

Phil 261: Political Philosophy; the State, Economy, and Society

Instructor: Joshua Kissel

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Office Hours: TBD [see survey!]

Class Meeting:

Videos will be posted MTW June 22 – July 22

Location: All over this green Earth, ideally in a quiet room

Course Description:

This is an introductory level philosophy course in contemporary political philosophy for majors and nonmajors. This course deals with normative questions: rather than asking how the world *is* arranged, we will focus on asking how it *ought* to be arranged. Because these are normative or ethical questions this course fits into the wider field of moral philosophy or value theory.

This course begins with a brief introduction to political philosophy wherein we will look at two tools of philosophy, deductive argument and thought experiments. In addition, I'll give you all a quick and dirty introduction to moral philosophy. In the second part of the course we will focus on the authority of the state (or it's lack). We will discuss how to understand freedom, the authority of democracy, and will even consider some anarchist objections to the state generally. We then turn our attention to the economy and distributive justice. Here we will evaluate justifications for capitalist and socialist property schemes as well as the justification of the market. In the last part of this course we will look at several different topics of applied political theory. Topics in this section will include: global poverty and effective altruism, the moral standing of non-human animals and the permissibility of eating them, power and oppression, epistemic injustice, and the justifiability of rioting (even in democratic states).

Course Objectives: this course enables students to:

- (1) Evaluate the validity and soundness of arguments.
- (2) Contrast competing solutions to political questions offered by various political theories.
- (3) Interrogate and identify the core normative claims underlying their own political positions.
- (4) Assess the justifiability of these claims.

In addition, students will acquire a background in important areas of philosophy and political theory including; critical reasoning, political ideologies including liberalism, republicanism, libertarianism, and anarchism, justifications of capitalism and socialism, and applied questions related to poverty and our duties to the poor, the status of non-human animals, and the experience of oppression, and the legitimacy of riot.

Office Hours:

During my office hours I will be sitting quietly behind a desk, staring at a wall unless students come to meet with me. This time is meant for you to ask questions, discuss philosophy, or just hang out. It is *your* time, and you do not need an excuse or any clarity about what you want to

do. I request, but do not require, that you send me an email alerting me to when you want to come, and if you happen to know, what you plan to discuss.

If for whatever reason you cannot make my regular office hours, please send me an email asap with a range of time that you could meet, and we will try to work something out!

Students with Disabilities:

Any student needing accommodations should speak directly to AccessibleNU ((847) 467-5530 or accessiblenu@northwestern.edu) and to me as early as possible in the quarter. Be aware that AccessibleNU will help arrange reasonable accommodations for both physical and mental health concerns. Barring unforeseen circumstances, any necessary arrangements should be made within in the first week of class. All discussions will remain confidential.

General Grading Schema:

1. Participation and Discussion 20% of Total. C-A+
 - a. Discussion Board
 - i. 12 Original Posts (10%)
 - ii. 24 Response Posts (10%)
 - b. Live Discussion Alternative (20%)
2. Rawls Game [or Alternative] 10% of Total. P/F [or A-F]
3. Three Paper Outlines 35% of total. A-F [1st 5%, 2nd and 3rd 15%]
 - a. First 5%
 - b. Second 15%
 - c. Third 15%
4. One Final Paper (~5 pages) 35% of total. A-F

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
94-100	90-93	87-89	84-86	80-83	77-79	74-76	70-73	60-69	60-0

Assignment Due Dates [Details for Particular Assignments to Come]

Assignment	(Some) Details	Due Date
Discussion Boards (or Live Discussion Alternative)	<p>Each week there will be three discussion boards (1 for each class). These will be open for 1 week. You should aim to participate in all discussions, but at minimum, must participate in 80% of them.</p> <p>Alternatively, there will be a live discussion section each week (pending survey results) Individuals can attend and participate in this section to meet their weekly participation goals, or participate in the three weekly discussion boards.</p> <p>It is permissible to utilize the discussion boards</p>	<p>Discussion Boards will open Monday of each Week and Close the following Sunday except during week 5.</p> <p>Week 5 discussion will open Monday and close Friday, the 25th at midnight.</p>

	in some weeks and live discussions in other weeks. Of course, you're welcome (and encouraged) to do both!	
Rawls Game	In lieu of one day of readings and lecture we will have a (optional)* live meeting where we will play out a philosophy experiment together. Participation in the session amounts to a perfect score <u>Grading:</u> Attendance and participation in this live section will garner full points. Because this class is asynchronous, students will have the option to complete a 5-page paper on Rawlsian Political Philosophy which will be graded as normal.	TBD (July 1 and July 2 selected for 2020)
First Paper Outline	This outline must be on a topic related to the Authority (and the State).	July 2 at 11:59 pm
Second Paper Outline	This outline must be on a topic related to the Economy	July 9 at 11:59 pm
Third Paper Outline	This outline must be on a topic related to Applied Political Philosophy	July 16 at 11:59 pm
Final Paper	This is a ~5-page paper written in prose on any topic related to the State, Economy, or Applied Political Philosophy	Friday July 24 at 11:59pm

General Course Outline: We have 15 sessions from June 22 through July 22. I will post lectures at the beginning of the week.

Class	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1 – Week 1: June 22-24 Introduction to Course	Validity and Soundness Normative Theory	What Will Future Generations Condemn Us For? – Kwame Anthony Appiah (3 Pages) WATCH: “The Simulation Argument”	Icebreaker Discussion
2 – Week 1: June 22-24 Authority and the State	Liberalism and Republicanism (on Freedom)	Christian List and Laura Valentini – Freedom as Independence (32 Pages)	
3 – Week 1: June 22-24 Authority and the State	Democracy	Thomas Christiano – The Authority of Democracy (25 Pages) Elizabeth Anderson - “How bosses are (literally) like dictators Dictatorship at Work” (~3000 Words)	

4 – Week 2: June 29-July 1 Authority and the State	Anarchism	Robert Paul Wolff – The Conflict Between Authority and Autonomy (19 Pages) from <i>In Defense of Anarchism</i> Emma Goldman – Anarchism: What it Really Stands For (9 Pages) from <i>Anarchism and Other Essays</i>	
5 – Week 2: June 29-July 1 Authority and the State	Tensions within Liberalism	Susan Moller Okin – Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women? (16 Pages)	1 st Paper Outline [11:59pm July 2 nd]
6 – Week 2: June 29-July 1 The Economy	Rawls and the Veil of Ignorance Game	Required Game No Required Reading	
7 – Week 3: July 6-8 The Economy	A Libertarian Critique of Rawls	Robert Nozick – <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> , Excerpt from Chapter 7 and Chapter 8. (41 Pages)	
8 – Week 3: July 6-8 The Economy	Defending Socialism	G.A. Cohen – <i>Why Not Socialism</i> (23 Pages)	
9 – Week 3: July 6-8 The Economy	Critiquing Socialism Defending Capitalism	Richard Arneson – Why not capitalism? (28 Pages) Milton Friedman – The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits (6 Pages)	2 nd Paper Outline [11:59pm July 9 th]
10 – Week 4: July 13-15 Applied Political Philosophy	Poverty and Personal Obligation	Peter Singer – Famine, Affluence, and Morality (15 Pages)	
11- Week 4: July 13-15 Applied Political Philosophy	Effective Altruism and It's Critique	Mathew Snow – Against Charity (~2500 Words) Amia Srinivasan – Stop the Robot Apocalypse (10 Pages)	
12 – Week 4: July 13-15 Applied Political Philosophy	The Scope of Justice – Animals and the Environment	Alastair Norcross – Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases (17 Pages) Tom Regan – The Case for Animal Rights (11 Pages)	3 rd Paper Outline [11:59pm July 16]

13 – Week 5: July 20-22 Applied Political Philosophy	Power	Iris Marion Young – Five Faces of Oppression (20 Pages)	
14 – Week 5: July 20-22 Applied Political Philosophy	Epistemic Injustice	Miranda Fricker – Testimonial Injustice (21 Pages)	
15 – Week 5: July 20-22 Applied Political Philosophy	Protest and Riot	Lucy Parsons (1886 interview) - “I am an Anarchist” (4 Pages) Avia Pasternak – Political Rioting: A Moral Assessment (35 Pages) Optional video on Lucy Parson’s life and organizing: More Dangerous Than a Thousand Rioters	Final Paper [11:59pm July 24 th]

Fostering an Online Learning Community

This course is designed to help each of you meet each of our learning goals. A large part of achieving these learning goals is actively engaging with our course materials. Active participation (in our case, informal Canvas participation tasks, discussion during synchronous Zoom class sessions, and engagement in office hours) is proven to boost retention, speed up the learning process, and facilitate creative thinking, among other things.

Most of all, the truths of the texts we are reading are not delivered from on high. We need to engage critically with our texts; in other words, *we need to practice doing philosophy*. I strongly encourage you *to talk to one another and not just to me*. Here are some suggestions and guidelines:

- Practice being patient with others.
- Listen carefully and respectfully.
- Leave others room to speak; don’t monopolize or dominate.
- When agreeing, explaining why you agree.
- Criticize ideas and arguments, not the people who offer them.

During our Zoom meetings, *please endeavor to stay on task and be present!* Do not spend our class time checking email or browsing other windows on your screen. I know this is difficult. For this reason, we will try to take breaks as needed. I will aim for *quality* of our meetings, not *quantity* of time. The more focused we can be, the more effectively we can learn.

Practice makes perfect. Many of us will be taking online classes in the academic year to come. Take this class as an opportunity to reflect on your own learning, to practice time management, and to see what works for you. Please also consult Northwestern’s [Student Resources for Remote Learning](#).