PHI 175

Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy

Spring 2024 M/W 12:30 pm - 1:25 pm. Sims 331

Instructor: Dr. Luvell Anderson
Office: 536 Hall of Languages
Email: lander04@syr.edu
Teaching Assistant: Autumn Harrison
Email: asharr04@syr.edu

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 should social beings be organized? 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 to this question. In this course, we will focus on key concepts concerning human nature, the nation-state, liberty, democracy, and punishment. Our goal is to achieve a basic level of understanding of some of the most important concepts in Western political thought.

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

Your learning in this course will be assessed by two exams—a midterm and final—and a participation score.

Both exams will be in short essay form. The final exam is take-home to be submitted on Blackboard on May 7, 2024.

Participation will include attending both the lecture and section. **Attendance in both lecture and section is required.** It also includes making meaningful contributions to class discussion. This can be satisfied by in-class comments or contributions to online discussions.

Grading scale

A	97-100
A-	90-96
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, transphobic 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?

1/16 Introduction
1/18 Intro

Week 2 Human Nature

1/23 David Miller, "Why Do We Need Political Philosophy?"
1/25 Aristotle, "The State Exists by Nature," Thomas Hobbes, "The Misery of the Natural Condition of Mankind," John Locke, "The State of Nature and the State of War"

Week 3 Human Nature (cont)

1/30 Rousseau, “The Noble Savage,” Peter Kropotkin, “Mutual Aid”
2/1 Plato, “Women as Weaker Partners,” Aristotle, “Separate Spheres,” Mary Wollstonecraft, “The Rights of Women,” Alison Jaggar, “Socialist Feminism and the Standpoint of Women”

Week 4 The State

2/6 John Locke, “Political Power,” Max Weber, “The State and Coercion”
2/8 Hobbes, “Creating Leviathan,” Locke, “Express and Tacit Consent,” Rousseau, “Natural Freedom and the Freedom of the Citizen,” Kant, “The Hypothetical Contract”

Week 5 The State (cont)

2/13 Hume, “The Irrelevance of Consent,” Bentham, “Utility as the True Foundation,” Hart, “The Principle of Fairness”
2/15 Bakunin, “Science and the People,” Wolff, “The Conflict of Autonomy and Authority”

Week 6 Democracy

2/20 Thoreau, “The Duty of Disobedience,” MLK, “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
2/22 Plato, “Ruling as a Skill,” Frederick the Great, “The Enlightened Despot”

Week 7 Democracy (cont)

2/27 Rousseau, “The General Will,” Kant, “Freedom and Equality,” Mill, “The Democratic Citizen,” Rawls “Majority Rule”
2/29 Lenin, “Bourgeois and Proletarian Democracy,” Carol Pateman, “Participatory Democracy”

Week 8 Liberty and Rights

3/5 Aristotle, “Rule of the People and Rule of Law,” Madison, “The Danger of Faction,” Tocqueville, “Tyranny of the Majority”
3/7 **Midterm**

Week 9 Spring Break

3/12 NO CLASS
3/14 NO CLASS

Week 10 Liberty and Rights (cont)

3/19 Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients and the Liberty of the Moderns,” Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”
3/21 Angela Davis, “Lectures on Liberation”

Week 11 Liberty and Rights (cont)

3/26 Scanlon, "The Satanic Verses," Catherine Mackinnon, "Only Words"
3/28 Pericles, "The Democratic Citizen,"

Week 12 Liberty and Rights (cont)

4/2 Martha Nussbaum, "The Cosmopolitan Tradition; Noble, But Flawed"
4/4 Anthony Appiah, "The Importance of Elsewhere: In Defense of Cosmopolitanism"

Week 13 Punishment

4/9 Mill, "In Favour of Capital Punishment," Hart, "Punishment and Responsibility," Nozick, "Where Deterrence Theory Goes Wrong"
4/11 Mariame Kaba, "So You're Thinking About Becoming an Abolitionist"

Week 14 (11/23): Concluding Thoughts

4/16 Recap and Review
4/18 R & R

Week 15 Last Week

4/23 Review
4/25 Take-home Final Exam