PHILOSOPHY 166 CLASSICS OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT


This course is an introduction to the issue of political legitimacy: What is required in order that a government’s coercion of its citizens to obey the law should count as morally legitimate? What are the legitimate functions of the state? We explore these questions by studying some classic texts of political theory. The authors of these texts radically disagree in their answers. Our working assumption is that these differences are instructive, partly because in modern democracies today these questions remain unsettled. The goal of the course is to improve our understanding of these core texts in political theory, to assess their arguments, and to reflect on our own political values.


Course Requirements: Quizzes (see below), a midterm exam in class, an analytical writing assignment (about five to seven pages in length), and a regular final exam. The writing assignment will not require extra reading, but will ask you to interpret and assess some course texts. On the writing assignment you will have a choice among topics assigned in class. The final exam will comprehend all course materials (required--not recommended--readings, lectures, and handouts), but will emphasize material not covered on the midterm.

For the course to be useful to you, it is important that you come to class prepared to participate in informed discussion of the readings. I won't try to grade class participation, but as a proxy for class participation I will give six surprise quizzes in class during the term. The quizzes will be brief and will test your understanding of that day's and perhaps the previous class's readings and lectures. No makeups will be given for these quizzes. Your two worst quiz scores will be discarded, and the scores on the remaining four will be added and assigned a single grade.

The final exam for this class is scheduled at Thursday, June 14, from 11:30--2:30. You should be sure that you can attend this final exam (e.g., that you do not have too many other finals on this same day) before you enroll in this class.

Grading: The midterm exam counts for 25 per cent of your final grade, as does the writing assignment, and the final exam counts for 40 per cent. The pop quizzes count for 10 per cent.

Course grading for those enrolled on a Pass/Not Pass basis: If you are taking the course on a Pass/Not Pass basis, you must get a C- or better on the final exam in order to earn a
Pass grade in the course, with one exception: If you have an A- average or better on the midterm and writing assignment, and quizzes, you will be excused from the final exam.

SCHEDULE OF REQUIRED READINGS AND LECTURE/DISCUSSION TOPICS

Week 1. April 2-8
MON: Introduction to Locke. Reading: None.
WED: Locke on natural rights; the state of nature, the right to property. Reading: Locke, Second Treatise, chapters 1-5.
FRI: Same topic continued. Reading: same as for Wednesday.

Week 2. April 9-15

Week 3. April 16-22
MON: Natural man. Reading: Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, Part I (pages 23-60 in The Basic Political Writings), plus Rousseau’s notes to Part I.
WED: The founding of civil society. Reading: Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, Part II (pages 60-81 in The Basic Political Writings), plus Rousseau’s notes to Part II.
FRI: Conclusion of discussion of Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality.

Week 4. April 23-29
WED: The general will. Reading: Rousseau, The Social Contract, Book II.

Week 5. April 30-May 6
FRI: MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS.

Week 6. May 7-13
Week 6 continued.

Week 7. May 14-20
MON: Marx on the dynamic of capitalist markets. Reading: “Manifesto of the Communist Party”; also handout excerpt from “Preface” to the Critique of Political Economy.

Week 8. May 21-27
FRI: Utilitarian liberalism; the liberty principle; Mill versus paternalism. Reading: excerpt from chapter 2 of Mill, Utilitarianism, in course reader; also Mill, On Liberty, chapter 1.

Week 9. May 28-June 3
MON: NO CLASS: MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY.
WED: WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE. Individuality and liberty. Reading: Mill, On Liberty, chapter 3. (Chapter 2 of On Liberty is recommended but not required.)
FRI: Direct and indirect harm to others. Reading: Mill, On Liberty, chapters 4 and 5.

Week 10. June 4-10

Arneson’s office hours: Mondays 3-4 and Thursdays 3-4 in HSS 8057.
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