

Instructor: Kyle Scott
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Course Location: Fletcher Hall 104

Course Time: Mondays, 7–9:50pm
Office: Broad Hall 212 #12
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 5:45–7:45pm, and by appointment

PHIL. 033: POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY



Course Description

This course is designed to expose students to the subfield of philosophy concerned with questions about the nature of, justification for, and purpose behind, human social and political arrangements. Unlike in some other politics-oriented disciplines, where the emphasis is on explaining how political society actually does in fact work, the primary goal in political philosophy is to explain how political society *ought* to work—or, what would be required of a political arrangement in order for it to be considered just. An additional goal is to provide an “error-theory,” or explanation of how and why things have gone wrong, when and where they have failed to meet certain ideals. As a field, political philosophy forces us to think deeply and profoundly about how we are all supposed to live together. In this course, we’ll be talking a lot about the state and its institutions, but we’ll also have a chance to talk about a number of other forms of human political organization and interaction—ones that are both “larger” and “smaller” in scope than the state, as traditionally understood. What will unite all of our discussions is the search for an answer to the question of what justice requires of these various arrangements.

Over the course of the semester, we will learn about what political philosophy is, and how to better do it ourselves, by reading a number of important texts in the canon of modern political thought. Although at first glance the reading list may look like a survey in the history of ideas, our ultimate objective will be to clarify and deepen our own views on the matter that are addressed—nearly all of which remain contested and urgent to this day. Beginning with Thomas Hobbes in the 17th century, and concluding with a number of contemporary philosophers, we will cover some of the most enduring, and pressing, questions about politics and justice. Questions we will consider include: What is the best form of government, and who should run it? What may the law compel us to do? What is

freedom? Why are actual social relations so messed up and how could they be better? What, after all, is the point of living in organized political societies?

Objectives

In addition to exposing students to philosophy and philosophical ways of thinking, this course also aims to provide students many opportunities to practice the fundamental skills of philosophical inquiry, including the extraction, expression, and evaluation of arguments articulated in philosophical texts; the crafting of compelling and convincing philosophical prose; and the development of one's own informed point of view on philosophical issues. More generally, the course aims to make students better writers and communicators. More specifically, students will learn:

1. How to produce a cogent argument and how to express it with maximum perspicuity, both in writing and orally.
2. How to articulate and even welcome objections to one's views; how to apply the principle of charity to others' opinions; and how to address objections and competing views effectively and respectfully in one's writing.
3. How to read, analyze, and articulate arguments and viewpoints in primary philosophical texts, both historical and contemporary.
4. How to turn a rough idea into a polished piece of writing.
5. How to develop and defend one's own position with respect to problems that have occupied both historical and contemporary philosophers.

Texts

All readings will be made available on the course website.

Course Requirements

The course requirements are designed to help you build three types of skills relevant to philosophy (and general life): (1) how to clearly and productively discuss a difficult text or complex topic, (2) how to read a difficult text, and (3) how to clearly and compellingly express yourself in writing.

Attendance and Participation (15%).

Philosophy is not simply a set of facts or questions that one could passively memorize; it is rather a way of approaching important problems and thinking them through. As such, philosophy is something that is "done." It is thus crucial to learning philosophy that it be actively practiced. Your attendance and informed participation in the class is therefore

expected and required. This generally entails regular attendance and engagement in discussion during class, but can also be accomplished by taking part in other fora, such as office hours. More specifically, all of the following counts as active participation:

- Asking questions and engaging with the instructor and other class participants in a courteous and charitable dialogue about the week's required reading.
- Asking a classmate to clarify or repeat a point they made or asking them a question about something they said.
- Explaining that you are confused or unsure about some aspect of the course material.
- Visiting office hours or scheduling an appointment with me to discuss the material.

For further examples of effective participation, please see “**But How Do I Participate? A Sampling of Ways to Contribute to a Philosophical Conversation,**” by Olivia Bailey, which is posted to the course website.

Having said that, I do of course understand that life sometimes gets in the way of attending class. Each student will thus be permitted **two absences from the course, no questions asked.** You do not need to email me or provide any excuse for missing either of those two classes. However, if you miss *more* than two classes (for any reason), then we will need to meet to determine some way to make up for the missed class time, since attending class is an integral part of the learning process for this course.

Short Writing Exercise (10%)

At the end of our first class, you will be asked to write a 350-450 word exposition of one of Hobbes's arguments. This will be due via the course website by Monday (9/18) by 11:59pm. Your job is to offer a close reading of the argument, breaking it down into parts that are easy to understand, even for someone who is not in the course and hasn't read the text. You should detail and motivate the argument as clearly and concisely as possible, but you should not attempt to assess or otherwise criticize the argument. Think of the exposition as the first step in writing an argumentative essay.

Protocols (15%)

A protocol is a one-page (double-spaced) reading response, which should be submitted to the course website on the day that reading will be discussed. The protocol can take various forms including:

- A summary of key points in the reading with one or more critical questions
- A working through of one or two issues in the reading
- A close reading of one or more quotes from the reading with analysis of the argument
- A reflection on the reading in relation to personal experience, beliefs, current events, or examples from media
- Any combination of the above

Grading of the protocols will depend on effort, depth of the engagement with the text, and stylistic clarity. The grading scale is:

- ✓+: “Excellent,” 20/20 (100%)
- ✓: “Satisfactory,” 17/20 (85%)
- ✓: “Unsatisfactory,” 14/20 (65%)
- 😞: “Incomplete,” (you didn’t submit a protocol), 0/20 (0%)

You must submit at least **4 protocols throughout the semester**. However, it is entirely up to you *when* you submit them. Moreover, you *may* submit more than 4. If you do, then I will only count the four highest grades towards your overall protocol grade.

Three Essays

The majority of your grade will be determined by how well you do on the three required papers you must complete for the course. Having to explain our ideas to others in writing forces us to be clear, and to be thoughtful and honest about the positions we hold. We will talk about what is expected of the problem essays, and discuss tips for writing well in philosophy, at a number of points before the papers are due.

First essay (15%). Your first essay will be a short paper of 1-2 double-spaced pages with 1-inch margins and 12 pt. font. It will ask you to address a question concerning readings or thinkers you have not yet written on. You will be able to select from among a choice of different questions.

Second essay (20%). The second essay will be a slightly longer and somewhat more complex paper of 3-4 double-spaced pages (with the same formatting as above). It will ask you to address a question concerning readings or thinkers you have not yet written on. Again, you will be able to select from among a choice of different questions.

Third essay (25%). The third essay will be a paper of 5-6 double-spaced pages (with the same formatting as above) that will ask you to address the arguments of two or more theorists you have not yet written on. Because the third paper will be longer and more complex than the others, you will have more time to complete it, and it will be worth a higher portion of your overall course grade. Again, you will be able to select from among a choice of different questions.

Summary Grade Breakdown and Paper Due Dates

Assignment	Length	Due	Percent of Grade
Participation	-----	-----	15%
Protocols	1 page	-----	15%
Short Writing Exercise	350-450 words	10/04	10%
First Essay	1-2 pages	10/23	15%
Second Essay	3-4 pages	11/13	20%
Third Essay	5-6 pages	12/18	25%

Grading and Late Policy

Unless otherwise stated, all assignments will receive a letter grade based on the Pitzer 4.0 scale. Papers and presentations are due at the time and date specified. Work turned in late is considered to have been turned in the next day and will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (A to A-, B- to C+, etc.) for each day late (including weekend days). Email submissions will not normally be accepted. Under appropriate circumstances, short extensions on papers may be granted so long. To arrange an extension please email me at least 36 hours in advance of the due date. In some rare instances, such as in last-minute emergencies, an extension may be granted after the deadline has passed.

Electronics Policy

On the first day of class, we decided collectively to allow electronics in the classroom exclusively for the purposes of taking notes and referring to the course readings. We also agreed that if the presence of electronics becomes too much of an impediment to class discussion, then we would change the policy, and electronics would no longer be allowed.

Covid

According to Pitzer's current protocols, masking is recommended but not required on campus. However, faculty can require masking by students. I will not require masking at the outset of the course; however, if there is an uptick in cases, I may decide to require masking. If you are uncomfortable with this policy for any reason, don't hesitate to get in touch.

Accommodations

If you are a student with academic accommodation needs based on learning differences, chronic illness or other needs please contact the Pitzer Office of Academic Support Services (PASS) at academicsupport@pitzer.edu or (909) 607-0213. In cases where a need may conflict with the course policies, students are also invited to discuss this with me.

Academic Integrity

All student work must be of original creation. It is always better to turn in an essay of your own creation than to plagiarize. Cases of plagiarism will be reported to the administration for disciplinary action. Please review the Academic Policies and Procedures, as well as the Guide to Student Life, for information on what counts as plagiarism.

<https://www.pitzer.edu/tlc/academic-integrity/>

If you have any question about what counts as a violation of academic integrity or how to cite your sources, please consult with me. Err on the side of caution. Any standard citation style will do (Chicago, APA, MLA, etc.). If you aren't sure which to use, consider Chicago style author-date format:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

Writing Center

I strongly encourage you to utilize the Pitzer Writing Center, which is an invaluable resource for this course and beyond. The Writing Center is located in 131 Mead Hall, just across from the fountain, and offers virtual and in-person consultations with peer Fellows trained to work with writers on assignments in any discipline and at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming ideas to polishing a final draft. The Writing Center is one of Pitzer's most popular academic resources, holding close to 2,000 one-on-one consultations per year. To book a 50-minute session or learn more about workshops and other resources and events, visit <https://www.pitzer.edu/writing-center>. All Pitzer students may use the Writing Center for any writing need. Students from the other 5Cs are welcome to book appointments for courses taken at Pitzer.

Course Readings and Schedule

As you may already know, reading philosophy is challenging. Here are some resources students report they've found useful in improving their reading experience (but feel free to contact me for more guidance about reading):

- <https://www.blogs.ppls.ed.ac.uk/2017/02/28/read-philosophy-step-step-guide-confused-students/>
- <https://philosophy.arizona.edu/sites/philosophy.arizona.edu/files/Rosati%2C%20How%20to%20Read%20a%20Philosophical%20Article%20or%20Book.pdf>
- <http://melissajacquart.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/How-to-Read-Philosophy-Handout.pdf>

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
M 8/28	Intro. to course, social contract theory, and Hobbes	N/A	
M 9/04	<i>Labor Day (no class)</i>	<i>Labor Day (no class)</i>	
M 9/11	Background: introduction to game theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin J. Osborne, <i>An Introduction to Game Theory</i>, 2.1-2.7 	
M 9/18	Background: public choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gary Becker, "The Economic Way of Looking at Behavior" • James Buchanan, "Public Choice: Politics Without Romance" 	
M 9/25	Social Contract Theory: Hobbes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>, Part I, ch.'s 13-15; Part II, ch.'s 17-21 • <u>Recommended but not required</u>: Victor Fabian Abundez-Guerra and Nathan Nobis, "Responding to Morally Flawed Historical Philosophers and Philosophies" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short writing assignment <u>assigned</u> (due Wednesday 10/04)
M 10/02	Social Contract Theory: Locke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i>, ch.'s 1-5, 7-14, 16-19 (70 pp.) 	
M 10/09	Social Contract Theory: Rousseau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>On the Social Contract</i>, Books I and II; book III (ch.'s 1, 12-18); book IV (ch.'s 1-2, 7-8) 	
M 10/16	<i>Fall Break (no class)</i>	<i>Fall Break (no class)</i>	
M 10/23	Social Contract Theory: Critical Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carole Pateman, <i>The Sexual Contract</i>, ch. 1 (18 pp.) • Charles Mills, <i>The Racial Contract</i>, Intro. & Ch. 1 (42 pp.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper 1 <u>due</u>
M 10/30	Liberalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (selections) 931-941), (10 pp.) • John Stuart Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, selections (900-925), (25 pp.) • John Stuart Mill, <i>Considerations on Representative Government</i> (selections) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper 2 <u>assigned</u>

		<p>(925-931), (6 pp.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Optional</u>: Introduction to John Stuart Mill (895-900) (5 pp.) 	
M 11/06	Marx	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," pp. 26-46 (20 pp.) • Karl Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital" (abridged) (15 pp.) • Karl Marx, <i>Manifesto of the Communist Party</i>, 473-500 (27 pp.) • <u>Video</u>: "First Taste of Chocolate in Ivory Coast" • <u>Optional</u>: Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, "The Rate of Exploitation: The Case of the iPhone," especially pp. 1-6, 23-31 (13 pp.) 	
M 11/13	Marx + Engels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," pp. 26-46 (20 pp.) • Karl Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital" (abridged) (15 pp.) • Karl Marx, <i>Manifesto of the Communist Party</i>, 473-500 (27 pp.) • <u>Video</u>: "First Taste of Chocolate in Ivory Coast" • <u>Optional</u>: Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, "The Rate of Exploitation: The Case of the iPhone," especially pp. 1-6, 23-31 (13 pp.) • Friedrich Engels, "Barbarism and Civilization," Ch. X of <i>The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State</i> (20 pp.) 	
M 11/20	Beauvoir + Feminism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i>, introduction (18 pp.) • Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i>, Ch. 3, "The Point of View of Historical Materialism" (9 pp.) • Friedrich Engels, "The Family," Ch. II of <i>The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State</i> (abridged) (17 pp.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper 2 <u>due</u>

M 11/27	Intersectionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics” (31 pp.) • Selma James, “Sex, Race, and Class” (9 pp.) • Naomi Zack, “Beyond Intersectionality” (20 pp.) 	
M 12/04	The Politics of Sex and Desire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catherine Mackinnon, “Sexuality, Pornography, and Method: Pleasure Under Patriarchy” (34 pp.) • Amia Srinivasan, “The Right to Sex” (19 pp.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper 3 <u>assigned</u>
M 12/18			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Paper <u>Due</u>