

Political Philosophy

PHIL 3751

Barnard College/Columbia University

Spring 2013

What do we mean when speak about freedom and equality? Do we have natural rights? What limits, if any, should there be on democratic authority? To what extent is capitalism just and beneficial? When is socioeconomic inequality unfair? When do personal differences like sex or disability justify different sorts of treatment? What, in general, is the proper role of government? Can we “legislate morality”? What are the social preconditions of a stable, well-ordered society? Which groups have a right to self-determination or representation? And, finally, what duties do we have to people in other countries? In this course, we examine questions such as these in the framework of major political philosophies like democratic liberalism, socialism, libertarianism, and conservatism through readings of historical writers like John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, and John Stuart Mill, as well as of contemporary philosophers like John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Ronald Dworkin, Iris Young, and K.A. Appiah.

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Office Hours: Mondays 10:00-11:00; Wednesdays 5:30-6:30 – 722 Philosophy

Class Meets: Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:10-5:25; Hamilton 516

Texts:

- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett) (but any other edition will do just as well)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings* (Hackett, 1st or 2nd Edition)
- All other readings will be in .pdf format on Courseworks.

Reading Assignments:

All readings are mandatory unless noted as “optional.” Where more than one reading is assigned, I recommend reading them in the order in which I have posted them.

Always bring the week’s assigned reading to class, whether in print or on computer or electronic device.

Evaluation:

- Paper 1: 20%
- Paper 2: 25%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Final Exam: 25%
- Discussion Forum: 10%

Because this is so large a class, class participation is not a part of the official part of the grade. However, you will probably get more out of the class if you ask questions and otherwise participate, and I will take frequent participation into consideration if your final grade is right on the boundary of two grades (esp. <1%).

Grading

100-97%	A+	89.99...-87%	B+	79.99...-77%	C+	69.99...%-60%	D
96.99...-93%	A	86.99...-83%	B	76.99...-73%	C	<59.99...%	F
92.99...-90%	A-	82.99...-80%	B-	72.99...-70%	C-		

The lower boundary for each letter grade is the cut-off. (The cut-off has to come somewhere.) So, I don’t generally round grades up.

Grading will be carried out by both the instructor and the teaching assistant. If you have questions about the grading, speak *first* to the person who graded your paper.

Discussion Forum Posting: At least 1 hour before each class, you should either (a) post a question or objection you have regarding the assigned reading, or (b) briefly respond to, or expand upon, a question or objection already posted on the Courseworks Bulletin Board. These may be as short as two or three sentences or as long as a paragraph. Credit may be withheld for responses that do not reflect having actually read the assigned text.

Posts are worth 10% of the final grade. To receive the full 10%, you must post on 24 of the available 26 classes. (There are 28 classes, but I'm not counting the first day and the midterm). Therefore, each post is worth a little less than .05% of your final grade.

No late posts will be accepted for any reason – even extremely good reasons – with the exception of the sorts of reasons that require you to contact your dean (hospitalization, death in the family, etc.). So if you want full credit for this part of your grade, you had better save up your two freebies for when you really need them (e.g., you are really sick, your boss has called you into work unexpectedly, your boyfriend or girlfriend broke up with you just two hours before class, and now you can't concentrate on John Rawls of all things!).

Papers: Papers will address assigned topics based on the assigned readings. Topics will be distributed at least two weeks in advance of the due date. In length, each paper should be not less than 1500 words (about 5 double-spaced pages). Papers should be submitted in the Courseworks "Dropbox" (preferred) or emailed to me by 11:59 PM on the due dates (3/2) and (4/28).

Plagiarism Policy: Unless otherwise instructed, you are advised not to do outside research for these papers. That said, any text taken verbatim from other sources must be quoted and cited. Paraphrases and the borrowing of ideas from other sources should also be cited. Plagiarism will be dealt with severely and may result in both failing the course and having the incident permanently recorded on your academic transcript. You may talk with other students about your papers, but you must do the actual writing yourself. You are encouraged to have friends or writing tutors read over your work to proofread and give you feedback.

Exams: There will be an in-class midterm (3/11) and an in-class final exam (date TBA). Exams will feature a combination of short-answer and essay questions. Study guides will be provided at least two weeks before the date of the exam.

PART I: SOURCES OF MODERN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY	
A. Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Political Thought: Natural Rights, Social Contract, and Representative Government	
1. W – Jan. 23	Introduction; Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , chs. 13-15, 17-18, 20 (selections)
2. M – Jan. 28	John Locke, 2nd Treatise, chs. II-V; VIII: §§95-99, 119-122; IX-XI
3. W – Jan. 30	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>Discourse on the Origin of Inequality</i> : Introduction and Part II (required); Part I (optional)
4. M – Feb. 4	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>Social Contract</i> , Bk. I: chs. 1, 5-9; Bk. II: chs. 1, 3-7, 11-12; Bk. III: chs. 1, 4, 12-13, 15; Bk. IV: chs. 1-2, 8-9
B. Nineteenth-Century Political Thought: Freedom, History, and the Economic Order	
5. W – Feb. 6	G.W.F. Hegel, “Freedom, Individual, and State,” selection from <i>Introduction to the Philosophy of History</i>
6. M – Feb. 11	G.W.F. Hegel, <i>Philosophy of Right</i> , §§189-208, 230-256
7. W – Feb. 13	<i>Federalist Papers</i> , ##10, 51, 78; <i>Brutus</i> , ##3, 11, 12, 15.*
8. M – Feb. 18	Alexis de Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> : Introduction, I.ii.9 (selections); II.i.5; II.ii.2, 4, 5; II.iii.5-8
9. W – Feb. 20	Karl Marx, <i>1844 Manuscripts</i> : “Estranged Labor” & “Private Property and Communism”
10. M – Feb. 25	Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, “Communist Manifesto” (pp. 473-491); Marx, “Critique of the Gotha Program,” (pp. 528-532)
11. W – Feb. 27	J.S. Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chs. 2, 4 (selections); <i>On Liberty</i> , chs. 1, 3, 5

* This really belongs in Eighteenth-Century Political Thought, but it has been moved for scheduling reasons.

Sunday-Mar. 2	First Paper Due
12. M – Mar. 4	J.S. Mill, “Considerations on Representative Government,” ch. 3 (selections); “Chapters on Socialism”
C. Retrospective	
13. W – Mar. 6	Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”
14. M – Mar. 11	Midterm Exam
PART II: ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY	
A. Theories of Justice	
15. W – Mar. 13	John Rawls, <i>Theory of Justice</i> , selections
16. M – Mar. 25	Robert Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State, & Utopia</i> , selections
17. W – Mar. 27	Ronald Dworkin, “Liberalism”
18. M – Apr. 1	T.H. Marshall, “Citizenship and Social Class”
B. The Scope of Justice: The Family and the Global Order	
19. W – Apr. 3	Susan Okin, “Justice and Gender”
20. M – Apr. 8	Thomas Nagel, “The Problem of Global Justice”
C. Democracy	
21. W – Apr. 10	Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere”; Jon Elster, “The Market and the Forum: Three Varieties of Political Theory”
22. M – Apr. 15	Ronald Dworkin, “The Moral Reading and the Majoritarian Premise”
23. W – Apr. 17	Iris Young, “Polity and Group Difference”
D. Community, Culture, and Politics	
24. M – Apr. 22	Thomas Nagel, “Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy”
25. W – Apr. 24	Joseph Chan, “Legitimacy, Unanimity, and Perfectionism”
April 28	Second Paper Due

26. M – Apr. 29	William Galston, “Public Virtue and Civic Religion”
27. W – May 1	Peter Berger and John Neuhaus, “The Role of Mediating Structures in Public Policy”; Michael Sandel, “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self”
28. M – May 6	Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Liberalism, Individuality, and Identity”
M – May 13, 4:10-7:00 PM	Final Exam