INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT (SYLLABUS) PHILOSOPHY 167 CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Professor: Richard Arneson.

Slightly revised Feb 5.

Class meets Mondays & Wednesdays 5:00-6:20. p.m. We're scheduled to meet in RWAC #0426, **AFTER JAN 31 WE MEET IN THIS CLASSROOM, WITH THE OPTION ATTENDING VIA ZOOM.** (the link for Zoom classes is at the Canvas course page).

The final exam for this course will take place on Monday, March,14 from 7:00-10:00 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. We study several intertwined issues. One is political legitimacy. Under what conditions, if any, does a state act permissibly when it enacts laws and issues commands to its citizens and coercively enforces them? There is a closely related issue of political obligation: Under what conditions, and to what degree, if any, does one have a duty to obey the laws and commands issued by a state, just because the state has issued these laws and commands? We'll say a state has *political authority* just in case it has political legitimacy and its citizens have some duty to obey law as such.

Another issue is freedom versus equality. Many of disagree about how best to interpret these values and which one, if either, has priority.

Another issue, connected to the others, is the meaning and justification of democracy. Many of us affirm democracy, but what exactly makes a society truly democratic? Is democracy the morally right form of government always or just under certain conditions? And if the latter, what are those conditions? Living in a democratic society, would we be obligated to obey its laws, even if they are unjust? If so, what might be the limits of this duty?

Yet another course 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.

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 views regarding the authority of democracy and the nature of social 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 Canvas page.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: (1) regular participation in class discussion, (2) a takehome midterm exam, (3) a writing assignment, six to eight double-spaced pages in length, topics to be assigned in class, and (4) a regular final examination. You will have some choice of topic on the writing assignment. On your midterm takehome exam, 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 (powerpoints), and other course notes. (This means that merely recommended readings will **NOT** be covered on exams. Merely recommended readings are purely optional. They are just suggestions for anyone who might wish to explore the class topic further, perhaps in conjunction with working on a writing assignment.)

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

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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.

Not everyone feels comfortable speaking up in class. I encourage everyone to participate, and to be sympathetic and constructive in responding to other students' comments. YOU CAN FULFILL REQUIREMENT (1), PARTICIPATE IN CLASS DISCUSSION, EITHER BY SENDING ME AN ANALYTICAL COMMENT ON THAT DAY'S READING BEFORE CLASS STARTS OR BY SPEAKING OUT IN CLASS.

An analytical comment briefly examines one line of thought or argument or claim made in a course reading for that day. In a comment, 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 a short comment. It may help to conceive of your comment as a paragraph-long essay. 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.

GRADING: The takehome midterm counts for 15% of your course grade, the writing assignment for 30%, class participation for 20% and the final exam for 35%.

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.

If you are enrolled in the course on a Pass/Not Pass basis, to get a Pass you must earn an overall C- or better grade on all course requirements taken together, with one exception: If you have an A- or better average grade at end of term heading into the final exam, you have earned a Pass grade and need not take the final exam.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, DISCUSSIONS, AND READINGS {All readings are available at the Canvas course page.}

Week 1. January 3-9.

MON: Introduction. Under what conditions, if any, are states morally legitimate? Reading: Christopher Wellman, "Liberalism, Samaritanism, and Political Legitimacy." Also: Michael Huemer, *The Problem of Political Authority*, chapter 1 excerpt.

WED: Utilitarianism/consequentialism and political legitimacy. Reading: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, chapter 1, sections 5-9 (emphasis on 5-6). Utilitarianism & welfarism. Objections to welfarism. Reading: Ronald Dworkin, "What is Equality? Part 1: Equality of Welfare." Merely recommended reading: Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs*, chapter on "Equality."

Week 2. January 10-16.

MON: Objections to utilitarianism/consequentialism. Lockean libertarianism says, justice is respecting natural moral rights. Reading: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State & Utopia*, chapter 3; also Amartya Sen, "Rights and Agency," sections 1 & 2 only. Also read: Nozick, "The Principle of Fairness," pages 90-95 from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.

WED: Lockean libertarianism and rights of private ownership. Reading: Robert Nozick, "Distributive Justice," part 1 only.

Week 3. January 17-23. MON: No Class. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DAY. WED: Entitlement theories and restitution. Reading: Robert Goodin, "Disgorging the Fruits of Historical Wrongdoing." Week 4. January 24-30.

MON: Justice as Fairness. Two principles of justice. Reading: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev.ed, sections 1-4 of chapter 1 along with chapter 2.

WED: More on Rawlsian justice. Reading: Will Kymlicka, "Liberal Equality," from his *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, 2nd. ed.

TAKEHOME MIDTERM EXAM Due before midnight, Thursday, January 27, at Canvas course opage, assignments folder.

Week 5. January 31-February 6.

MON: Chosen and unchosen luck; distributive justice and insurance; Equality of resources. Reading: Ronald Dworkin, "What Is Equality? Part 2: Equality and Resources." Merely recommended reading: Richard Arneson, "Equality and Equal Opportunity for Welfare."

WED: Distributive justice; critique of luck egalitarianism; democratic equality. Reading: Elizabeth Anderson, "What Is the Point of Equality?" Merely recommended reading: Arneson, "Luck Egalitarianism and Prioritarianism."

Week 6. February 7-13

MON: Freedom as non-domination. Reading Philip Pettit, *Just Freedom: A Moral Complex for a Complex World*, "Prologue and Chapters 2-3.

WED: Freedom as non- domination and political democracy. Reading: Pettit, *Just Freedom*, chapters 4 & 5. Merely recommended reading: Critiques of Pettit: Thomas Simpson, "The Impossibility of Republican Freedom"; also Matthew Kramer, "Liberty and Domination."

Week 7. February 14-20.

MON: Special ties and the duty to obey democratically enacted laws. Reading: Samuel Scheffler, "Membership and Political Obligation."

WED: Democracy and political borders. Reading: Robert Goodin, "Enfranchising All Affected Interests, and Its Alternatives."

Week 8. February 21-27.

MON: No class. PRESIDENTS DAY.

WED: More on who should be included in democratic political society. Reading: David Miller, "Democracy's Domain."

Week 9. February 28-March 6.

MON: Against Democracy. Reading: Jason Brennan, "The Right to a Competent Electorate." Merely recommended reading: David Estlund, "Why Not Epistocracy?" Also merely recommended reading: Richard Arneson, "The Supposed Right to a Democratic Say."

WED: Reading: Alex Guerrero, "The Paradox of Voting and the Ethics of Political Representation." Also: Alex Guerrero: "Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative."

Week 10. March 7-13.

MON: Another View. Democracy as a crucial component of a nonhierarchical society. Reading: Niko Kolodny, "Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy."

WED: Limits of duty to obey the law. Reading: Tommie Shelby, "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto."

Arneson's office hours: Wednesdays 1-2 and Thursdays 2-3 in RWAC #0489. Email rarneson@ucsd.edu