

PHI 175
Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy
Fall 2021

Instructor: Professor Neelam Sethi
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Course Description:

Social and political philosophy is concerned with issues such as the justification of the state, the limits of the coercive power of the state, the relationship between justice and equality, what rights individuals should have, and concerns regarding exploitation. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to several major theoretical issues in social and political philosophy through an examination of the relationships among individuals, groups, and institutions in civil societies.

While our main focus will be on the question “What is justice?”, we will also engage with issues regarding rights and their distribution, the notion of power, and the value of equality and freedom. Specifically, we will examine competing political theories (liberalism, libertarianism, utilitarianism, egalitarianism, and feminism) to discuss public policy and law, including measures dealing with surrogacy, racism, immigration, climate change, gender equality, income inequality, and poverty.

Required Readings:

Readings will be available on the class Blackboard site.

Course Requirements:

1. **Prelim # 1 and Prelim #2** Details TBA
2. **Paper** Details TBA
3. **Short writing assignment** Details TBA
4. **Class participation and attendance**

Class participation is only possible if you attend all class lectures. In philosophy, learning requires your engagement in dialogue with the instructor and your peers, which means that you cannot simply sit through lectures. Meaningful participation in class discussions requires that you raise questions that emerge from the assigned texts and offer comments as well as respond to issues raised in class by others. Note that our aim is to learn from one another, which involves engaging productively and respectfully with peers and allowing everyone to have a chance to contribute.

5. Information regarding assignments, due dates etc. will be posted on class Blackboard site. It is your responsibility to check class Blackboard regularly for such information.
6. Students must complete ALL assignments. Any missing assignment will result in failing the class.
7. **All work submitted must be your own.** Failure to cite sources used will count as plagiarism and will result in disciplinary action. When in doubt, provide references. The Syracuse Code of Academic Integrity can be reviewed online at <http://www-h1.syr.edu/cas-pages/PromAcademicHonesty.htm> Please come talk to me if you have any questions regarding this matter.
8. If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities that require accommodations, please let me know by the end of the class this Thursday so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Disability Services Office that can be reached at 315-443-4498
9. **Laptop/cell phone policy:** I will follow a very strict policy regarding the use of laptops, cell phones, iPads, kindles, iPods, and the like. Please switch off your cell phone for the duration of the class. Laptop or iPad use will NOT be allowed with the exception of students registered with the office of disability services.
10. All information regarding class assignments, readings (or any changes made thereof) and any other related topic will be made available on the class blackboard available to all enrolled students. Please contact me if you have any questions about assignments or readings. **Original class materials (handouts, assignments, tests, etc.) are the intellectual property of the course instructor. You may download these materials for your use in this class. However, you may not provide these materials to other parties (e.g., web sites, social media, other students) without permission. Doing so is a violation of intellectual property law and of the student code of conduct.**

Tentative Reading Schedule: What follows is a list of required readings for each week. Note that the schedule is tentative, as we will make changes, whenever necessary, to accommodate the class discussions and the interest expressed by you. I will announce any such changes in advance.

Week 1: August 31- September 2

Introduction to Course

What is political philosophy? What is justice?

John Locke, "Of Property"

Week 2: September 7-9

Libertarianism

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy State and Utopia* (selections)

Week 3: September 14-16

Surrogate Motherhood and Justice

Elizabeth Anderson, "Is Women's Labor a Commodity?"

H. McLachlan & J.K. Swales, "Babies, Child Bearers and Commodification"

Week 4: September 21- 23

Liberal Democratic Justice: The Contractarian Approach

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (selections)

Week 5: September 28-30

Liberal Democratic Justice: The Contractarian Approach

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (selections)

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy State and Utopia* (selections)

Week 6: October 5-7

Liberal Democratic Justice: The Utilitarian Approach

John Stuart Mill, "Freedom of Action"

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Garrett Hardin: "Lifeboat Ethics"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKJqVoC5JA>

Week 7: October 12-14

Liberal Democratic Justice: The Utilitarian Approach

Peter Singer: "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

Angus Deaton: "Rethinking Robin Hood"

Week 8: October 19-21

Racial Justice

Kwame Appiah: "Racisms"

Week 9: October 26-28

Justice and Immigration

David Miller: "Immigration"

Joseph Carens: "Migration and Morality"

Week 10: November 2-4

Gender Justice

Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction: The Second Sex"

Martha Nussbaum, "The Challenge of Gender Justice"

Week 11: November 9-11

Economic (In) justice

Gregory Mankiw, "Defending the One Percent"

Joseph Stiglitz, “Income Inequality”

Week 12: November 16-18

Economic (In) justice

Eduardo Porter, “Richer But Not Better Off”

Student class discussion

Week 13: November 23-25 Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: November 30-December 2

Environmental Justice

Henry Shue, “Human Rights, Climate Change, and the Trillionth Ton”

John Schwartz: “Global Climate Change”

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/mar/12/climate-change-student-activists-environment>

Week 15: December 9

Student class discussion

Wrap-up