

**INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT PHILOSOPHY 167**  
**CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**  
 Professor: Richard Arneson.

**WINTER, 2017**  
**REVISED**

Class meets Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:30-4:50 in Warren Lecture Hall 2112

The final exam for this course will take place on Thursday, December 10 from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. If you enroll in this class, you must be free to take a regular final exam for this course at this time.

This is a course in normative political theory. Its aim is to seek to identify moral principles suitable for the regulation of a modern, diverse, democratic society. Here “suitable” principles are taken to be those whose implications for policy best satisfy our considered moral judgments, after reflection, all things considered. The course is text-centered; we’ll spend considerable time examining the view of the main course authors. Topics to be covered include the proper role of the state and the moral limits of state authority, the obligation to obey the law, economic justice, freedom versus equality, the nature and justifiability of political democracy, and the moral basis for (or against) capitalism. A particular concern is to ponder various conceptions of freedom (also allied norms such as antipaternalism and neutrality on the good )and consider their place, if any, in fundamental moral principles regulating public life and public policies.

Recent past versions of this course have included sections on our duties to distant strangers, global justice, and nationalism versus cosmopolitanism. This quarter Phil 167 sets aside these important issues, but Andy Lamey is covering them in his Global Justice course this term.

Truth in advertising: this course is not carefully balanced in left-wing versus right-wing terms in its selection of themes and readings. I’m interested in exploring and assessing some ideas prominent in recent political philosophy writings, which tend to have a left-liberal slant. (In compensation, the last word in the course is given to right-wing arguments by Robert Nozick and by Jason Brennan and John Tomasi.) –I want students to read and understand course materials and argue their merits, but you are welcome to argue from any perspective you choose.

**COURSE GOALS:** The goals of the course are to improve our skills at interpreting challenging texts and assessing their arguments, to understand a variety of approaches to the theory of justice, and to gain a more reflective understanding of our own political values. A secondary aim is to sharpen our analytical writing skills.

**COURSE TEXTS:** All course readings will be available at the course TritonEd page.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** (1) regular participation in class discussion, (2) nine short weekly discussion papers, each about one page in length, commenting on some aspect of the reading for that class that strikes you as significant, (3) a longer writing assignment, six to eight double-spaced pages in length, topics to be assigned in class, and (4) a regular comprehensive final examination. You will have some choice of topic on the writing assignment. On your discussion papers, writing assignment, and final exam you will be graded according to the clarity of your prose, the cogency of your arguments, and the soundness of the understanding of course materials that you exhibit. The final examination will comprehend all course materials including required readings, lectures, and handouts distributed in class. (This means that merely recommended readings will NOT be covered on exams.)

To encourage keeping up with the reading class by class and week by week, there will be a class participation component of your grade. At each class meeting, there will be class discussion for about half of the class, always on questions posed in advance of class (and relating to the readings assigned for that class). This class discussion usually will take place at the start of class, before the instructor’s lecture starts, but sometimes will occur at the mid-way point. During lectures, you are always encouraged to interject questions and comment. I will take notes after every class on the class discussion, and the quality and frequency of your contributions to discussion will be the basis of your class participation grade.

The weekly discussion paper examines one line of thought or argument or claim made in a course reading for that day (the day you are turning in the paper). In the paper you can highlight something in the reading you

think would be a good focus for class discussion. You can present a claim or argument advanced by the course author. You can raise an objection to what the author is saying, or defend a controversial claim in the reading against some possible objection. You have a lot of choice as to what to do in the short paper. Trying to summarize the entire reading in a one-page paper is probably not a good idea, but you might summarize and clarify an argument in the reading that seems complicated or pivotal or both. **The weekly discussion paper for each week is due at the start of class on any class day in that week and should discuss some part of the assigned reading for that day's class.**

If you turn in ten discussion papers I will count your nine best grades. Also, you may if you wish write at most one two-page discussion paper, in which case you would be turning in a total of eight one-page comments and one two-pager. (The two-pager counts the same as two one-pagers.)

**GRADING:** The final exam counts for 35 % of your exam grade, the writing assignment for 30%, the nine discussion papers for 15%, and class participation for 20 %.

Only medical excuses certified by a note from your physician or a comparable certified excuse will be accepted for late submission of the writing assignment or to justify the assignment of an Incomplete course grade.

## **SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, DISCUSSIONS, AND READINGS**

**{All readings are available at the TritonEd course page.}**

Week 0. Classes start September 27.

THUR: Introduction to politics & political philosophy. Liberty and social justice. Negative & positive liberty.

Reading: Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty"; also Philip Pettit, "Prologue "to his *Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World*.

Week 1. October 1-7.

TUES: Liberty, autonomy & paternalism. Autonomy. Reading: Gerald Dworkin, "The Nature of Autonomy." Adaptive preferences. Reading: Jon Elster, "Sour Grapes."

THUR: Hard and soft paternalism: Reading: Joel Feinberg, "Legal Paternalism"; also Richard Arneson, "Joel Feinberg and the Justification of Hard Paternalism."

Week 2. October 8-14.

TUES: Neutrality and Politics. Reading: Alan Patten, "Liberal Neutrality: An Interpretation and Defense"; also Jonathan Quong, "Paternalism and Perfectionism." Merely recommended: Martha Nussbaum, "Perfectionist Liberalism & Political Liberalism."

THUR: Is there a duty to vote? Reading: Jason Brennan, ""*The Ethics of Voting*, chapter 1, "Arguments for a Duty to Vote," and chapter 2, "Civic Virtue without Politics."

Week 3. October 15-21.

TUES: Is there a duty to vote? Reading: Alex Guerrero, "The Paradox of Voting and the Ethics of Political Representation." Also: Alex Guerrero: "Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative."

THUR: Is there a democratic right to an equal say? Reading: Jason Brennan, "The Right to a Competent Electorate." Merely recommended reading: David Estlund, "Why Not Epistocracy?"

Week 4. October 22-28

TUES: Freedom as non-domination & politics. Reading: Philip Pettit, *Just Freedom*, chapters 2 & 3.

THUR: Freedom as non-domination & politics. Reading: Philip Pettit, *Just Freedom*, chapters 4 & 5. Merely recommended reading: Pettit, *Just Freedom*, chapter 6.

Week 5. October 29-November 4.

TUES: Critiques of Pettit. Reading: Thomas Simpson, "The Impossibility of Republican Freedom"; also Matthew Kramer, "Liberty and Domination."

THUR: Another view: Niko Kolodny, "Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy." Merely recommended reading: R. Arneson, "The Supposed Right to a Democratic Say."

Week 6. November 5-11.

TUES: Distributive Justice. Reading: Ronald Dworkin, "What Is Equality" Part 1: Equality of Welfare."

Also Steven Wall, "The Good Society." Merely recommended reading: Will Kymlicka, "Liberal Equality," from his *Contemporary Political Philosophy*.

THUR: Distributive justice. Reading: Ronald Dworkin, "What Is Equality? Part 2: Equality of Resources."

Week 7. November 12-18.

TUES: From equality of resources to justice as fair insurance. Reading: Ronald Dworkin, "Justice, Insurance, and Luck." Merely recommended: R. Dworkin, "Equality," from his *Justice for Hedgehogs*; also R. Arneson, "Dworkin & Luck Egalitarianism: A Comparison."

WED: Another luck egalitarianism. Reading: Richard Arneson, "Equality and Equal Opportunity for Welfare."

Week 8. November 19-25

TUES: Critique of luck egalitarianism; democratic equality. Reading: Elizabeth Anderson, "What Is the Point of Equality?"; also Richard Arneson, "Luck Egalitarianism and Prioritarianism." Merely recommended: Samuel Scheffler, "Choice, Circumstance, & Luck."

THUR: NO CLASS. THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY.

Week 9. November 26-December 2.

TUES: Libertarianism and justice. Reading: Robert Nozick, "Distributive Justice."

THUR: Contemporary social conservatism. Reading: Arlie Hochschild, "The Deep Story," from her *Strangers in Their Own Land*. "[Note—This is a work in descriptive sociology, not normative theory. Hochschild seeks to describe the feelings and beliefs of some Louisiana conservatives she interviewed for her 2016 book. To put this in the framework of the course, the task would be to figure out what combinations of normative principles and empirical claims would render the views she describes most plausible and defensible.]]

Week 10. December 3-9.

TUES: Free markets and community: the socialist ideal. Reading, G. A. Cohen, "Why Not Socialism?"

Merely recommended reading: R. Arneson, "Why Not Capitalism?"

THUR: Free markets and community: the capitalist ideal. Reading: Jason Brtennan and John Tomasi, "Classical Liberalism." Merely recommended: John Locke, "Of property," chapter 5 of his *Two Treatises of Government*,

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