

PHL 265 H5F: Social and Political Philosophy

Instructor: Etye Steinberg, etye.steinberg@mail.utoronto.ca

Lectures: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5-6 (online)

Office hours: Tuesdays, 4-5 (online)

Course description:

Political philosophy asks questions about the nature of political life: should there be a state? Why? What rights should people have? What is justice? What limits should we place on individual liberty? What limits should we place on state power? In this course, we will examine five key topics in political philosophy: (1) What is the source – and what are the limits – to our obligation to the state and to obey the law? (2) How do different theories about the source of the state's authority privilege or disadvantage certain groups or considerations? (3) What limits should the state place on personal freedoms such as speech and expression? (4) What is justice, and how should we understand state power? (5) Finally, what is oppression, and how does identity play a role in politics and society?

Course objectives:

In this course you will learn to:

- Describe and explain key concepts and theories in political and social philosophy
- Think critically about political theory and social topics
- Recognize, extract, analyze and evaluate philosophical arguments from a text
- Construct arguments on your own using terminology that you will learn in the course

Required Texts:

All texts will be made available online through Quercus.

Evaluation:

10%	Tutorial participation
10%	Online participation
5%	Online quizzes and surveys
5%	Discussion boards; office hours; lecture attendance, lecture participation
45%	Home exercises
10%	Ex.1: Summary [400-500 words], October 9
15%	Ex.2: Summary + objection [500-800 words], November 6
20%	Ex.3: Summary + objection + response [800-1000 words], November 27
35%	Final Writing Assignment

Important Dates:

- September 9: classes begin
 - October 9: Ex.1 due
 - November 6: Ex.2 due
 - November 11: last day to drop F course from academic record
 - November 27: Ex. 3 due
 - December 8: classes end
 - TBD: Final writing assignment due
-

Course Schedule

September 10th

- Introduction to course
-

I Civil Dis/Obedience

September 15th and 17th

- Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham jail”.

Recommended reading:

- Plato, “Crito”.

September 22nd and 24th

- Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. “The Duties of a Law Abiding Citizen” and “Postscript”.

Recommended reading:

- Seyla Benhabib, “Arendt’s Eichmann in Jerusalem”. In Dana Villa (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pages 65-85.
-

II Social Contract Theory

September 29th and October 1st

- Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988. Chapter 3.

Recommended readings:

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Book 1, chapters 13, 14, and 17.
- John Locke, *Treatise on Government*, Book 1, chapters 1-2.

October 6th and 8th

- Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999. Pages 1-40.

Recommended readings:

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Book 1, chapters 13, 14, and 17.
- John Locke, *Treatise on Government*, Book 1, chapters 1-2.

October 9th: *** Writing Exercise 1 due ***

III Liberty and Free Speech

October 20th and 22nd

- Rae Langton, 1993. "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts". *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol 22(4): 293-330.

Recommended readings:

- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chapters 1-2.
- Catherine MacKinnon, "Francis Biddle's Sister: Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech", in her *Feminism Unmodified*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1987. Pages 163-197.

October 27th and 29th

- Japa Pallikkathayil, 2020. "Free Speech and the Embodied Self". In David Sobel, Peter Vallentyne, and Steven Wall (eds.) *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy Volume 6*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pages 61-83.

Recommended reading:

- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chapters 1-2.

IV Justice and Disability

November 3rd and 5th

- Amartya Sen, 1980. "Equality of What?". In McMurrin (ed.), *Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recommended reading:

- John Rawls, 1999. *Theory of Justice (revised edition)*. Sections 5, 11, 24-26. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

November 6th: *** Writing Exercise 2 due ***

November 10th and 12th

- Martha Nussbaum, 2003. In McMurrin (ed.), *Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Section I: "Capabilities and Disabilities: Justice for Mentally Disabled Citizens", pages 418-457.

Recommended reading:

- John Rawls, 1999. *Theory of Justice (rev. ed.)*. Sections 1-4.

November 17th and 19th

- Shelley Tremain, 2001. "On the Government of Disability". *Social Theory and Practice*, vol. 27(4): 617-636.

Recommended readings:

- Michel Foucault, 1978. "Right of Death and Power over Life", in *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1. (trans. Robert Hurley). New York, NY: Random House. Pages 135-159.
- Michel Foucault, 1977. "The Means of Correct Training", in *Discipline and Punish* (trans. Alan Sheridan). New York, NY: Random House. Pages 170-194.

V Oppression

November 24th and 26th

- Tommie Shelby, 2002. "Foundations of Black Solidarity: Collective Identity or Common Oppression?". *Ethics*, vol. 112(2): 231-266.

Recommended reading:

- Iris M. Young, 1990. "Five Faces of Oppression". In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Pages 39-65.

November 27th: *** Writing Exercise 3 due ***

December 1st and 3rd

- Kristie Dotson, 2011. "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing". *Hypathia*, vol. 26(2): 236-257.

Recommended reading:

- Marilyn Frye, 1983. "Oppression", in *The Politics of Reality*. New York, NY: Random House. Pages 1-17.
- Maya Angelou, 1983. "Caged Bird"
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48989/caged-bird>.

December 8th

- Review

Policies:

1) Submission: Home exercises must be submitted through Quercus. DO NOT EMAIL SUBMISSIONS.

Deadlines: October 9, November 6, November 27. All by 23:59pm.

***** Late submissions will be penalized 5% per day, including weekends *****

Conditions that can justify an extension/accommodation include, for instance:

- Medical/accessibility: please inform me in advance.
- Emergency: inform me as soon as possible.
- Students who wish special academic consideration for health reasons must submit a completed [Verification of Illness form](#).
- Other grounds? Submit relevant supporting documentation.

Examples of circumstances that do not justify an extension include:

- Extra-curricular activities
- Employment obligations
- Deadlines in other courses.

Paper submission through Quercus will go automatically through Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com services are described on the Turnitin.com web site. You can find the guide for student use here:

<http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching/academicintegrity/turnitin/guide-students.htm>

2) Accessibility Services:

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and [Accessibility Services](#). The earlier you notify me of any potential accessibility issues, the more help I can provide.

3) E-mail Policy:

This course has many students (150 students!). Answering everyone's emails promptly is a difficult task. To make sure that your emails receive timely responses, please adhere to the following guidelines. ***In your emails, include the course number PHL265.***

- You should email me about extensions and accommodations.
- Other emails should be used for quick clarificatory questions, for instance about administrative issues (e.g. "the syllabus says that the paper is due on Wednesday, but

with Thursday's date – which one is it", "I can't make it to your office hours – is there another time we can meet").

- Alternatively, use emails for brief and simply questions about the material (e.g. "Mill talks about the greatest happiness principle – does he mean *my* happiness or *everyone's* happiness").

I will **not** answer the following types of emails:

- Emails with questions that are answered in the syllabus or the assignment instructions (e.g. "how much is attendance worth", "when is the 3rd paper due", "what did I miss last week", "how do I get an extension", "how long should my paper be", "when are your office hours"). If you have this sort of question, read the syllabus or assignment instructions. You will probably find an answer there.
- Emails with substantive questions about the material (e.g. "what is Kant's view", "why does Aristotle think that a virtuous life is a happy life", "what is an argument"). Substantive philosophical questions are better answered in person – either in lecture, tutorials, or office hours. Who knows – maybe other students also have a similar question, or maybe we will have an interesting discussion following your question!

4) Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is a core value of academic work and research. Without abiding to rules of academic integrity, research becomes worthless. If an experiment's results are forged, then that experiment cannot be useful in future work; if a paper does not properly cite its sources, then the continuous thread of knowledge is torn. This applies to the work of everyone taking part in the project of academia: from full time faculty members publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals, through graduate students and research assistants taking their first steps in research, and all the way to first year undergraduate students writing short essays.

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. Academic integrity is a fundamental value of learning and scholarship at UofT. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that your UofT degree is valued and respected as a true signifier of your individual academic achievement.

The University of Toronto's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#). If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me.

If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me or other available campus resources like the [Academic Skills Centre](#), or the [U of T Writing Website](#). **These are great resources not just for learning about academic integrity, but also for acquiring further tools for academic writing and research – I strongly encourage you to check these out!**