

PHIL 2217: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

T/Th 12:30-1:45; Busn 122

Fall 2014

Professor Suzy Killmister

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-3pm

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Introduction

The first half of this course surveys some of the most influential figures in western political thought: Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Rawls. We will focus primarily on their justifications of the state, their defenses of individual liberty, and their understandings of political community. The second half of the course will address questions of racial oppression and marginalisation from a contemporary perspective, taking the recent events in Ferguson as a focal point. Throughout the course we will consider whether and how the classic texts of political philosophy offer insight into contemporary US political issues.

Required Materials

1. *The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought: Essential Readings: Ancient, Modern and Contemporary Texts*, Bailey, Brennan, Kymlicka, Levy, Sager and Wolf (eds).
2. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Cornell University Press, 1999
3. Additional readings will be available on the Husky CT page for this course. If you have trouble accessing Husky CT, please contact the help desk (486-1187)

Assessment

There are five components to the assessment for this class:

1. Argument Reconstructions and Objections
2. Reflective pieces
3. Long Essay
4. Midterm/Final
5. Class Participation

Each of these forms of assessment will be testing a different philosophical skill. Since there are many different ways to be a good philosopher, I do not expect you to be able to excel at all of these. As such, only your best two forms of assessment will count towards your final grade, and each of these will be weighted at 50%. ****In order to get a passing grade, you must attempt each of the first three forms of assessment. What counts as an attempt is detailed below.****

- Argument Reconstructions and Objections
 - This assessment tests your ability to clearly articulate the content of a philosophical argument, and identify an objection to it. For the week's reading you must first identify one claim that the philosopher makes. Your second task is to summarise the argument the philosopher puts forward to justify that claim. This can be done as a formal argument reconstruction, or as an informal summary. Your third task is to develop an objection to that argument. ****The objection should constitute at least half of the paper.****
 - Recommended length: 750 words per paper
 - Due date: Fridays, midnight.
 - Submissions: Submit your papers through Husky CT. You may submit as many weeks as you wish; your best three papers will count, and they will be equally weighted. A single on-time submission **by October 3** counts as an attempt at this assessment.
- Reflective Pieces
 - This assessment tests your ability to draw creative connections between philosophical theories and everyday life. Your task is to write a short piece explaining how the theories we are covering in class relate to a particular current event in the US or abroad. While there are no restrictions on how you do this, a couple of ways to approach this assessment would be a) to show how a particular theory helps make sense of a current event; or b) to show how a current event raises doubts about a particular theory.
 - Recommended length: 750 words per paper
 - Due date: Fridays, midnight
 - Submissions: Submit your papers through Husky CT. You may submit as many weeks as you wish; your best three papers will count, and they will be equally weighted. A single on-time submission **by October 3** counts as an attempt at this assessment.
- Essay
 - This assessment tests your ability to engage in extended philosophical analysis, and to develop an original line of argument. Before writing your paper will need to decide on your own essay topic, submit a one page essay plan, and meet with me to discuss the direction of your paper. There are no restrictions on the topic you write on, provided it connects in some way to the class materials.
 - Recommended length: 2500 words
 - Due date: Essay plan: October 31
Final essay: November 30
 - Submissions: You may submit as many essays as you like; your best essay will count. Submitting an essay plan on-time counts as attempting this assessment.
- Midterm/Final
 - This assessment tests your ability to develop a close understanding of the course materials. Both the midterm and the final will be composed of multiple choice questions; short answer questions; and an argument reconstruction. The midterm will

- Provisional Dates: Midterm: Available online Oct 5-10
Final: Friday December 12, 10:30-12:30

- This assessment tests your ability to develop philosophical arguments and objections orally, and to facilitate productive philosophical conversation with your classmates. Conversation during office hours can count towards your class participation grade.

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- Dean of Students Office: 486-3426 or www.dos.uconn.edu
- The Writing Center: 486-4387 or <http://www.writingcenter.uconn.edu>

Grade Scheme

94 - 100	A
90 - 93	A-
86 - 89	B+
82 - 85	B
78 - 81	B-
74 - 77	C+
70 - 73	C
66 - 69	C-
62 - 65	D+
58 - 61	D
54 - 57	D-
< 54	F

Reading Schedule

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION

AUG 26: No readings assigned

AUG 28: Greg Howard, "America is Not for Black People"
Isabel Wilkerson, "Mike Brown's Shooting and Jim Crow..."

WEEK 2 HOBBS

SEP 2: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*: Introduction; Chapters 13 – 15 (skip 15.4 - 15.33)

SEP 4: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*: Chapters 17-19; Chapter 21; Chapter 30 (sec. 1-3 only)

WEEK 3 FROM HOBBS TO LOCKE

SEP 9: No new readings assigned

SEP 11: John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*: Chapters 1-5

WEEK 4 LOCKE

SEP 16: John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*: Chapter 7 (from sec. 87 only); Chapter 8 (sec. 95-104; sec. 113-122); Chapters 9-11

SEP 18: No new readings assigned

WEEK 5 ROUSSEAU'S STATE OF NATURE

SEP 23: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*: Intro; Part One

SEP 25: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*: Part Two

WEEK 6 ROUSSEAU'S SOCIAL CONTRACT

SEP 30: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*: Book 1; Book 2, Chapters 1-3

OCT 2: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*: Book 2, Chapters 4-7. Book 3, Chapters 1-2; 12-15. Book 4, Chapters 1-2; 7-9

WEEK 7 THE RAWLSIAN SOCIAL CONTRACT

OCT 7: Will Kymlicka, "Liberal Equality"

OCT 9: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sec. 3-6; 24

WEEK 8 RAWLSIAN JUSTICE

OCT 14: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sec. 11-17

OCT 16: No new readings assigned

WEEK 9 FROM IDEAL TO NON-IDEAL THEORY

OCT 21: Tommie Shelby, "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto"

OCT 23: No new readings assigned

WEEK 10 THE RACIAL CONTRACT

OCT 28: Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Introduction

OCT 30: Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Chapter 1

WEEK 11 THE RACIAL CONTRACT CONTINUED

NOV 4: Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Chapter 2

NOV 6: Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Chapter 3

WEEK 12 STAND YOUR GROUND

NOV 11: Anderson, Hoagland, and Leighton, "Now You See It, Now You Don't"
Goff and Richardson, "No Bigots Required"

NOV 13: Kelly and Roedder, "Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias"
Implicit Association Test

WEEK 13 EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

NOV 18: Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, "Prejudice in the Credibility Economy"

NOV 20: Kristie Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing"

THANKSGIVING

WEEK 14 TBD