
Philosophy 331: Social and Political Philosophy

Instructor

Matthew Watts

MXW685@miami.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays & Fridays 10:00 - 11:00 (Online)

Class Meeting: MWF (8 - 8:50 a.m.)

Course Description

This is an intensive writing course that touches upon a number of areas of inquiry, from philosophical subfields, like ethics, social philosophy, political philosophy, philosophy of action, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of education. Often philosophical inquiry takes the form of academic discussions or imaginative thought experiments that have little direct relevance for how we live our lives and how we relate to others. In this class, we will make use of these tools of philosophical inquiry, and incorporate other tools such as service learning to explore issues that deeply affect society, and our lives.

In this class, we will investigate four pressing social, political and moral problems facing the United States today: work and labor, immigration and migration, homelessness and housing, and mass incarceration.

Learning Objectives

- Acquire an introductory working knowledge of select philosophical issues of concern and reflect on their relevance.
- Learn to provide critical analysis of philosophical concepts concerning social and political philosophy.
- Students will further gain a basic understanding of how these issues pertain to them as individuals, philosophy, and society more generally.

Service Learning Component

While a philosophy course, this is also a community engaged learning course, and as such you will be required to engage in at least 15 hours of service-learning through one of the below listed community partners. Time will be allotted for you to complete your community engagement so as to not overburden you.

Community Partners

- Camillus House - "A local broad based homeless services organization that serves more than 33,000 a year."

- Scheduling:
 - <https://www.camillus.org/ways-to-help/volunteer-opportunities/#1643492480269-f3d60757-9040>
 - Schedule time and date and put in the comments section that you are part of Matt Watts Social and Political Philosophy course at UM. That way you can be approved without needing to go through orientation.
- Lotus House - “Founded in 2004, Sundari Foundation, Inc. is a non-denominational, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of women, youth and children experiencing homelessness by ensuring that they have the sanctuary, support, education and resources needed to heal, grow, and blossom into who they were truly meant to be. The first initiative of the Foundation was the establishment of the Lotus House Women’s Shelter in 2006 in the heart of Overtown, Miami serving homeless women.”
 - Scheduling:
 - <https://lotushouse.org/volunteer/>
 - Complete the volunteer agreement and send it back with a copy of your COVID-19 vaccine card
 - Tell them you are part of Matt Watts Social and Political Philosophy course at UM
- Miami Workers Center - “The Miami Workers Center (MWC), founded in 1999, is a frontline strategy and action center working to organize, mobilize and build the power of oppressed and disenfranchised communities, particularly low-income Black and Latina women in south Florida. We employ an intersectional approach linking gender, race, and socio-economic status across our analyses and programs.”
 - Scheduling:
 - ketia@miamiworkerscenter.org
 - Tell them you are part of the Social and Political Philosophy course at UM and that you would like to volunteer at one of their events. I should be updating you from time to time with their upcoming events.

Late Assignments

In this course, due dates are posted for your convenience as well as mine. With the exception of group presentations, I *will* accept late assignments, with penalty.¹

Required Texts

There are no required texts for this class. Readings will mostly take the form of journal articles and book chapters. Where applicable readings will be supplemented with news stories, podcasts, or videos. All readings will be made available through the course page.

Requirements

In-Class Participation (20% in total)

Service-Learning Reflection Journals (20% together)

¹ Email me with any questions you may have.

Philosophy Learning Objects (20% together)

Group Poster Presentation (20%) - (Due Day of Presentation)

Philosophy Paper (20%) - (December 5th)

Assignments²

Each of the below assignments will have an in-depth assignment description to supplement posted in the syllabus tab of blackboard

In-Class Participation (20% in total) - As a significant portion of this class is dedicated to in-class discussion this portion of the grade is meant to measure the students participation in class discussions.

Service-Learning Reflection Journals (20% together) - This task requires that you reflect on your experience volunteering and write about it. A substantial portion of your journal should reflect on how your experience is informed or connects to the philosophy we have covered in this course. These do not need to be overly formal, but I do expect to be able to read them, and make sense of your reflection in light of our course philosophical concerns. Along with each individual submission of your service-learning journal you should include:

- Proof that you volunteered through pictures, and completion of the service-learning log signed by the community partner.

Philosophy Learning Objects (20% together) - In this assignment, you will craft a learning object/tutorial that could be used by others to better understand the topic. You will find something you find difficult in the course, and once you feel you have a handle on it, create something to help other students. This could be text based, but it would be better if it also incorporates some other kinds of visual or auditory elements (e.g., a video, or incorporating hand drawn images/schematics, or slides or something) Make sure that your tutorial details not only how to better understand the topic, but also what you originally found difficult/didn't understand. This is important as it will allow others who make use of the tutorial/learning object able to follow your thinking.

Group Poster Presentation (20%) - In this assignment you and your group will create a poster detailing a philosophical topic that we have covered in class and how it relates to the service-learning component and how each has contributed to a better understanding of each other.. You will not merely layout the argument as described in one of the readings, but rather will contribute your own arguments for or against the subject matter. I will bring in a number of example posters in the first week of class that you can look over in order to get a better idea of what will be expected of you and your poster.

Note: I view this assignment to be one in which you, the student, should feel free to take the Mrs.Frizzle approach - "Take chances, make mistakes, get messy!" This includes both in the construction of your poster, its design, and in the topic of choice and argumentation.

Philosophy Paper (20%) - In this assignment you will write a short philosophy paper on a topic of your choosing. You will take a topic we have discussed in class, and attempt to expand upon it, using

² A more in depth explanation, if need be, for each of these assignments will be posted to blackboard in the following week.

philosophical literature, and hopefully some of your own thoughts on the topic. This paper should be between 4-6 pages in length. (Email or otherwise discuss the topic and structure with me first. Topics outside of those discussed in class are welcomed, assuming you have previously invested time thinking about and attempting to understand said topic)

Note: I consider this a more formal assignment, as opposed to the presentation.

Grading Scheme

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-69 = D

0-59 = F

Tentative Course Schedule

The goal of the class is to not only provide an introduction to philosophical thinking, but also to use philosophical works to ground our thinking about social and political philosophy and how it relates to contemporary issues such as homelessness, education, incarceration, and migration.

Some weeks may include secondary material such as podcasts, videos, or articles made available through blackboard. The secondary readings are for those who wish to explore topics further. They may inform our class discussions, but students will not be expected to read secondary material (though I hope many will!).

Please note that the schedule is subject to change as the term progresses.

***Service Learning Time (as noted on the schedule) will be split between time dedicated to out of class service learning opportunities, and in-class service-learning group project work.**

Social and Political Philosophy (Tentative) Schedule Fall 2022		
Week 1		
Monday Aug 22	Introductions and Syllabus/ Schedule	Course Introduction
Wednesday Aug 24	Goals of Class & Questions about Class/Introduction to Service-Learning	Course Introduction

	Assignment Overview	
Friday Aug 26	Community Partners Introduction to the Philosophy of Work	Community Partner overview Assignment: Group Definitions - Work & Labor
Module 1: Work		
Week 2		
Monday Aug 29	<i>White, Education and the End of Work</i> , Ch.1 Work As We Know It <i>Schaff, Philosophy and the Problems of Work</i>	The Basic Issues
Wednesday Aug 31	<i>Pence, Towards a Theory of Work</i> <i>Karlsson & Manson, Concepts of Work in Marx, Durkheim, and Weber</i>	Work, in Theory and Concept
Friday Sep 2	<i>Arendt, The Human Condition</i> , Ch.1 Marx, Estranged Labor	Work, Labor, and Humans
Week 3		
Monday - Sep 5	No Class	
Wednesday - Sep 7	<i>Marcuse, Eros and Civilization</i>	Society and Work
Friday - Sep 9	Service Learning Time	
Week 4		
Monday - Sep 12	<i>Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man</i> , Ch.1 <i>New Forms of</i>	Society and Work

	<i>Control</i> Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , Docile Bodies	
Wednesday - Sep 14	Graeber, <i>Bullshit Jobs</i> Ch.1, Ch.7 Schweickart, <i>Against Capitalism</i>	Philosophy Lab: Building a World of Meaningful Work
Friday - Sep 16	Service Learning Time	
Module 2: Migration		
Week 5		
Monday - Sep 19	Castles et al., <i>The Age of Migration</i> , Chapter 1: Introduction Shelley Wilcox, <i>Immigration and Borders</i>	Migration and the Basic Arguments
Wednesday - Sep 21	Carens, Joseph. <i>Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders</i> Miller, David. <i>Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics</i> , Immigration: The Case for Limits	The Case for Open Borders and the Case for Limits
Friday - Sep 23	Service Learning Time	
Week 6		
Monday - Sep 26	Castles et al., <i>The Age of Migration</i> , Chapter 2: Theories of Migration	Migration Theory

Wednesday - Sep 28	Castles et al., <i>The Age of Migration</i> , Chapter 3: How Migration Transforms Societies	How Migration Transforms Societies
Friday - Sep 30	Service Learning Time	Due: Learning Object Assignment
Week 7		
Monday - Oct 3	Castles et al., <i>The Age of Migration</i> , Chapter 10: The State and International Migration: The Quest for Control	How Migration Transforms Societies Continued
Wednesday - Oct 5	Silverman, Stephanie J. 2014. "Detaining Immigrants and Asylum Seekers: A Normative Introduction." <i>Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy</i> 17 (5): 600–617.	Migration and the State
Friday - Oct 7	Service Learning Time	
Module 3: Housing and Homelessness		
Week 8		
Monday - Oct 10	Moran and Atherton., <i>The Philosophy of Homelessness</i> , Introduction	Introduction to the Philosophy of Homelessness
Wednesday - Oct 12	Kathleen Arnold, <i>Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity</i> , Introduction	Homelessness and Citizenship
Friday - Oct 14	No Class	
Week 9		

Monday - Oct 17	Smith, <i>In Defense of Homelessness</i>	Homelessness and Societal Identity
Wednesday - Oct 19	Moran and Atherton., <i>The Philosophy of Homelessness</i> , Ch. 3&4	VR Experience - We Live Here and Becoming Homeless
Friday - Oct 21	Service Learning Time	
Week 10		
Monday - Oct 24	<i>Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity. Ch.2</i> <i>Citizenship and Political Identity</i>	Homelessness and Society
Wednesday - Oct 26	<i>Homelessness, Citizenship, and Identity. Ch.4</i> <i>Homelessness and Panopticism</i>	Continued Discussion
Friday - Oct 28	Service Learning Time	
Module 4: Incarceration		
Week 11		
Monday - Oct 31	Pollock, <i>The History and Philosophy of Prisons</i> , Introduction Alexander, <i>The Philosophy of Punishment</i> Joel Feinberg, <i>The Expressive Function of Punishment</i>	VR Experience - Inside a Texas Prison
Wednesday - Nov 2	Bedau, <i>Retribution and the Theory of Punishment</i> Hernández, Muhammad & Thompson, <i>Introduction:</i>	Prisons and the State

	<i>Constructing the Carceral State</i>	
Friday - Nov 4	Service Learning Time	Due: Learning Object Assignment
Week 12		
Monday - Nov 7	Michel Foucault, <i>Discipline & Punish</i>, The Body of the Condemned Michel Foucault, <i>Discipline & Punish</i>, Panopticism	The Prisoner
Wednesday - Nov 9	Lisa Guenther, <i>Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives</i>. Excerpts. Brownlee, Kimberley. <i>A human right against social deprivation</i>	VR Experience - Prisons around the world
Friday - Nov 11	Service Learning Time	
Week 13		
Monday - Nov 14	Angela Davis, <i>Racialized Punishment and Prison Abolition</i> Davis, <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i> Ch.1 and 2	The Necessity of Prisons
Wednesday - Nov 16	Conway, Reassessing Punishment, Retributive Versus Restorative Justice	Retribution, Rehabilitation, or Restoration?
Friday - Nov 18	Service Learning Time	
Week 14		
Monday - Nov 21	No Classes	
Wednesday - Nov 23	No Classes	
Friday - Nov 25	No Classes	

Week 15 Poster Presentations		
Monday - Nov 28	Group Presentations	
Wednesday - Nov 30	Group Presentations	
Friday - Dec 2	Group Presentations	
Week 16 Poster Presentations		
Monday - Dec 5	Group Presentations	
Saturday - Dec 10	FINAL PAPER DUE	