PHIL 2132.10
Spring 2013
Smith Hall, 114, Mondays, Wednesdays 2:20p – 3:35p

Instructor: Dr. Michael J. Sigrist
Office: 525A Phillips
Office Hours: M, 12:45 – 2p; W 3:45 – 4:30p
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SOCIAL & POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Course description

This course focuses on normative questions concerning the arrangement of economic, political, and cultural institutions. There is a special emphasis on how these institutions might be more just. In addition we will investigate matters such as the nature of political and civic liberty, legal and moral rights, the moral significance of inequality, and the relation between democracy and the rule of law.

Course Aims and Objectives

Course Goals: The first goal of this course for students to develop a deep background in the history, concepts and methods of philosophical social analysis. Students should finish the course with solid foundation in the history of social and political thought in the Western philosophical tradition. Students will be expected to apply this knowledge to contemporary social and political issues relevant to their daily lives and responsibilities as an active citizen. Attention will be paid throughout the course to ongoing policy concerns. Students will complete the course with a deep and rigorous understanding of the institutions of deliberative democracy. As a philosophy course we will also be emphasize analytical and conceptual skills. Students will finish the course with the ability to read difficult texts, identify conclusions and the premises used to support them, analyze and critique arguments, as well as construct theories of their own.

Course Policies and Expectations

Attendance: This material is difficult. You will not understand it if you do not attend class regularly. Regular attendance is required. You are allowed three unexcused absences; each additional unexcused absence will cost two percentage points from your final point total for the course.

Make-Ups: If you miss a quiz due to an unexcused absence you will not be able to make it up. If you miss a quiz due to an excused absence you will need to submit an alternative writing assignment within one week. Late papers will be accepted, but they will be deducted half a letter grade for each day (NOTE: not class period) late.

Reading Summaries: You will be responsible for outlining and summarizing the major arguments, concepts, and themes from one reading during the semester. Sample summaries will be posted on blackboard, along with the criteria I will be using to assess your work.

Respect and Tolerance: We will be dealing with difficult and often personal themes in this course. In fact, the material in this course will be difficult to understand if you do not take it personally. All the same, you will be required to act respectfully, politely and collegially to other students, including to any who
express opinions that might upset you, either in the classroom or on the discussion boards. At the same time, intentional offense, disrespect of any kind, and impoliteness will not be tolerated.

**Phone Number:** Above you will see a phone number. This is not my personal phone number. It is a Google Voice number I have set up especially for students. Use discretion, but if you have quick questions about the class or an assignment, are running late for an appointment, would like to schedule an appointment, would like to let me know that you are planning on attending office hours, or anything else germane to the class, you may call or text. I much prefer text. I am unlikely to answer any calls or texts in the evening, night or early morning, and will often take 24 hours or more to respond. The best policy is to bring questions to me in class. Be also advised that if you text or phone me, the number from which you dial will show up on my phone. In any case, *always leave your name with your message.*

**Email:** I will often take 24 to 48 hours to reply to emails. If you email with questions readily available on the class syllabus, in our readings, or from class, it’s possible that I will not reply at all. Replies are especially likely to be slow around due dates and the final exam. Your emails should be professional and concise. If you have urgent questions, it is always best to ask during class or to bring them to office hours.

**Required Materials and Access**

- **Social Philosophy**
  - Gerald F. Gaus
  - M E Sharpe Inc
  - 1563249480

- **Utilitarianism**
  - J S Mill
  - Hackett Publishing Co
  - 087220605X

- **The Politics and Constitution of Athens**
  - Aristotle

- **A Theory of Justice**
  - John Rawls
  - 0674017722

- **Anarchy, State, and Utopia**
  - Robert Nozick
  - Basic Books
  - 0465097200

Additional readings will be available on Blackboard.

**Assignments and Grading Procedures**

You are expected to come to class each day having studied and prepared to discuss the entirety of the material listed on that date on the class schedule. Repeated unpreparedness will negatively impact your final mark for the course.

**Quizzes:** Quizzes will assess basic reading comprehension and analysis. There will be five quizzes throughout the semester (marked ‘Quiz’ on the class schedule). Quizzes will contain short answer, multiple choice and short essay questions. **Not all material on the quizzes will be covered in class.** You are responsible for knowing the material in the assigned readings even when we do not cover all of it in class. Quizzes comprise the largest single percentage item of your final grade, so make sure that you prepare for each regularly and well in advance. Quizzes will be open book, but not open note.

**Papers:** You will have two papers for the course. The first paper will be analytical and explanatory. The final paper, due on the university scheduled final exam date, will be argumentative. Detailed instructions, including a rubric, will be available on blackboard for each assignment at least four weeks prior to the due date.
Summary: Each student is required to sign up for a day of summary note taking. Notes should summarize the main points of the readings and outline the major themes, topics and arguments from class lecture and discussion. Readers should be able to surmise quickly and without difficulty the major ideas of the day’s assigned material and discussion; they should know where to look and what questions to ask for deeper study. Bulleted or outline form may be best, although I leave it to the discretion of the note-taker so long as the basic requirements are met. Summaries must be signed and posted to Blackboard by the Monday of the following week.

Final Exam: There will be a final exam for the course covering all the semester’s material. The final exam will be in a format similar to an expanded quiz, with multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. If you have done the readings, attended class regularly, and review the class summaries, you can expect to do well.

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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>80 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>15 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>40 pts</td>
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<td>Paper #2</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Academic Integrity

I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: [http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html)

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: [http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/)

University Counseling Center (UCC) 202-994-5300

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:
- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
- confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
[http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices](http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices)

Security.
The George Washington University

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.
CLASS SCHEDULE

(B) marks readings available on Blackboard

January

14\textsuperscript{th}: Introduction, Crito

16\textsuperscript{th}: Gaus, Ch. 1, Crito (cont’d)

21\textsuperscript{st}: NO CLASSES

23\textsuperscript{rd}: Gaus, Chs. 2, 3; Aristotle, pp 1 - 30

28\textsuperscript{th}: Cont’d

Quiz #1

30\textsuperscript{th}: Aristotle, pp 61 - 91

February

4\textsuperscript{th}: Aristotle, pp 166 - 207

6\textsuperscript{th}: Gaus, Ch. 4; Mill. Utilitarianism, Chs 1 -3

11\textsuperscript{th}: Mill, Utilitarianism, Chs. 4 - 5.

13\textsuperscript{th}: Gaus, Ch. 5; Hobbes, Leviathan (B)

Quiz #2

18\textsuperscript{th}: NO CLASSES

25\textsuperscript{th}: Cont’d; Locke, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Treatise (B)

27\textsuperscript{th}: Rousseau, Social Contract (B)

March

4\textsuperscript{th}: Gaus, Ch. 6; Rawls Ch. 1

6\textsuperscript{th}: Rawls, Ch. 2

Paper #1 Due

11\textsuperscript{th} – 16\textsuperscript{th}: NO CLASSES – SPRING BREAK

18\textsuperscript{th}: Cont’d

20\textsuperscript{th}: Rawls, Ch. 3
25th: Cont’d; Ch. 5

Quiz #3

27th: Cont’d; Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society"

April

1st: Gaus, Chs. 7 – 8;

3rd: Nozick, Chs. 2 - 3

6th: Gaus, Ch. 9; Nozick, Ch. 7

10th: Cont’d

15th: Nozick, Ch. 8

17th: Nozick, Ch. 10

Quiz #4

22nd: Williams, "The Idea of Equality" (B); Nagel, "Egalitarianism" (B)

24th: TBA

29th: TBA

Final Paper due on university scheduled exam date. Final exam will also be held on that date.