and F-, computed as follows:

- A+ (100%): Student **participated well** at least 5 times.
- C+ (77%): Student participated well 3-4 times.
- F+ (50%): Student participated well 1-2 times.
- F- (0%): Student participated well 0 times.

There are two main ways you can participate: (1) First, by making a point or raising a question during class discussion sessions; (2) second, by chatting with me either during official office hours or one-on-one Zoom appointments about material related to the course. (Other ways might be possible if you reach out to me with enough time before the end of the course.)

Each day that you participate in discussion session or office hours or a meeting you will have participated "one time." So as to spread your participation throughout the term, I will not count several questions, words, syllables, thoughts, or mumblings as separate instances of participation. You are totally encouraged to participate more than once per day, but you don't have to, and doing so will not gain you any extra participation points. In short, you can generally get points

for participation only “once per day.” (And, conversely, you cannot knock out all your participation for the term by asking 5 questions in one session at the end.)

Note that I say **you must participate well**: You must raise questions or comments that indicate you have done the reading, seen the lectures, and are actively engaging with the problem we are talking about. (Note that I *do* track participation after discussion sessions, by check-marking on my roster those who have participated. If you participate, you *will* get credit.)

However, rest assured that I will not judge your participation by how *strong* your arguments are, or on how *well* you understand the material. So long as you are sincerely trying to understand and discuss the material you will get full points, even if you ask a supposedly “dumb” question. (Although really there is no such thing!)

In general, if you just put in a good-faith effort here, this part of the course grade will be simple and straightforward.

Exams: You will have two (2) exams that will most likely involve some multiple choice and some short answer questions. Most likely they will be timed. I am still working on how these exams will be delivered, but I expect they will be done online through Sakai. Details of the exams and study guides will be given as we get closer to each exam.

Papers: Please read the following closely:

- Instructions for the papers will be uploaded at certain dates; due dates are indicated on the reading schedule.
- So as to make grading as fair as possible, grading will be blind. Thus, **no names are allowed on your papers; please include only your Duke UID.**
- In general, **late papers** will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for every day (or part of a day) after they are due. However, you are allowed **one (1) “free” late day**, where you can turn a paper in up to 24 hours after the time it is due. Which paper you use it on is up to you. If and when you choose to use this, please just let me know via e-mail.
- **You must use citations:** You must cite sources in your papers, especially when you are quoting or attributing a view to an author. Citations serve the purposes of (a) protecting you from allegations of plagiarism (see below), and (b) proving to me that what you attribute to an author is what the author actually says. I don’t care what format you use, so long as I can easily find the place you are referencing. Citations do not count toward the word count. **Failure to cite will result in loss of points.**

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism: The Duke Community Standard Guide [defines](#) plagiarism as follows:

“Plagiarism occurs when a student, with intent to deceive or with reckless disregard for proper scholarly procedures, presents any information, ideas, or phrasing of another as if they were the student’s own and/or does not give appropriate credit to the original source. Proper scholarly procedures require that all quoted material be identified by quotation marks or indentation on the page, and the source of information and ideas, if from

another, must be identified and be attributed to that source. Students are responsible for learning proper scholarly procedures.” (p. 16)

Note that it is also unacceptable to **re-use your own work**, including submitting old papers. Note also that in this class it is **absolutely essential for your grade** that you use **citations** in your scholarly work. It is your responsibility to be familiar with university policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty. (See the Duke Library’s website for further information on plagiarism, [here](#).) It is my responsibility to report any instances of academic dishonesty. If you have any questions about anything on this topic, please talk to me.

Accompanying Video Series: Please note that there is an accompanying video series for the book, with lectures by the author, Harvard professor Michael Sandel. These videos are very helpful (and very fun to watch!). You can find that [here](http://justiceharvard.org/justicecourse/): <http://justiceharvard.org/justicecourse/>

Reading & Assignment Schedule

Readings will be covered in **discussion sessions** on the dates listed.

This means they are explained in the lecture from the **previous date**.

(Note that this schedule may change.)

(6/29) Course Introduction

(6/30) Required: Watch: Michael Sandel, [The Case of Dudley and Stephens](#)

(Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YCc1jkFY_qU)

Optional: [Reader](#): Ch.1, “The Queen v. Dudley and Stephens” (pp. 3-7)

(7/1) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 1, “Doing the Right Thing” (pp. 3-30)

(7/2) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 2, “Utilitarianism” (pp. 31-33)

[You may want to start on the readings for next time, as they are a bit longer.]

(7/3) **HOLIDAY:** No discussion meeting

(7/6) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 2, “Utilitarianism” (pp. 34-48)

Reader: Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation* (pp. 9-14)

(7/7) No additional readings.

[But use the time to start readings for 7/8, as they are somewhat longer!]

(7/8) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 2, "Utilitarianism" (pp. 48-57)

Reader: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* Chs. 1 & 2 (pp. 14-27)

(7/9) Required: *Reader*: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* Ch. 5 (pp. 35-47)

[May want to start readings for 7/10 too!]

(7/10) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 3, "Libertarianism" (pp. 58-74)

Reader: Milton and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose* (pp. 49-60)

(7/13) Required: *Reader*: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (pp. 60-73)

PAPER 1 DUE AT 11:59PM 7/13

(7/14) Required: Plato, *Crito* (Online)

(7/15) No additional readings.

(7/16) Hobbes, *Leviathan*, selections (Online)

(7/17) Required: *Reader*: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chs. I–IV (pp. 84-90)

(7/20) Required: *Reader*: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. V (pp. 90-96)

(7/21) Required: *Reader*: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. VII (pp. 96-101)

(7/22) Required: *Reader*: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chs. VIII–X (pp. 101-111)

(7/23) Required: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, selections (Online)

Optional: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, selections (Online)

(7/24) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 4, "Markets and Morals" (pp. 75-102)

(7/27) **EXAM THIS DAY ON SAKAI 7/27**

(7/28) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 5, "Immanuel Kant" (pp. 103-139)

Optional: *Reader*: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, sec. 38

(7/29) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 6, "John Rawls" (pp. 140-153)

Reader: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*

pp. 203-209 (stop at "Classical Utilitarianism")

pp. 214 - top of 215 (stop at "Interpretations of the Second Principle")

pp. 219 - 221 (read the section titled "The Veil of Ignorance")

Optional: *Reader*: Rawls, rest of pp. 209-221

(7/30) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 6, "John Rawls" (pp.153-166)

Reader: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (pp. 223-226)

(7/31) Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (pp. 226-235)

(8/3) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 7, "Arguing Affirmative Action" (pp. 167-183)

(8/4) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 8, "Aristotle" (pp. 184-207)

Reader: Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. I Chs. 1-2 (pp. 264-266)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Selections from Book II (pp. 295-297)

Optional: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Selections from Book X (pp. 297-299)

(8/5) Required: *Reader*: Aristotle, *Politics* Bk. III, Chs. 6-13 (pp. 284-295)

(8/6) Required: *Justice*: Ch. 9, "Dilemmas of Loyalty" (pp. 208-243)

Reader: Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, (pp. 328-334)

Optional: *Justice*: Ch. 10, "Justice and the Common Good" (pp. 244-269)