

Philosophy, Politics, and Society

Instructor: Jamie Lindsay

Email: JLindsay@gc.cuny.edu

PHILO 10600-01 (3341)

M-Th 11:40am-1:14pm

June 3rd-July 15th

HW505

Philosophy, Politics, Society provides an introduction to social and political philosophy, both in historical context and in relation to contemporary debates in national and global politics, and in society domestically and internationally. Emphasis will be placed on classroom discussion of philosophical texts, all of which will be available on-line, so no textbook purchase is required. Thematically, our discussions will be focused around the concepts of freedom, justice, care, equality, and democracy. We will explore *both* fundamental questions about each concept, *and* practical debates concerning the application these concepts:

- Is freedom (or liberty) fundamentally individual, or social, or in some way both?
- What is the relation between an ethics of care, and theories of social justice?
- Is there a fundamental human right to health care, or is universal healthcare a problematic sort of “hand-out”? Are there other reasonable ways to think about this issue, from the point of view of justice?
- Are there circumstances of oppression and/or domination under which revolution, rather than reform, is the right response? What weight does a claim of non-violence have, in considering how to respond to injustice?
- Would global justice require global democracy, or perhaps, would global justice require smaller, more local governance? Is representative democracy justifiable, from the point of view of justice, or are there reasons to think that citizens must be able to directly participate in governance?

Philosophy, Politics and Society is an excellent first course in social and political theory, introducing some of the core concerns explored in the *new major and minor concentrations in Philosophy, Politics, & Society*, as well as introducing philosophy more broadly. We will consider basic elements of philosophical argumentation that are important in all areas of philosophy, and we will work on developing skills that are important in reading difficult works, in considering historical texts, and in writing about core philosophical concepts.

Final Grade*:

Blackboard Discussion (before each class):	20%
Presentation:	20%
Take-Home Exam One:	20%
Take-Home Exam Two:	20%
Final Exam:	20%

**Attendance is required. After the second unexcused absence, your grade will be dropped by a letter for each further unexcused absence.*

Course Requirements:

1. You are required to have a functioning email address associated with your Blackboard account, by the second day of class.
2. You are expected to read *all* assigned texts *before* the meeting for which they are assigned. Required texts will be posted on Dropbox.
3. Before every class, you are required to post your reflections and/or questions about *every* reading that we will discuss.
 - a. Approximately fifty-word posts are sufficient, *per meeting*, and you are encouraged to use the Discussion Board as an opportunity to debate the material with your classmates.
 - b. Posts are *not* graded for accuracy of interpretation, 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 sometimes 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 20% of your final 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, which will be included in the Blackboard discussion grade.*
- 4. You are expected to attend every class, 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 second unexcused absence.*
- 5. During the last week of the summer session, there will be group presentations on several debates in contemporary political philosophy:**
- a. Group presentations provide 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 two members, and should last at least thirty minutes, including class discussion, which you will facilitate.
 - c. Presentations should explore the philosophical debates in your subject area (so some research is required), but the focus should be on the views expressed in the two papers on which your group is presenting; 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, or with either of the authors.
 - 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.). All media should be on the laptop, as classroom access to the internet is *not* reliable.
- 6. Two Take-Home Exams will be given in class.**
- a. If you fail to receive the Exam due to an *unexcused* absence, this will *not* be accepted as a legitimate excuse for failing to turn in the Exam.
 - b. You may work with your classmates (and on Blackboard) on the Take-Home Exams, but your response must be your own. Identical responses still violate the Academic Integrity policy of Brooklyn College (i.e. it's *cheating*), and *must* be reported.
 - c. You may use outside sources, but any outside sources *must* be cited clearly (in any format). Failure to cite sources is a violation of the Academic Integrity policy of Brooklyn College (i.e. it's *plagiarism*), and *must* be reported.
 - d. *Cheating or plagiarizing will result in failing the course.*
- 7. The Final Exam questions will be distributed prior to the end of the semester.**
- a. The Final Exam will consist of short-answer questions requiring at most three sentences each.
 - b. The Final Exam will be open notes, but not open book.
- 8. By the end of the course you should be able to:**
- a. Articulate the basic features of several approaches to contemporary political and social philosophy
 - b. Evaluate political speech and the media using the critical tools of social and political philosophy
 - c. Develop your own arguments in relation to political debates and social issues
 - d. Identify and state serious objections to your own political views

Hunter College Policy on Academic Integrity: "Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures."

ADA Policy: "In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of Accessibility, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772- 4857 or (212) 650-3230."

NY Policy on Religious Observance: "Any student in an institution of higher education who is unable, because of their religious beliefs, to attend classes on a particular day or days shall, because of such absence on the particular day or days, be excused from any examination or any study or work requirements. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which they may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days. Any student who is aggrieved by the alleged

failure of any faculty or administrative officials to comply in good faith shall be entitled to maintain an action or proceeding in the supreme court of the county in which such institution of higher education is located for the enforcement of their rights.”

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.

Course Calendar:

Week One: Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy

- 6/3: Introductory discussion: society & the law
- 6/4: **Plato**, *Apology*
- 6/5: Jürgen **Habermas**, “Interpreting the Fall of a Monument”
- 6/6: Linda Martín **Alcoff**, “Censoring Race in Arizona”
Peter **Singer**, “Famine, Affluence, Morality”

Week Two: Freedom and Self-Ownership

- 6/10: John **Locke**, from *Second Treatise on Government* (J. Bennett, ed.);
read pp. 1-18: <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/lo2tr.html>
- 6/11: Robert **Nozick**, from *Anarchy, State, Utopia*
- 6/12: Karl **Marx**, “Alienated Labor”
- 6/13: John **Rawls**, from *A Theory of Justice*

Week Three: Deontology and the Social Contract

- 6/17: Thomas **Hobbes**, from *Leviathan* (J. Bennett, ed.);
read Chapter 13, pp. 56-9: <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/levi1.html>
[*first take-home exam due, hard copy, in class*]
- 6/18: Immanuel **Kant**, “What Is Enlightenment?”
- 6/19: Immanuel **Kant**, “Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch”;
read pp. 1-30: <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/kantpeac.pdf>
- 6/20: *No new readings*

Week Four: Ethical Life

- 6/24: G.W.F. **Hegel**, from *The Philosophy of Right*, “Ethical Life,” § 142-157:
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/prethica.htm>
- 6/25: Judith **Butler**, “The Claim of Non-Violence”***
- 6/26: G.W.F. **Hegel**, from *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, “Lordship and Bondage”:
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/ph/phba.htm>
- 6/27: *No new readings*

Week Five: Global Justice

- 7/1: Seyla **Benhabib**, “Reason-Giving and Rights-Bearing: Constructing the Subject of Rights”
[*second take-home exam due, hard copy, in class*]
- 7/2: Omar **Dahbour**, “The Response to Terrorism: Moral Condemnation or Ethical Judgment?”
- 7/3: Jacques **Rancière**, *Hatred of Democracy*, pp. 33-70**
- 7/4: *No new reading*

Week Six: Student Presentations: Justice for all?

- 7/8: *Student presentations:* Susan Moller **Okin**, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?”
Anthony Kwame **Appiah**, “Cosmopolitan Citizenship”
- 7/9: *Student presentations:* Ronald **Dworkin**, “On Not Prosecuting Civil Disobedience”
Jürgen **Habermas**, “Civil Disobedience: Litmus Test for the Democratic Constitutional State”
- 7/10: *Student presentations:* Michael **Walzer**, “The Triumph of Just War Theory...”
Jürgen **Habermas**, “Bestiality and Humanity: A War on the Border between Legality and Morality”
- 7/11: *No new readings*
- 7/15: Closing discussion