

PHIL 2200: MAJOR SOCIAL THEORIES

Spring 2017

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MWF 2:00-2:50 VAC 1B88

MWF 3:00-3:50 CLRE 209

Office Hours: MWF 4:00-5:00 HLMS 192

"The man who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the co-operation or consent of his deliberate reason." – Bertrand Russell

Course Description

Almost everyone lives in a society. We live together. And yet we often appear to be pretty selfish. These two facts (if they are facts) raise a number of difficult and important questions, some of which we will explore in this class. In particular, we will be asking: What do we want society to be like? Do we need a central authority, or government, to ensure the society functions properly? What is the proper role of the government? Whence does it derive its authority? What is it allowed to do? When should individuals in the society obey the government, and why? In thinking about these questions, you will refine your critical thinking skills by evaluating complex ideas and arguments and forming your own views about them. Be prepared to have your beliefs challenged and, when provided with good reason to do so, to revise them. I'm excited about this course and think you should be too. It will be lively and fun and you will come out of a better thinker, and hopefully a better person, too.

Course Format

The format for this course involves a combination of lecture, class discussion, and various in-class activities. You should be prepared to engage in discussion every day. That means you'll have to do the readings and come to class.

Course Materials

There is one required book, which is *The Problem of Political Authority: An Examination of the Right to Coerce and the Duty to Obey*, by Michael Huemer, referred to in the schedule below as "PPA." All other assigned readings can be found on Desire2Learn.

Online

We will be using Desire2Learn. This can be found at learn.colorado.edu. On Desire2Learn, you can find the readings that aren't in the book, as well as the gradebook to see how well you are doing.

Assessment

1. Exams (40%): You will take a midterm exam (20%) and a final exam (20%).
2. Papers (40%): You will write two papers. The first (15%) will be a short diagnostic paper, 600-900 words (or 2-3 pages), and the second (25%) will be a longer paper, 1200-1800 in length (4-6 pages). Details TBA.
3. Reading notecards (10%): Over the course of the semester, you will turn in 10 reading notecards. These will be handwritten on standard, white 3x5 notecards. **I won't accept anything else**, so you should get a pack right away if you don't already have some. Each notecard should have two items: (1) A critical comment about the reading. It can be an objection, an implication of the author's thesis, a connection to a previous reading, or any other comment that demonstrates critical engagement with the reading. (2) A question about the reading. It should be a substantive question that shows you have engaged with the reading. Notecards will be accepted only at the beginning of the class (you are not to write them during class). You may only turn in one notecard per week. This means you will have to plan carefully so as not to run out of weeks. They will be evaluated on a credit/no-credit basis. Each card is worth 1% of your grade. If you submit a card that does not meet the requirements or is otherwise unacceptable, you will receive no credit for that card. If you receive a 0 on a card, you will be allowed to submit another card, provided you never turn in more than one card per week. Also, you may not turn in a notecard for a reading after the day on which the reading is assigned. Once we have begun discussing the reading in class, you may no longer submit a notecard for that reading. It should be obvious that it is in your interest to get an early start on the reading notecards. A safe approach would be to simply think of them as weekly notecards, though you can miss a few and/or you won't have to do them the last few weeks of class.
4. Participation (10%): I expect you to attend class every day and to be an active participant in class discussion. A portion of this grade will be determined by in-class activities, done for a small amount of credit. A portion will also be determined by my subjective sense of how active and engaged you were in the course.

Policies, tips, and other stuff:

Attendance: I expect you to come to class every day. Missed class work will be excused only if you (1) have a good reason to be absent from class, (2) can provide documentation of this reason, and (3) have notified me of the absence in advance.

Late work: Late papers will be lowered by one "grade increment" for every day they are late (e.g., a B+ paper that is one day late will get a B; a C paper that is two days late will get a D+). Computer crash or theft is not a legitimate excuse. You should already be

using a cloud-based service. If something extremely dire happens such that an extension is obviously necessary, documentation is required.

Extra credit: Extra credit will not be offered. Stay on top of things.

Participate a lot: Philosophy is really fun. Try to participate as much as you can, even if you are shy. You will get a lot more out of the class if you do.

Office Hours: Come to office hours. I like getting to know students and it's a good chance for you to get help on anything you are struggling with or talk about your papers.

Technology in the classroom: Texting during class is prohibited. If you must read or send a text, please step out of the classroom. First-time offenders will be asked to stop. Additional offenses will result in dismissal from class and a loss of participation points. If you use a laptop in class, you may use it only for taking notes. No web-surfing, emailing, IMing, Facebooking, etc. If you use a laptop, disable the wifi.

Email: From time to time, I will be sending you emails with important information about the class, including changes to the readings and schedule. You will be responsible for the information I send via email.

Phone: My phone number is on the top of the syllabus. You may call or text me, but please use common sense when it comes to the time of day. If you call and I don't answer, I can usually respond to voicemails fairly quickly.

Other grading notes: Grades are not a personal evaluation of you, and they do not report how hard you tried. They report only how well you completed the assignments. Do not worry too much about your grade, since for most of you, minor differences between grades will have little to no effect on your future lives.

Plagiarism: The honor code is mentioned in general below under "Fine Print" but I want to highlight plagiarism here. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for you to understand what constitutes plagiarism. In **EVERY SINGLE** case of plagiarism I have ever encountered, the student claimed that he or she did not intend to plagiarize. This does not count as a legitimate excuse. **The minimum penalty for plagiarism is an F for the course**, though even more severe penalties are possible.

Schedule

Readings from *The Problem of Political Authority* are designated as PPA. All other readings can be found on D2L.

- 1.18 Intro, syllabus, "What is Philosophy?"
- 1.20 Layman "Logic" (Optional: Schick and Vaughn, "Informal Fallacies")

- 1.23 JS Mill, *Utilitarianism* (selections), Shane Gronholz, “Introduction to Consequentialism”
- 1.25 James Rachels, “The Debate Over Utilitarianism”
- 1.27 No new reading
- 1.30 Robin S. Dillon on Kantian Respect (SEP), Andrew Chapman, “Introduction to Deontology: Kantian Ethics”
- 2.1 no new reading
- 2.3 W.D. Ross, “What Makes Right Acts Right?”
- 2.6 Robert Nozick, “Distributive Justice,” (Optional: Jeremy Waldron, “Property Rights”)
- 2.8. John Rawls, “A Theory of Justice”
- 2.10 No new reading
- 2.13 Rawls v. Nozick
- 2.15 No new reading
- 2.17 Derek Parfit, “Equality and Priority”
- 2.20 Michael Huemer, “Against Equality and Priority”
- 2.22 no new reading
- 2.24 PPA, “Introduction: The Problem of Political Authority”
- 2.27 Jeremy Waldron, “A Right to do Wrong”
- 3.1 No new reading
- 3.3 John Locke, *Second Treaties of Government* (selections)
- 3.6 no new reading
- 3.8 **Midterm exam**
- 3.10 PPA, “The Traditional Social Contract Theory”
- 3.13 no new reading
- 3.15 PPA, “The Hypothetical Social Contract Theory”
- 3.17 no new reading | **first paper due**
- 3.20 PPA, “The Authority of Democracy”
- 3.22 no new reading
- 3.24 TBA

Spring break: March 27-31

- 4.3 PPA, “Consequentialism and Fairness” ***
- 4.5 no new reading
- 4.7 PPA, “The Psychology of Authority”
- 4.10 no new reading
- 4.12 PPA, “What if there is no Authority?”

- 4.14 no new reading
- 4.17 PPA, "Evaluating Social Theories"
- 4.19 PPA, "The Logic of Predation"
- 4.21 no new reading
- 4.24 PPA, "Individual Security in a Stateless Society"
- 4.26 PPA, "Criminal Justice and Dispute Resolution"
- 4.28 PPA, "War and Societal Defense"
- 5.1 PPA, "From Democracy to Anarchy"
- 5.3 TBA
- 5.5 TBA | **second paper due**

Fine Print

- 1. honor code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>
- 2. classroom environment: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code
- 3. disabilities: if you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and see <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>
- 4. religious holidays: campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you anticipate any such conflicts this semester, please contact me in a

timely manner so that we can make arrangements that will be acceptable to you. For further information see: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

5. discrimination, harassment, amorous relationships:: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student in this class who believes he or she has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>