

Date prepared: 1/22/14

The University of New Orleans
Dept. of Philosophy

PHIL 4215: Advanced Social and Political Philosophy (3 credits)

SECTION 601: LA 194, Thursday, 4:30 p.m – 7:15 p.m.

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Surprenant
Office: UNO: LA 387
Office Hours: M: 3:30-4:00; T: 11:00-11:30; Th: 11:00-4:00
Office Phone: (504) 280-6818
Email: csurpren@uno.edu
Course Webpages: Accessed via Moodle.

Required Text

There are no required books for this course. All required readings are available on Moodle.

Course Description

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: A systematic study of major positions, problems, and concepts in social-political theory, as represented in classical and contemporary works.

COURSE OVERVIEW: This course is an advanced study of social and political philosophy. We will examine such questions as: May the state legitimately use the law to impose a certain conception of morality on its citizens? Or must the state aim, rather, to remain neutral when its citizens disagree strongly about the best way of life, protecting its citizens' freedom to choose their own visions of the good life?

A primary focus throughout the entire semester will be on learning how to read, understand, evaluate, and construct philosophical arguments, and then engaging with contemporary scholars about these arguments and ideas. In this way, this course will also serve as an introduction to being a philosopher. Unique to this course is that during the semester we will papers from contemporary scholars. Each of these scholars will then visit our class the following week to engage in a discussion with us about the topics central to their papers.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- to understand theories central to social and political philosophy, and how these theories can be applied to contemporary problems
- to work with philosophical concepts and methods
- to construct and evaluate arguments
- to learn how to construct an analytical essay
- 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

Requirements
Participation = 20% (20 points)
Midterm Exam = 30% (30 points)
Final Paper = 50% (50 points)

Final Grade
A = 100 – 89.5 points
B = 89.4 – 79.5 points
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 is due by 11:59pm on Friday, February 28. The format will be either a take-home exam consisting of multiple, multi-part essays, or a short paper that has students respond to a number of the ideas encountered in the course up until this point. More information about the format of the midterm exam will be provided in class.

Final Paper and Research Presentation: An analytical research paper of no longer than 5000 words is due no later than Friday, May 9. You will select your own paper topic, but all topics must be approved by me in advance. You are also strongly encourage to meet with me as you develop your topic and the argument in your paper.

All students will present a portion of their final paper in class, either on April 24 (group 1) or May 1 (group 2). Each student will speak for approximately 10 minutes and then field questions for approximately 10 minutes.

Course Policies

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu>.

STUDENT CONDUCT: Civility in the classroom and respect for the opinions of others is very important in an academic environment. In this class you should be prepared to have your positions challenged, as well as to challenge the positions of your classmates. It is likely you may not agree with everything that is said or discussed in the classroom, but courteous behavior and responses are expected.

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.

DISABILITY STAMENT: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>.

ELECTRONICS: Computers and tablets are allowed in class only if they are being used to access the course material. Any other use of electronics is prohibited. Any student found to be in violation of this policy (e.g., texting) will be asked to leave the room.

LATE WORK POLICY: Work is late one minute after the posted deadline. All late work is peanlized 1/3rd of a letter grade for each day (24 hours) it is late.

Course Schedule

Reading is due for the date listed. It is strongly suggested that you read the texts in the order listed.

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| Jan 16 | Miller, <i>Political Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction</i> |
| Jan 23 | “Evangelii Gaudium, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, 2013”
Karl Marx, “Alienated Labor”
“The Morality of Capitalism”
Panel Discussion with Bradley Hobbs and James Payne
This class meets in LA 236 from 6:00pm – 7:30pm. |
| Jan 30 | Other readings TBD based on background of students in class.
Taylor, “Why We Should Legalize a Market in Political Votes” |
| Feb 6 | <i>reread</i> Taylor, “Why We Should Legalize a Market in Political Votes” |
| Feb 13 | Bayne, “Gamete Donation and Parental Responsibility”
Other readings uploaded to Moodle.
Moschella, “Donor Conception and the Right to Genetic Parents’ Love” |
| Feb 20 | <i>reread</i> Moschella, “Donor Conception and the Right to Genetic Parents’ Love”
This class meets with Melissa Moschella from 5:00pm – 6:30pm. |
| Feb 27 | Other readings TBD based on background of students in class.
Bradford, “Improving Perfectionism” |
| Mar 6 | <i>No Class -- Spring Break</i> |
| Mar 13 | <i>reread</i> Bradford, “Improving Perfectionism”
This class meets with Gwen Bradford from 5:00pm – 6:30pm. |
| Mar 20 | “Federalism: The New Nationalism”
Panel Discussion with Heather Girken and Judge Stephen Higginson
This class meets in LA 236 from 6:00pm – 7:30pm. |
| Mar 27 | Other readings TBD based on background of students in class.
Vallier, “How to Publicly Justify Religious Exemptions” |
| Apr 3 | <i>reread</i> Vallier, “How to Publicly Justify Religious Exemptions”
This class meets with Kevin Vallier from 5:00pm – 6:30pm. |
| Apr 10 | Other readings TBD based on background of students in class.
van der Vossen, “A Deontological Defense of Private Property” |
| Apr 17 | <i>reread</i> van der Vossen, “A Deontological Defense of Private Property”
This class meets with Bas van der Vossen from 5:00pm – 6:30pm. |
| Apr 24 | Student Presentations (Group 1) |
| May 1 | Student Presentations (Group 2) |