PHIL 2400 (19082)
SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Political and Social Philosophy

How should we live together? What is human nature and does it impact how we ought to live together socially and politically? What is the proper relationship between the individual, the state, and society? Is the state necessarily a crony of economic and social forces, or can it adequately serve as an opposing or limiting source of power? How might we design and reform our public lives to eliminate or minimize the negative effects of majoritarianism, conformism, and capitalism? How should live with each other under conditions of moral and political disagreement? What explains the nature and persistence of historical and structural forms of injustice, especially patriarchy, white supremacy, and colonialism? How should we live together now in light of these inheritances? This course provides an introductory survey of leading answers to these questions from the history of social and political philosophy.

This course fulfills the following General Education requirement: Cultures and Ideas.

Instructor

Professor Amy L. Shuster
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General Education Goal

• Students evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas in order to develop capacities for: aesthetic and historical response and judgment, and interpretation and evaluation.

General Education Expected Learning Outcomes

• Students analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression.
• Students evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior.

Students will achieve these goals through thoughtful reading of assigned texts, participation in class activities, and successful completion of formal and informal writing assignments.

Course Materials

Required readings posted to course website in Carmen
Reading guides posted to Carmen
Discussion board on Carmen
Assessments

Overall course grade is computed with the following values for each component:

- 100 points  Good Citizenship
- 100 points  Argumentative Paragraphs (2 at 50 points each)
- 100 points  Posing Objections Assignment
- 600 points  Problem Essays (2 at 300 points each)
- 200 points  Final Exam
- 100 points  Wild Card

You must complete each component of the course in order to receive at least a passing grade. Grades posted during semester to grade book in Carmen.

**Good Citizenship** measures how students contribute to the learning of fellow students and to the educational environment of our class. Points up to 100 can be earned in the following ways:

- Class attendance: 1 point/class (29 possible)
- Display completed reading guide notes directly before class: 1 point/class (23 possible)
- Class participation: 2 points/class
- Discussion board posts: 2 points/topic (at least weekly)
- Discussion board replies: 1 points/topic
- Occasional informal writing in class: 2 points/class (several possible)

In order to be able to participate fully, carefully read and take notes on the assigned texts for that day of class in advance of class. Expect to spend 1-2 hours reading in advance of each class. To aid you in this endeavor, I distribute reading guides. These guides are designed to help you more effectively take notes on the assigned texts: to recognize key terms and their definitions, the important steps in an argument, and connections to other class texts. After taking these notes, come to class with questions about elements of the text that you did not fully understand or that were particularly interesting to you. You should bring to class the text(s) assigned for discussion, as noted in the Schedule of Classes, as we will reference the text regularly in class. To contribute to the educational environment, you should project respect for and interest in the contributions of fellow students both in what you say and how you comport your body. Respect comes in a variety of forms, including but not limited to disagreement that takes the ideas of others seriously and sincerely, asking others to say more about their ideas, connecting the ideas of students, listening attentively, and reflecting back to others what you hear them saying. Lack of respect also comes in a variety of forms, including but not limited to arriving late to class and doing things during class that should be done outside of class (e.g. checking your phone, work for other classes).

**Argumentative Paragraphs** are assigned to help students learn a basic but not obvious component of college-level, philosophical writing. After instruction on the elements and purpose of argumentative writing, students are asked to turn in a single paragraph (of approximately 350 words) twice toward the beginning of the semester.

**Posing Objections Assignment** will introduce students to one important way in which contemporary philosophers develop their arguments. After instruction on the difference between a strawman and real objection, students will compose two paragraphs: one stating an argument and a second posing a real objection to that argument.

**Problem Essays** offer students the opportunity to formalize their engagement with the course material in writing. You will respond to a prompt for at least two (2) of the three (3) due dates. You must turn in an essay for the first due date. You are permitted to write for all three; if you do,
then your grade for this assignment will be for your best two essays. Prompts for each due date will
be distributed in class and posted to Carmen several weeks in advance. Excellent responses will
accurately, clearly, and appropriately explain the relevant course material (with correct citations)
and develop an insightful, original (i.e. your own) argument that is accessible to college-level
students and insightful to other students in our class. Essays should be at least 1500 words and not
much more than 2000 words in length, use Chicago “Author-Date” in-text citation style, and include
a complete and accurate list of references. Any works consulted (print, online, or interpersonal)
should also be acknowledged as per standard academic procedure and the prescriptions of the OSU
Code of Student Conduct. A lexicon and rubric describing the elements of the academic essay at
various levels of accomplishment will be posted to Carmen. Essays will be uploaded as MS Word
compatible documents to Carmen. See Course Policies uploaded to Carmen for information on late
assignments and extensions.

**Final Exam** study questions will be available well in advance of the end of the semester. The key
concepts noted for each class period in the Schedule of Classes are part of this study guide. The
exam will comprise a selection of these questions, which will pertain to all the course material and
discussions (i.e. it is cumulative). You will be asked to answer multiple-choice questions and write
a series of short, expository responses. Expository responses accurately and clearly explain the
course material.

**Wild Card** is designed to allow you to engage with the course material in light of your distinct
talents and interests. Here are a few options to consider:

1) Write a third problem essay that you have not already written for.
2) Use your grade on the final exam as the grade for this assignment.
3) Create a “reverse outline” of your two problem essays, and submit a reflection letter on that
   process. See Professor Shuster for the particular prompt for the letter and outlining process.
4) A piece of public writing of at least 1200 words (e.g. blog post, letter to an editor, newspaper
   editorial); consult with course instructor on topic and audience. For example:  
   https://civitasperegrina.wordpress.com/2013/06/27/doma-and-distributive-justice/  or
   http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/9366177/A-philosopher-for-the-Facebook-
   generation.html  
5) An original illustration, drawing, collage or other artwork of a core concept or idea from the
   course material. For example (though far more involved than expected for this assignment):
   http://comment.rsblogs.org.uk/2010/06/28/rsa-animate-crisis-capitalism/  or
   http://existentialcomics.com/  
6) A soundtrack of at least 12 songs that illustrate or exemplify ideas from the course, along with a
   description of how each song (or a significant set of lines from the lyrics) relates to the course.
7) An improvement over the existing class A/V material for one class period.
8) If you are majoring in Education or considering a teaching career, design a lesson plan
   (including all necessary A/V material) that introduces one of our course readings on a topic
   central to the course theme to a student population that you anticipate teaching. For sample
   lesson plans (not all topically relevant), see http://www.tocqueville.org/ and http://p4c.com/  
9) Another appropriate project of your design approved by the course instructor.

You will be asked to declare your Wild Card intention on the last day of class. If you chose an option
numbered 3-8 above, then you must turn in a proposal of your planned project on the last day of
class. Consult the course instructor at least a week in advance of the last day of class to learn what
to include in your proposal and when your project is due.
# SAMPLE Schedule of Classes

**Tues, 8/23**  
How should we live together?  
Key concepts: capabilities approach, contractarianism, contractualism; and endeavors of political philosophy: Vision, Criticism, Road Map  
Watch in advance: Martha Nussbaum from *The Examined Life* (8 min)  

**Thurs, 8/25**  
How modern social life threatens liberty  
Key concepts: utility, living belief, dead dogma, appropriate region of human liberty  

**Tues, 8/30**  
Individuality and legitimate interference  
Key concepts: experiments in living, limits of liberty, right of discrimination  
Read in advance: J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, selections from chapters 3-4  

**Thurs, 9/1**  
What are we by nature (before modern society)?  
Key concepts: state of nature, atomism, self-preservation, natural equality, ambivalent nature of man  
Read in advance: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters 8, 11, 13, and 17  

**Fri, 9/2**  
**Argumentative Paragraph 1 due to Carmen > Assignments by 10:00pm**  

**Tues, 9/6**  
The source(s) of government  
Key concepts: nature versus convention, laws of nature, civil laws  

**Thurs, 9/8**  
The minimalist, absolutist state  
Key concepts: the social contract, commonwealth by institution and by acquisition  
Read in advance: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters 18, 20, and 30  

**Tues, 9/13**  
Revisiting human nature  
Key concepts: self-preservation, self-love, pity, perfectibility, reason, free agency, nascent society  
Read in advance: Rousseau, selections from “Discourse on Inequality”  

**Thurs, 9/15**  
Rights and (property) ownership before the state of war and civil state  
Key concepts: right of the strongest, right of the first occupant, origin and extent of property rights, natural versus moral & civil freedom, natural versus moral equality  

**Fri, 9/16**  
**Argumentative Paragraph 2 due to Carmen > Assignments by 10:00pm**  

**Tues, 9/20**  
A legitimate source of coercive authority  
Key concepts: particular will, the general will, the will of all, common interest  
Read in advance: Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, 2.1-4, 2.6, 2.11-12, 4.1-2
**Thurs, 9/22**  
From contract to an idea of reason  
Key concepts: contractarianism versus contractualism, the categorical imperative, maxim, right, public right, freedom, equality, independence  
Read in advance: Kant, “On the Common Saying: This May Be True in Theory, but It Does Not Apply in Practice” Section II, and a page from *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*

**Tues, 9/27**  
Making sense of forced freedom  
Key concepts: right, public right, coercion, freedom, the (civil) state  
Read in advance: Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* §41-45, §47, §52 and §D

**Thurs, 9/29**  
Kant on citizenship and Idea Generation Workshop  
Read in advance: sample student essay and [On Introductions (a prezi)](#)

**Fri, 9/30**  
**Problem Essay 1 due to Carmen > Assignments by 10:00pm**

**Tues, 10/4**  
Alienation under capitalism  
Key concepts: materialism, four aspects of estrangement (or alienation), social property, human emancipation, real foundation of society, superstructure, modes of production  
Read in advance: Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, “Estranged Labor” and “Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy”

**Thurs, 10/6**  
The contradiction between liberty and private property  
Key concepts: liberal freedom, Marxist freedom, rights of man  
Read in advance: Marx, selection from “On the Jewish Question”

**Tues, 10/11**  
The Marxian challenge to the social contract tradition  
Key terms: economics matters, ideology matters, society matters, alienation matters, social change matters  
No reading assignment

**Weds, 10/12**  
**Posing Objections Assignment due to Carmen > Assignments by 10:00pm**

**Thurs, 10/13**  
Class canceled for Autumn Break

**Tues, 10/18**  
Justice as fairness  
Key concepts: justice as fairness, the original position, veil of ignorance, principles of justice, social cooperation, the basic structure, reflective equilibrium, circumstances of justice  
Read in advance: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* 1.1-4 and 2.24 (chapter.section)

**Thurs, 10/20**  
The principles of justice  
Key concepts: difference principle, basic structure, primary goods, representative persons, property-owning democracy, fair equality of opportunity, least favored position  
Read in advance: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* 2.10-12
Tues, 10/25  Reasoning from the principles of justice
Key concepts: primary social goods; pure, perfect and imperfect procedural justice;
distributive vs. allocative justice; property-owning democracy; democratic equality
Read in advance: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* 2.13-16

Thurs, 10/27  Rawls wrap-up
Review Rawls reading to date

Fri, 10/28  **Problem Essay 2 due to Carmen > Assignments by 10:00pm**

Tues, 11/1  Contracting for Male Domination
Key concepts: the sexual contract, patriarchal right, civil mastery, civil
subordination, contractarianism, patriarchy
Read in advance: Carole Pateman, selections from *The Sexual Contract*

Thurs, 11/3  Contracting for White Supremacy
Key concepts: the problem of the color line, the veil, double-consciousness; the
racial contract, epistemology of ignorance, descriptive theory versus normative
theory, exploitation contract
W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*

Tues, 11/8  Contracting for Modern Colonialism
Key concepts: three senses of *terra nullius*, strict versus tempered logic of settler
contract (plus examples), legitimate private war, Locke on private property,
legitimate acquisition of property, the settler contract
Read in advance: Carole Pateman, “The Settler Contract”

Thurs, 11/10  From Ideal to Non-Ideal Theory
Key concepts: normative theory (ideal and non-ideal forms), descriptive theory,
predictive theory, forward-looking and backward-looking roadmaps
Read in advance: no assignment

Fri, 11/4  **Problem Essay 3 due to Carmen > Assignments by 10:00pm**

Tues, 11/15  Against contracts as the paradigmatic relationship
Key concepts: mothering person, non-patriarchal household, voluntariness, non-
replaceability, empowerment, vulnerability, shared goals and interests
Read in advance: Virginia Held, “The Non-Contractual Society”

Thurs, 11/17  What are we by nature (before modern society)?
Key concepts: *eudaimonia*, capacity, activity, human function
Read in advance: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book.chapter) 1.1-5, 1.7-8, 1.13

Tues, 11/22  Cultivating human capability
Key concepts: virtues (intellectual & character), the mean, contextualism, the
virtuous person (a.k.a. the practically wise person)
Read in advance: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1-9

Thurs, 11/24  Class canceled for Thanksgiving Break
Tues, 11/29  How social and political life relate to human capability
Key concepts: association, the citizen, plurality, self-sufficiency, justice, equality
Read in advance: Aristotle, Politics, 1.1-4, 1.12-13, 2.1, 3.1, 3.5-6, 3.12, 7.3, and 7.8
Check in with Professor Shuster about Wild Card options

Thurs, 12/1  The inevitability of disability
Key concepts: 10 central human capabilities, circumstances of justice, purpose of
social cooperation, good care, varieties of guardianship, equal respect for dignity,
respect for human individuality
Read in advance: Martha Nussbaum, selections from Frontiers of Justice

Tues, 12/6  How should we live now in light of these features and inheritances?
Key concepts: review all
Read: no assignment
Declaration of Wild Card intention due in class

Thurs, 12/8  Reading Day

Mon, 12/12  Final Exam

NB: This syllabus is subject to change with appropriate notice
Changes will be announced in class and posted to our course website in Carmen.

College of Arts and Sciences Required Statements

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish
procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term
“academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed;
illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with
examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the
committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct
http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/.

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for
Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should
inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office
for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil
Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; http://www.ods.ohio-
state.edu/.

Consult Course Policies posted to Carmen > Modules > Course Policies & Procedures
for policies and procedures developed specifically for this course.