

PHI 175

Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy

Fall 2021

M/W 12:45pm - 1:40 pm.

HL 211

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All information in this syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and communicated by email and/or on Blackboard. Students are responsible for regularly checking their email and the Blackboard site for this class.

Course description

How ought people relate to one another? This is what I understand to be the central question behind virtually all social and political theorizing. We draw on various background assumptions and concepts to make claims one way or another about acceptable answers for this question. Liberalism, understood in its catholic sense, has come to be a dominant political philosophy for social organization, at least in what is known as the West over the past few centuries. Because of this influential status, it is important to understand central features of liberalism, what distinguishes it from other political philosophies, and some of its central views. That is what this course is about.

Course Objectives

In this course, students should:

- a. Develop knowledge of some central facts, key concepts, important theories, and key individuals in social and political thought;
- b. Acquire the ability to think holistically, i.e. see the whole as well as the parts;
- c. Appreciate diverse perspectives;
- d. Develop informed concern about current issues relevant to the topic

Texts

We will use a variety of texts in the course. All texts will be available on **Blackboard**. These texts are considered required reading and you are expected to read the assigned texts before class.

Assessment

Each assessment is designed to help us achieve our course objectives. Assignments will consist of the following:

1. Quizzes
2. Short written or video summaries
3. Podcast or Op-Ed

Quizzes: To help make sure you are understanding what you read, short content quizzes will be given periodically. These will be a mix of multiple choice and true/false questions. There will be 7 quizzes.

Written or video summary: At the end of each unit, you will either write or video record a brief summary of all the major claims and concepts in that unit. The goal is to synthesize the material, showing how each position relates to its alternatives. There are 9 units, so...Written summaries should be about 250 words. Video summaries should be about 3 minutes.

Podcast or Op-ed: This will be the major project we will spend the course working towards. You have the option of option of a Podcast or Op-ed. Podcasts can be done individually or in a group (limit: 3 members), while the op-ed is to be done only individually.

The podcast is to be between 7 – 10 minutes in duration with the following structure:

- a. Introduction of the main topic or question;
- b. Presentation of historical background of the topic or question;
- c. Discussion of preferred solution to the problem;
- d. Recap of the main takeaway point of the discussion.

You will need to write a script (a basic outline of the podcast, bullet points are fine) to turn in along with the recording itself.

The Op-ed is a written opinion piece between 800 to 1200 words in length. You will choose a contemporary topic and write an opinion on it using material from the course readings. For guidance on how to write an op-ed, see <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/oped-what-is-it-and-how-to-write-it-1360714>.

Quizzes: 1 pt each (total, 5)
Summaries (10): 5 pts each (total, 55)
Initial draft: 10 pts
Podcast/Op-ed: 30 pts

Grading scale

A+	99-100
A	95-98
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	65-69
D	61-64
F	≤ 60

Communication

Any important announcements, advice, changes to the class schedule, etc. will be communicated by email or on the course homepage on Blackboard. You are responsible to regularly check your SU email account as well as the Blackboard page for the class.

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

Expectations for academic integrity and student conduct are described in detail in the Academic Integrity Policy, which can be found here: http://class.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Academic-Integrity-Policy_final.pdf.

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct can result in an automatic failing grade for this course, or a report to the appropriate Academic Judiciary, or both. If you are feeling pressured for time or confused, don't plagiarize! Instead, come get help.

Disability Statement

Any student who anticipates physical or academic barriers based on the impact of a disability is encouraged to speak with me privately. Students with disabilities should also contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) at disabilityservices@syr.edu or Phone: Voice: (315) 443-4498.

Ground rules

- Be respectful. Do not disrupt class by coming in late or leaving early, holding private conversations, being rude, etc.
- If you have questions about the course material, ask for clarification. Don't stay confused!
- Everyone has an equal right to be heard. Listen carefully to what your colleagues have to say and let them finish.
- Every viewpoint merits consideration, even if you disagree.
- Talk to each other, not just to the professor.
- Debate and disagree politely and respectfully. Object to arguments, but refrain from personal attacks and insults.
- Avoid racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise inappropriate comments. Speak up if you feel like someone is using derogatory language, but try to be charitable in your interpretation of their intentions.

Class schedule

Changes, additions, substitutions, or cancellations may be expected during the semester. They will be announced on Blackboard for this class.

Week 1 What is Social and Political Philosophy?

- 8/30 Introduction
9/1 David Miller, "Why Do We Need Political Philosophy?"

Week 2 Politics in the Ancient World

- 9/6 Labor Day. No Class.
9/8 Plato, "Crito"
9/10 Quiz 1. Summary 1 Due.

Week 3 Politics in the Ancient World (cont)

- 9/13 Aristotle, "Politics" Book I, chs. 1-5.
9/15 Aristotle, "Politics" Book II, chs. 1-5..
9/17 Summary 2 Due.

Week 4 The Question of Political Authority

- 9/20 Aristotle, "Politics" Book III, chs. 1,3 and 4
9/22 Joseph Raz, "Authority and Reason"
9/24 Quiz 2. Summary 3 Due.

Week 5 The Question of Political Authority (cont)

9/27 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
9/29 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*
10/1 Quiz 3. Summary 4 Due.

Week 6 Human Nature

10/4 Jean Jacques Rousseau, *On The Social Contract*
10/6 Hobbes, *Leviathan* selection
10/8 Quiz 4. Summary 5 Due.

Week 7 The Common Good

10/11 Ruth Hubbard, "The Political Nature of 'Human Nature'"
10/13 Bird, "The Common Good"
10/15 Quiz 5. Summary 6 Due.

Week 8 Liberty, Rights, and Property

10/18 J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*
10/20 Mill, *On Liberty* (cont)
10/22 Summary 7 Due.

Week 9 Challenges to Liberalism

10/25 Angela Davis, "Unfinished Lecture on Liberation"
10/27 John Christman, "Conservatism, Communitarianism, and the Social Conception of the Self"
10/29 Summary 8 Due.

Week 10 Interests, Groups, and Identity

11/1 Adam Hosein, "Selection for Admission" from *The Ethics of Migration*
11/3 Hosein, cont.
11/5 Summary 9 Due.

Week 11 Global Issues

11/8 Arthur Schlesinger, excerpt from "The Disuniting of America"
11/10 Robert Gooding-Williams, "Race, Multiculturalism, and Democracy"
11/12 Summary 10 Due.

Week 12 Global Issues

11/15 Martha Nussbaum, "The Cosmopolitan Tradition; Noble, But Flawed"

11/17 Anthony Appiah, "The Importance of Elsewhere: In Defense of Cosmopolitanism"

Week 13 Thanksgiving Break

11/22 No Classes

11/24 No Classes

Week 14 (11/23): Writing Workshop

11/29 1st draft due

12/1 1st draft due

Week 15 Last Week

12/6 Revisions

12/8 **Last Class. Final Project Due**