

## PHI 362: Social and Political Philosophy

9:30-10:45am TR, SCI 42

Spring 2017

**Professor:** Jennifer Kling, PhD

**Office Hours:** MW 1-3pm, TR 11am-1pm; available by appointment (Sacred Heart Hall 312C)

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### Course Description:

In this course, we will explore and evaluate some of the most influential figures in western political thought, including Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Rawls. In particular, we will investigate their use of the social contract (actual, hypothetical, or conceptual) to justify the political authority and sovereignty of the state. Then, we will turn our attention to some of the most influential critiques of social contract theory, critiques that focus on various axes of oppression, such as race, class, gender, and ability. Throughout the course, we will consider whether and how philosophy can help us think about contemporary US political issues, such as police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement, the wage gap and the feminist movement, and labor unions and the so-called populist movement. In addition, we will destroy some myths about political philosophy (i.e., that philosophy has no place in politics, that it's all “just a matter of opinion” anyway, that the United States is exceptional in various ways, etc), and will also make an effort to learn how to communicate ideas and concepts of a high intellectual order clearly, vigorously, and creatively.

This course is targeted towards high-level undergraduate students; no general or specific philosophical expertise is assumed or required, but you will need to be able to read carefully, discuss critically, and write insightfully about (what can be) difficult and oblique texts. In this class, you will have to struggle with big concepts that you may not have engaged before, and you will have to work hard to succeed. Along the way you will come to better understand the content and import of political philosophy, and its implications for our world today. In other words, in this course you are going to learn how to *do* analytic philosophy, which is both difficult and rewarding.

### Course Requirements:

**Participation (10%):** You will need to both do the readings and come to class in order to be successful in this course. If you don't do the readings, you'll be lost in class; if you don't come to class, you'll be lost in the readings and assignments. While \*excessive\* participation is not required, some willingness to engage with both me and your fellow classmates is necessary— without this willingness on your part, we won't be able to have the sort of productive class discussions that will enable you to successfully engage in the course. So, while a lack of participation won't harm your grade very much, participation can significantly *help* your grade.

I appreciate that speaking to a classroom full of your peers can be difficult; so, there are a number of other ways to participate in class. You may speak in class, you may engage in small group work, you may visit my office hours, you may send me emails with questions, comments, and concerns, you may start online discussion threads, you may post relevant outside documents/videos/blogs, etc. to the course website, you may tweet and/or blog and/or journal about issues raised in class, etc. If you're unsure of whether some action counts as participation, please see me, and we'll discuss it.

**Argument Reconstructions (5% each):** You are required to submit **four** argument reconstructions throughout the semester. Argument reconstructions are due by the start of the class period on the due date. **Late argument reconstructions will not be accepted.** They should be roughly ½-1 page in length, and should reconstruct the relevant argument. Argument reconstructions may take the form of a detailed

bulleted outline or a detailed conceptual map (hand-drawn or computer-generated are both fine). If you wish to submit an argument reconstruction in some other form, please see me, and we'll discuss it.

**\*\*Collaboration is encouraged but not required.\*\***

**Papers (15% each):** There are **three** required academic papers for this course. Each paper should be 3 pages long, and should *critically engage* with some issue brought up in the course readings and class discussions. I will provide a list of topics one week in advance of each paper's due date. If you wish to write on a topic not on the list, please come see me to discuss your proposed topic. If you wish to submit a paper in some other form (podcast, video, tumblr, etc), please see me, and we'll discuss it.

Papers are due by the start of the class period on the due date. For every 24-hour period that a paper is late, I will take 5 points off. That said, I am aware that life happens; if you feel you need an extension, please ask me as soon as possible. The earlier you ask, the more likely I am to give you an extension. Failure to turn in any one of the papers will result in failing the course.

**\*\*\*Possible Alternative:** If you wish to write one 10-page paper instead of three 3-page papers, that is an option for this class. This paper should include an extended philosophical analysis and should develop an original line of argument. If you wish to complete this alternative, please meet with me to discuss it further.**\*\*\***

**In-class Presentation (15%):** Each student must do an in-class presentation, either by themselves or with a partner. Each presentation should be 5-10 minutes long, and should present and critically engage with the main points from the assigned text for the day. We will pick presentation dates a few weeks into the semester, so that students have a feel for the text on which they would like to present. If you wish to present on a topic/issue that is not covered by an assigned reading, please see me, and we'll discuss it. Failure to do an in-class presentation will result in failing the course.

**Final (10%):** There is a required final exam for this course. The exam will consist of a series of short answers as well as (possibly) one longer essay. Failure to take the final exam will result in failing the course.

### **Grading Scale:**

**A:** An 'A' denotes exceptional skill and ability. An 'A' student demonstrates an excellent grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the material enough to explain it succinctly and well), and also displays the ability to engage thoughtfully with both the broad issues and finer points under discussion.

**B:** A 'B' denotes solid-to-impressive skill and ability. A 'B' student demonstrates a good grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the material well enough to explain it with few mistakes), and also displays the ability to engage thoughtfully with most, if not all, of the issues and points under discussion.

**C:** A 'C' denotes adequate skill and ability. A 'C' student demonstrates a fair grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the big picture, but makes some serious errors in presentation), and also displays the ability to engage thoughtfully with at least some of the issues under discussion.

**D:** A 'D' denotes inadequate skill and ability. A 'D' student has serious problems with grasping the material, and fails to engage thoughtfully with any of the issues under discussion.

**E:** An 'E' denotes catastrophic problems in fulfilling the requirements of the course. An 'E' student neither grasps the material nor engages with it critically at any level.

While hard work is correlated with success, it is not sufficient for success. To get a good grade in this course, you need to not only understand and engage with the material, but also communicate your understanding and engagement to me via your participation, projects, and papers. If you sense that you are heading towards a grade you do not want, please come see me as soon as possible (if you wait until the end

of the semester, it will be too late).

**Texts and Assignments:**

- Bailey, Brennan, Kymlicka, Levy, Sagar, and Wolf (eds), *The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Philosophy*, Broadview Press, 2012. (Hereafter referred to as Broadview)
- Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Cornell University Press, 1999.

**All other readings, videos, podcasts, etc can be found on this course's website.**

Date	Topic	Assignment
1/10	Introduction to the Course	
1/12	Social Contract Theories: Hobbes' <i>Leviathan</i>	Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> (Broadview), The Introduction; Chapter 13; Chapter 14 (sec 1-5); Chapter 15 (sec 1-3; 30-41)
1/17		Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> (Broadview), Chapters 17-18; Chapter 21 (sec 10-25)
1/19		Elias Rodriguez, <a href="#">“Fear and Aggression in Florida”</a>
1/24 <b>Argument Reconstruction #1 Due</b>	Social Contract Theories: Locke's <i>Second Treatise</i>	John Locke, <i>Two Treatises of Government</i> (Broadview), Chapters 1-5
1/26		John Locke, <i>Two Treatises of Government</i> (Broadview), Chapter 7 (sec 89-94); Chapter 8 (sec 95-99; 113-122); Chapter 9
1/31		Emma Goldman, <a href="#">“Anarchism: What it Really Stands For”</a>
2/2	Social Contract Theories: Rousseau's <i>The Social Contract</i>	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>On the Social Contract or Principles of Political Right</i> (Broadview), Book 1 (chap 1-8)
2/7 <b>Paper #1 Due</b>		Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>On the Social Contract or Principles of Political Right</i> (Broadview), Book 2 (chap 1-6); Book 3 (chap 10-11; chap 16-17)
2/9		James Baldwin, <a href="#">“A Report From Occupied Territory”</a> and Ta-Nehisi Coates, <a href="#">“The Paranoid Style of American Policing”</a>
2/14	Social Contract Theories: The Rawlsian Social Contract	John Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (Broadview), Sections 3-6; Section 24
2/16		John Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (Broadview), Section 11; Sections 14-15; Section 17
2/21 <b>Argument Reconstruction #2 Due</b>		Susan Moller Okin, <i>Justice, Gender, and the Family</i> (Broadview), Chapter 5: Justice as Fairness: For Whom?
2/23	Axes of Oppression: Paradigms and Structures	Iris Marion Young, <i>Justice and the Politics of Difference</i> (Broadview), Chapter 1: Displacing

		the Distributive Paradigm
2/28	Axes of Oppression: Race	Charles W. Mills, <i>The Racial Contract</i> , Introduction
3/2 <b>Paper #2 Due</b>		Toni Morrison, <a href="#">“A Humanist View”</a>
3/7 <b>No Class</b>	<b>No Class—Spring Break</b>	
3/9 <b>No Class</b>	<b>No Class—Spring Break</b>	
3/14		Charles W. Mills, <i>The Racial Contract</i> , Chapter 1
3/16		Charles W. Mills, <i>The Racial Contract</i> , Chapter 2
3/21 <b>Argument Reconstruction #3 Due</b>		Charles W. Mills, <i>The Racial Contract</i> , Chapter 3
3/23	Axes of Oppression: Class	Karl Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (Broadview), Sections 1-2
3/28		Rutger Bregman, <a href="#">“Why We Should Be Giving Everyone a Basic Income”</a>
3/30		Karl Marx, <i>The German Ideology</i> (Broadview)
4/4		Joanna Kadi, “Stupidity 'Deconstructed'” (eCollege)
4/6 <b>Paper #3 Due</b>	Axes of Oppression: Gender	Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> (Broadview), Introduction to Book I
4/11 <b>Guest Lecture (Professor Out)</b>		Virginia Held, “Non-Contractual Society: A Feminist View” (eCollege)
4/13 <b>No Class</b>	<b>No Class—Easter Break</b>	
4/18		Meghan Murphy, <a href="#">“What Is it About Men That They're Committing These Horrible Massacres?”</a>
4/20 <b>Argument Reconstruction #4 Due</b>	Axes of Oppression: Ability	Martha Nussbaum, <i>Frontiers of Justice</i> selections (eCollege)
4/25		Eva Feder Kittay, <i>Love's Labor</i> selections (eCollege)
4/27		Nomy Lamm, <a href="#">“This is Disability Justice”</a>
Finals Week 5/1—5/5		<b>Final Exam</b>

### Code of Student Conduct:

All students at Siena Heights University are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. For more information, please see the [Code of Student Conduct](#). Please obey the spirit as well as the law of SHU's Code of Student Conduct. If you think that something is in violation of the Code, it probably is, so check before doing it. Please remember that unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism, and that **you must cite all of your sources** for papers!

\*\*Please note: every assignment turned in for this class must be your own original work, produced specifically *for this class*. You may not turn in an assignment written for a previous and/or different class. To

do so would constitute (self) plagiarism, and will be treated as such.\*\*

### **The Writing Center:**

The Writing Center at Siena Heights University is a free resource available to all CAS students. Students are encouraged to visit the writing center for writing feedback at any stage in the writing process. For information regarding their tutors, hours, location, or to utilize their online links and resources, please visit [writingcenter.sienaheights.edu](http://writingcenter.sienaheights.edu).

### **Diversity and Disability Statement:**

Our institution values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students with disabilities are also welcome to contact the Office of Accessibility (517) 264-7683 or Laura Lyall (coordinator) at [llyall@sienaheights.edu](mailto:llyall@sienaheights.edu) to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in the course, including accommodations. This process is initiated and driven by the student. It is to your advantage to begin the process in a timely manner, since accommodations are not retroactive. Grades earned before verification of a disability by the Office of Accessibility will not be changed.

### **Academic Engagement Policy:**

In response to federal regulations governing financial aid, faculty will report students who are absent from class for one week without explanation. These students will be contacted to determine their current status. Students who are disengaged from a class for two weeks will be administratively withdrawn from that class and given a withdrawal grade equivalent to an E in grade point calculations. In order to avoid an administrative withdrawal, students can initiate a withdrawal themselves before the deadline (November 5) and avoid negative consequences to their grade points.

### **Sex- and Gender-based Violence and Harassment:**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted for **any** reason, you can find the appropriate resources here:

- The SHU Counseling Center, directed by Sandy Morley, is open M-F from 8 am to 5 pm or by appointment. Sandy Morley is a confidential resource. You can reach her at 517-264-7193 or [smorley@sienaheights.edu](mailto:smorley@sienaheights.edu), or stop by Ledwidge Hall 195-197. Counseling services are offered at no charge to University students.
- The SHU Public Safety Department can be reached at 517-264-7800 or by dialing 0 on campus. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and they offer 24-hour escort service to any location on campus. Cindy Birdwell is the Chief Public Safety Officer and she is also SHU's Title IX Coordinator. She can be reached at 517-264-7194 or [cbirdwel@sienaheights.edu](mailto:cbirdwel@sienaheights.edu) and her office is in Ledwidge 179.
- Campus Ministry is another valuable resource for students, no matter their faith tradition. Father John Grace is a confidential resource on campus. He can be reached at 517-264-7198 or [jgrace@sienaheights.edu](mailto:jgrace@sienaheights.edu), and his office is located in the Campus Ministry Lounge in Ledwidge.

### **Syllabus Changes:**

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as appropriate. The odds that I'll do so during the semester are small, but if I do, I will inform you as soon as possible.