

PHIL 2205: Social and Political Philosophy (3 credits)

SECTION 001: LA 236, Monday, 4:30 p.m – 7:00 p.m.

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Surprenant
Office: UNO: LA 236
Office Hours: M:2:00-4:00,T:12:15-1:00pm,Th:12:15-3:30 (and by appointment)
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Course Webpages: Accessed via Moodle.

Required Text

[1] *Justice: A Reader*, edited by M. Sandel, Oxford, 2007. ISBN: 0195335120

Course Description

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: An introduction to theories and problems concerning the nature and justification, if any, of society, authority, and the state.

COURSE OVERVIEW: This course will examine a number of the main figures, texts, and ideas in the history of Western political thought. We will consider such issues as: the relationship between individual rights and democracy, the nature and extent of political obligations, and the value of freedom as compared to other potentially competing goods like community, progress, security, etc., as well as the role of political institutions in both perpetuating and overcoming race, gender, and economic oppression.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- understand theories central to political philosophy and how these theories can be applied to contemporary problems
- work with philosophical concepts and methods, and to construct and evaluate arguments
- to participate in classroom discussion, developing and displaying an ability and readiness to defend one's own point of view while listening openly but carefully to others
- to demonstrate a willingness to entertain criticism, formulate and reply to reasonable objections, and represent opposing views both critically and sympathetically
- to read both primary and secondary texts, and analyze the arguments contained in them correctly

Grading

Requirement		Final grade	
Midterm Exam	(30%) 30 points	A	100 – 89.5 points
Final Exam	(70%) 60 points	B	89.4 – 79.5 points
Other	see below	C	79.4 – 69.5 points
		D	69.4 – 59.5 points
		F	59.4 — 0 points

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation: The University of New Orleans has a strict attendance policy. Attendance and intelligent participation at all class meetings is expected. Attendance will be kept via a sign-in sheet at the front of the room. You are allowed to miss one class without penalty. For each class missed beyond the first, your final grade will be reduced by 1/2 of a letter grade. Your final grade may be raised by no more than a full letter based on intelligent and thoughtful class participation throughout the semester and noticeable improvement in the quality of your contributions and work.

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will be held in-class on Monday, October 14. The format of the exam will be discussed in class. The midterm will be open book. You can reference any notes that you have in your book. All notes should be taken in your book. You are not allowed to have your computer or use any electronic devices during the exam. Sharing of notes during the exam is not allowed. Exams are graded blind. The grading procedure will be discussed in-class.

Final Exam: The final exam will due on Sunday, December 15. The format of the final exam and the rules governing it will discussed in class.

Extra Credit: The primary reason for attending college is to begin the process of becoming a scholar by reflecting on complicated questions related to the human experience. To this end, you will receive a bonus of 3 points (1/3rd of a letter grade) added to your final score for attending scholarly lectures sponsored by the Philosophy Department of my Alexis de Tocqueville Project on Democratic Ideals and Institutions. To receive this bonus, you must attend at least 3 lectures during the semester. Further, for each of these talks you attend, I will reduce your course absences by 1. A schedule for this semester's talks has been included with the syllabus.

Course Policies

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is expected at all class meetings. You may miss up to two classes (and not submit the two corresponding response papers) without penalty. For each class missed beyond the second, you'll lose 2% off your final grade. The cap is 10%, or one, full letter grade.

ELECTRONICS: Computers, phones, and similar devices are not allowed in class. If you are on one of these devices (e.g., texting) and I see you (and, believe me, I will see you), I will stop class and we will have a phone quiz. Phone quizzes will consist of one, short answer question, graded on a 4-point scale. Everyone who takes the quiz will score at least 1 out of 4 points. Students not present will be exempt (since they are already being penalized by the absence policy). The person who was on his/her phone will not be allowed to take the quiz and will receive a 0. Quizzes will count towards each student's attendance grade.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Academic dishonest undermines the enterprise of the university and includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarizing, tampering with academic records or exams, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. If you're foolish enough to do something like this, you'll be expelled from the course with a failing grade and will be reported to the university.

DISABILITY STAMENT: UNO is committed to providing for the needs of students who have disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students who qualify for services will receive academic modifications to which they are legally entitled. It is the responsibility of students who may require such services or modifications to register each semester with the Office of Disability Services (UC 260, 280-6222) and follow its procedures for obtaining assistance.

Course Schedule

Reading is due for the date listed. All page numbers refer to the required course text.

Aug 26	Doing the Right Thing and Utilitarianism The Queen v. Dudley and Stephens (1984) (the lifeboat case) Jeremy Bintham, Principles of Morals and Legislation John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism	pp. 3-48
Sept 2	No class, Labor Day	
Sept 9	Locke: Property Rights John Locke, Second Treatise of Government	pp. 83-126
Sept 16	Kant: Freedom as Autonomy Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals Immanuel Kant, "On the Supposed Right to Lie"	pp. 158-202
Sept 23	Rawls: Justice as Fairness John Rawls, A Theory of Justice	pp. 203-222
Sept 30	Libertarianism Milton and Rose Friedman, Free to Choose Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia Friedrich Hayek, The Constitution of Liberty	pp. 49-82
Oct 7	Distributive Justice: Equality, Entitlement, and Merit John Rawls, A Theory of Justice Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia	pp. 223-236
Oct 14	Midterm Exam	
Oct 21	Markets and Morals Guido Calabresi and Philip Bobbit, Tragic Choices James McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom James Traub, "All Go Down Together" In the Matter of Baby 'M' Elizabeth Anderson, "Is Women's Labor a Commodity?"	pp. 127-157
Oct 28	Affirmative Action: Reverse Discrimination? Richard Bernstein, "Racial Discrimination or Righting Past Wrongs?" Hopwood v. State of Texas & Grutter v. Bollinger Ronald Dworkin, "Bakke's Case: Are Quotas Unfair?" Jefferson Morley, "Double Reverse Discrimination" Michael Brus, Affirmative Action and Racial Profiling, What's the Difference?	pp. 237-263
Nov 4	Ability, Disability, and Discrimination Sue Anne Pressley, "A Safety Blitz: Texas Cheerleader Loses Status" Michael Sandel, "Honor and Resentment" Bob Ryan, "Sorry, Free Rides Not Right" Tom Kite, "Keep the PGA on Foot" PGA Tour Inc. v. Casey Martin	pp. 301-314
Nov 11	Aristotle: Justice and Virtue Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics and Politics	pp. 264-300
Nov 18	Justice, Community, and Membership Alasdair MacIntyre, "After Virtue" Michael Sandel, "Democracy's Discontent" Michael Walzer, "Spheres of Justice"	pp. 315-342
Nov 25	Moral Argument and Liberal Toleration John Rawls, Political Liberalism Michael Sandel, "Political Liberalism"	pp. 343-378
Dec 2	Morality and Law Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health Michgael Kinsley, "Abolish Marriage" John Finnis, "Law, Morality, and 'Sexual Orientation'" Stephen Macedo, "Homosexuality and the Conservative Mind" Robin West, "Universalism, Liberal Theory, and the Problem of Gay Marriage"	pp. 379-410