Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy
Philosophy 175
Spring, 2025
M, W 3:45-5:05
School of Management 306

Prof. David Sobel
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Office: Hall of Languages, 535
Office hours: W, 2-3 pm. I prefer to meet by appointment.

Required book:

An Introduction to Political Philosophy, fourth edition, by Jonathan Wolff. We will be reading most of this book—you will definitely need it for this class. All other readings will be made available on Blackboard.

This is an introduction to Social and Political Philosophy. We will be considering abstract questions about what, if anything, gives the government the right to rule, the appropriate limits of government intervention into our lives, what justification can be given for democracy, and similar timeless issues. We will also consider less abstract and more pressing current issues, focusing especially on issues of mass incarceration, race, punishment, drugs, abortion, and inequality.

Grades: This class will have a mid-term exam, a final exam, and 5 in class pop quizzes on the reading for that day. The mid-term will count for 30% of one's grade, the final for 35 percent, and the quizzes 35 percent. You are allowed 3 excused absences without providing any justification for the absence. These can be used by e-mailing me PRIOR to the start of class and explaining that you are using one of your excused absences. (Late e-mails will not excuse you from the class meeting.) Missed classes beyond the 3 excused absences, or where excused absences, will result in your getting a 0 for any pop quiz on such days unless you provide convincing and clear written documention of a legitimate excuse for missing class. The use of AI aids during quizzes or exams is not permitted.

Electronic devices (phones, laptops, I-Pads, etc.) are not allowed to be used in class except for note-taking.

Academic Dishonesty: Syracuse University's academic integrity policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about

course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The university policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same written work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. The presumptive penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty by an undergraduate student is course failure, accompanied by a transcript notation indicating that the failure resulted from a violation of academic integrity policy. The presumptive penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty by a graduate student is suspension or expulsion. SU students are required to read an online summary of the university's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice. For more information and the complete policy, see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu.

Any case of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course. Additional penalties for plagiarism may also be imposed in more serious cases.

Disability

Our community values diversity and seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Syracuse University and I are committed to your success and to supporting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990). This means that in general no individual who is otherwise qualified shall be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity, solely by reason of having a disability.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, located at 804 University Avenue, room 309, or call 315-443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities "Accommodation Authorization Letters," as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.