

**Political Philosophy**  
**Jamie Lindsay**

In this course we will explore a several approaches to political philosophy. You will have ample opportunity to develop your abilities to think and write about philosophical questions, to practice giving reasons for your views, and to consider opposing arguments carefully. We will focus on classroom discussion, with the aim of encouraging you to develop your own views in dialogue with the texts and with each other.

We will use Kymlicka's *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* as the primary text for the course, to orient ourselves within the primary debates in English-language philosophy. Kymlicka helpfully organizes discussion in terms of a debate over the meaning of equality, rather than as involving antagonism between wholly different values. Nonetheless, Kymlicka's method *is* a potentially contentious way of organizing debates in political philosophy, so we will supplement his *Introduction* with Jürgen Habermas' *The Divided West*, with supplementary essays posted online, and with research on contemporary debates arising in disability studies, critical race theory, multiculturalism, feminism, communitarianism, liberalism, republicanism, and the politics of pedagogy.

**Final Grade:**

Blackboard Discussion (before each class):	25%
Group Research Presentation:	25%
Short Essay (1):	10%
Final Term Paper:	40%

**Course Requirements:**

1. **You are expected to read *all* assigned texts *before* the meeting for which they are assigned. Required textbooks are available at Shakespeare and Co.:**
  - a. Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2001)
  - b. Jürgen Habermas, *The Divided West* (2006)
2. **Before class, you are required to post your reflections and/or questions about *all* readings that we will discuss.**
  - a. Approximately one-hundred word posts are sufficient, *per week*, and you are encouraged to use the Discussion Board as an opportunity to debate the material.
  - b. Posts are *not* graded for accuracy, though you will be assessed at the end of the course for the extent to which you engage in *discussion* of the material. Merely posting your thoughts without considering – and sometimes responding to – the posts of others is insufficient. The aim is *discussion*, and I too will engage *as a participant*.
  - c. You are expected to use your Discussion Board posts to prepare for class, by reviewing and debating the central ideas of the readings with your classmates.
  - d. Blackboard *discussion* counts for 25% of the grade.
  - e. *If less than half of the class participates actively prior to a class meeting, Blackboard discussion will be supplemented with a reading quiz and/or classwork.*
3. **You are expected to attend all classes, having done the reading, and to review your notes from previous sessions before attending class.**
  - a. Lateness, absences, and lack of positive participation (or any negative participation) will affect your final grade dramatically.
  - b. *Your grade will be dropped by a letter for each unexcused absence after the third unexcused absence.*
4. **During the last month of the semester, there will be group presentations on several debates in contemporary political philosophy:**
  - a. Group presentations may be done in the area of your Term Paper, and should serve as an opportunity for you to research and discuss your ideas, both within your group, and then with the entire class.
  - b. Groups will have approximately four members, and should last at least thirty minutes.
  - c. Presentations should explore the philosophical debates in your subject area (so research is required); your group ought to present the primary arguments in the debate, and should explore the differences of view amongst group members. You need not agree with your group members.
  - d. Presentations *must* include a .ppt or .key slideshow, with any multimedia sources that would be helpful, and so requires that someone have a laptop (which can be checked out from I.T.).
5. **The Final Paper (seven to eight pages), defending an original thesis, requires an extended engagement with the material.**
  - a. There will be no Final Exam; rather, the Final Term Paper will be your opportunity to exhibit what you have learned in the class. The paper should be tightly focused around a single thesis, and should develop an argument for that thesis while considering significant objections.

- b. If you have not written a philosophy paper before, I invite you to make an appointment to come in for Office Hours to discuss your ideas, *well before the end of term*.
- c. All outside sources must be cited, using any standard format (e.g. MLA, Chicago, etc.).
- d. Failure to cite sources is a violation of the Academic Integrity policy of Hunter College (i.e. it's *plagiarism*), and *must* be reported. *Plagiarizing will result in failing the course*.
- e. A draft or proposal will be due six weeks before the end of the semester, which must be submitted as a hard copy, in class.

**Calendar:**

- 1/29: Discussion: Equality & Consensus  
Linda Martin Alcoff, "In Arizona, Censoring Questions about Race"\*
- 1/31: Thomas Hobbes, from *Leviathan* (J. Bennett, ed.)\*\*; read Chapter 13, pp. 56-9: <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/levi1.html>
- 2/5: John Locke, from *Second Treatise on Government* (J. Bennett, ed.)\*\*; read pp. 1-18: <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/lo2tr.html>
- 2/7: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, from *The Social Contract* (J. Bennett, trans.)\*\*; read Book One, pp. 1-11: [http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/f\\_rousseau.html](http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/f_rousseau.html)
- 2/12: NO CLASS (Lincoln)
- 2/14: Immanuel Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch"\*\*\*; read pp. 1-30: <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/kantpeac.pdf>
- 2/19: Kymlicka, "Utilitarianism"\*
- 2/21: *No new readings*
- 2/26: Kymlicka, "Marxism"\*; Karl Marx, "Alienated Labor"\*\*\*
- 2/28: Kymlicka, "Libertarianism"\*
- 3/5: Habermas, "Interpreting the Fall of a Monument"\*  
SHORT ESSAY DUE IN CLASS (hard copy)
- 3/7: Omar Dahbour, "The Response to Terrorism: Moral Condemnation or Ethical Judgment?"\*\*\*3/12: Habermas, "Fundamentalism and Terror"\*
- 3/14: Habermas, "Is the Development of a European Identity Necessary...Possible?"\*
- 3/19: Habermas, "An Interview on War and Peace"\*
- 3/21: Kymlicka, overview of text, read the chapter(s) relevant for your term paper & presentation\*
- 3/26-4/2: *NO CLASSES*
- 4/4: *No new readings*; RESEARCH PAPER DRAFT/PROPOSAL DUE (hard copy, in class)
- 4/9: Richard Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality"\*\*\*
- 4/11: Nina Powers, "Axiomatic Equality: Jacques Rancière and the Politics of Contemporary Education"\*\*\*
- 4/16: Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy*, pp. 33-70\*\*
- 4/18: *Group Presentation: Disability Studies & Liberalism* (Anita Silvers, Eva Feder Kittay, Will Kymlicka on "Liberal Equality"\*)
- 4/23: *Group Presentation: Critical Race Theory & Liberalism* (Charles Mills, Linda Martin Alcoff, Joy James, Will Kymlicka on "Liberal Equality"\*)
- 4/25: *Group Presentation: Feminism & Multiculturalism* (Susan Moller Okin, Azizah al-Hibri, Seyla Benhabib, Carol C. Gould, Will Kymlicka on "Feminism"\* and "Multiculturalism"\*)
- 4/30: *No new readings*
- 5/2: *Group Presentation: Liberalism vs. Communitarianism* (Michael Walzer, John Rawls, Will Kymlicka on "Liberal Equality"\* and "Communitarianism"\*)
- 5/7: *Group Presentation: Liberalism & Feminism* (Susan Moller Okin, Carol C. Gould, Sibyl Schwarzenbach, Margot Canaday, Amy Baehr, Will Kymlicka on "Liberal Equality"\* and "Feminism"\*)
- 5/9: *Group Presentation: Republicanism & Citizenship Theory* (Phillip Pettit, Will Kymlicka on "Citizenship Theory",\* Jürgen Habermas\*)
- 5/14: *No new readings*
- 5/16: *No new readings*
- 5/20: Term Paper Due (via email)**

**Syllabus Change Policy:** This syllabus is a guide for the course. *If* there are any changes to the calendar, they will be announced in class, and a revised syllabus will be posted on Blackboard. Other than (possible) calendar changes, there will be no changes, to grading and other course policies.