**INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

Taught in Summer 2018

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What does justice require? Is it enough that the government doesn’t overstep its legitimate authority (and why do we need a government anyway?), or do we also need everyone to have their basic liberties protected? Should a just society secure equality among its citizens? And if so, what should it seek to “equalize”? Should we think of equality in terms of the just distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation, or rather, in terms of standing in relations of equality with each other? Finally, what is oppression and why is it antithetical to justice? In this course, we will answer these questions by discussing four central issues in political philosophy (political authority, liberty, distributive justice, and oppression). Critiques of mainstream political philosophy’s treatment of these topics from the perspectives of gender, race and class will also be addressed. We will read historical figures, such as, Hobbes, Locke, Mill, Rousseau and Marx, as well as contemporary figures such as Rawls, Mills, Young, and Anderson.

**COURSE GOALS**

* Become acquainted with and reflect on central issues in classical and contemporary political philosophy.
* Apply the philosophical concepts we learn in class to the socio-political issues of our time.
* Develop analytical reading, writing and speaking skills that will serve you both inside and outside the classroom.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

* Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Revised Student Edition*, ed. Richard Tuck(Cambridge University Press)
* Locke, *Second Treatise of Government,* ed. C.B. Macpherson(Hackett)
* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ‘*The Social Contract’ and other Later Political Writings,* ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge University Press)
* Additional required readings will be accessible on Courseworks (CW).

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Your main goal is to read and reflect on the assigned material. You must come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

The written assignments are: 10 reading replies (see below) and 1 take-home exam (~6 double-spaced pages), presentation proposal

The oral assignments are: active class participation and 1 in-class presentation at the end of the term (see below)

On the Reading Replies**:** you will be expected to write a 2-paragraph reply to the assigned reading for each session (except for the first and last). Your replies should be posted on Courseworks by 8 p.m. on the day prior to class. I encourage all of you to read each others’ replies in order to make class discussion more profitable. Your replies can take the form of questions about the reading that demonstrate engagement with the material, criticism of an argument in the reading, elaborations of a point made by the author, or a comment on another reply made by one of your peers.

On the in-class presentation: you will be expected to give a 15-20-minute presentation on the last day of classes. Your presentation should advance a valid philosophical argument that bears relevance to the topics covered in class. Some possibilities are criticizing an author’s position, taking a stance on a philosophical dispute (e.g. positive liberty v. negative liberty), and applying a philosophical concept to a concrete historical or contemporary socio-political issue (e.g. reparations for African-Americans). Your presentation will be followed by a ~10-minute Q&A session in which you will be asked to clarify and/or defend your claims for your peers and the instructor. The grade breakdown for this assignment is as follows: presentation delivery (20%), visual aids, such as handouts and slide presentations (5%), Q&A performance—in your own, as well as in your peers’ presentations (10%).

On the presentation proposal: roughly a week before your presentation, you will be required to submit an outline of the main arguments of your presentation. The length of this document should be between 500 and 750 words.

**GRADES**

Attendance and Participation 15%

Reading Replies 25%

Take-home Exam 20%

Presentation Proposal 5%

In-class Presentation 35%

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

The CC Honor Code is: “I affirm that I will not plagiarize, use unauthorized materials, or give or receive illegitimate help on assignments, papers, or examinations. I will also uphold equity and honesty in the evaluation of my work and the work of others. I do so to sustain a community built around this Code of Honor.” You are REQUIRED to write this on the back of all submitted work. I will not grade your work unless it includes this statement. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please refer to the Columbia Undergraduate Guide to Academic Integrity. <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

**READING SCHEDULE** (devised for an intensive summer class)

**Part I: Political Authority**

Why do we need a state? What is the “State of Nature” and how does the “Social Contract” solve the problems associated with it? What is this contract anyway (I didn’t sign anything!)? And what groups has it traditionally excluded?

May 21 – The State of Nature

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. 13-16

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. 2-3

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, excerpts from *A Discourse on Inequality* (CW)

May 23 – The Social Contract (Justifying the State)

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government,* chs. 8-14

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan,* chs. 17-21

Rousseau, *Social Contract*, books 1 and 2

May 28 (Class Cancelled – Univeristy Holiday)

May 30 – Challenges to Social Contract Theory

Charles Mills, excerpts from *The Racial Contract* (CW)

Virginia Held, “Non-Contractual Society: A Feminist View” (CW)

**Part II: Liberty**

What are the basic liberties that a just society should secure? Is being free not having others interfere with one’s personal affairs? Or is it to have the capacity to make one’s own laws by participating in the collective process of government? Or should freedom be thought of as non-domination—that is, as not being subject to the arbitrary power of the state or other subjects?

June 1 (make-up class) – Negative and Positive Liberty (I)

Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty” (CW)

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan,* chs. 14-16

TAKE-HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED

June 4 – Negative and Positive Liberty (II)

Charles Taylor, “What’s Wrong With Negative Liberty?”, (CW)

Nancy Hirschman, “Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom” (CW)

June 6– Republicanism

Hannah Arendt, “What is Freedom?”, *Between Past and Future* (CW)

Philip Pettit, “The Republican Ideal of Freedom,” *The Liberty Reader*, ed. David Miller (CW)

June 8

TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE

**Part III: Distributive Justice**

What constitutes a just distribution of the economic benefits and burdens of social cooperation? Are people entitled to their initial holdings and to subsequent just economic transactions even if that leads to a deeply inegalitarian society? Or should we diverge from equality only when that benefits the most disadvantaged members of society? What constitutes a just economic transaction? Are there some transactions that are just only in appearance?

June 11 – The Entitlement Theory

John Locke, *The Second Treatise on Government*, ch. 5 [re-read ch. 2]

Robert Nozick: *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, 150-182 (CW)

Bernard Boxill, “A Lockean Argument for Black Reparations” (CW)

June 13 – Justice as Fairness

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* 10-17, 52-56, 65-70, 73-78 (CW)

WORKSHOP: HOW TO CONSTRUCT A PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT

June 18 – Marx’s Critique of Capitalism as a System of Distribution

Marx, “Estranged Labor” (Tucker, 70-81); “Capitalism, Alienation and Communism” (Tucker, 292-3); “Sale of Labor-Power” (Tucker, 336-343); “Surplus-Value and Exploitation” (Tucker, 344-361) (CW)

\*Optional: “Private Property and Communism” (Tucker, 81-93) (CW)

**Part IV: Oppression**

What is the nature of oppression? If it is a failure to stand in relations of equality with others, is it always an interpersonal affair or is it more structural in nature? What is the role of privilege in sustaining systems of oppression?

June 20 – Defining Oppression I

Ann Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression*, 1-26 (CW)

Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression,” in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (CW)

**June 22**

PRESENTATION PROPOSAL DUE

June 25 – Defining Oppression II

Bailey, “Privilege: Expanding on Marilyn Frye’s ‘Oppression’” (CW)

Sally Haslanger, “Oppressions: Racial and Other” (CW)

Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, 7-22 (CW)

June 27-Exam Day

IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS