

# PHIL 240

## Introduction to Political Philosophy

Tuesdays / Thursdays, 2:35 – 3:55  
Stewart Biology Building S3/3

### INSTRUCTOR

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### TEACHING ASSISTANT

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

All human beings find themselves living under some form of political order, whether it be theocratic, democratic, or autocratic. We rarely *choose* the overall political order under which we live. And yet, all forms of political organization are in some sense chosen: that is, they are products of human creativity, understanding, and behaviour. This means that normative questions have a special salience in politics. Given that, unlike a law of nature, a political order can be changed or supplanted with enough human strength, ingenuity, and effort, it is natural to ask whether the status quo in politics lives up to our understanding of how things *ought to be*. Is our political order as good as it can be and, if not, how can it be improved? What normative values, ideas, and standards must a good government satisfy or respect? What does the best political society (perhaps a utopia) look like? These are the most basic questions of political philosophy.

This course will introduce students to a wide array of topics and issues in political philosophy. As it is an introductory course, a special emphasis has been placed on *breadth*. The student will come away with a broad competence in the core topics addressed by political philosophy. Some of these topics include: Whether there exists a genuine alternative to life under a political order of some form (Section I); how political authority and political obligations can be justified (Section II); whether democracy is the best form of government (III); what it means to respect the freedom and equality of citizens (Sections IV and V); whether liberalism is an inadequate political ideology (VI); how we should respond to cultural diversity in political governance and in moral argument (Section VII and IX); what a *right* is, and what a *human* right is (VIII); and, what application might the idea of moral progress have in the real world (Section X).

Although political philosophy can often seem abstract, throughout the course an effort will be made by the instructor to demonstrate the relevance of political philosophy to current events and political practice. Such topics are likely to include: The so-called Arab Spring, Québécois nationalism, party politics in the US and Canada, the plight of Native American peoples and

other ethnic minorities, the recent military interventions in Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and anti-gay laws in Africa, among many other topics.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**(30%) Short essay:** of 1000-1250 words, due on 13<sup>th</sup> of October. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, students will be given 5-10 eligible short essay questions. The questions will draw on the topics and readings discussed in the first four sections of the course. And the student will be required to answer their chosen essay question in light of all of the readings associated with its topic, including supplementary readings. The essay will be assessed on the basis of its (i) clarity, (ii) effort, (iii) relevance to the chosen question, (iv) critical distance from the arguments of the discussed authors, and (v) its demonstration of familiarity with the relevant readings. A particular emphasis should be placed on familiarity with the work of the original historical authors, excerpts from which are included in *PT*.

**(50%) Final essay:** of 2000-2500 words, due on 6<sup>th</sup> of December. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of November, students will again be given 5-10 eligible final essay questions. The questions will draw on topics and readings included in the final six sections of the course. These questions are likely to be more ambitious than those provided for the short essay, in that they will require students to cover more material, and to make a distinct positive argument. The same standards of evaluation that applied in the short essay will apply here, but as this is a longer essay more emphasis will be placed on critical distance. If students wish, the instructor will be willing to consider original suggestions for a final essay topic and/or for final essay readings (although this must be done in advance of handing in the essay). Also, it should be noted that critical engagement with one (or both) of the supplemental main course texts listed below, will be looked on favourably by the markers.

**(20%) Essay outlines:** In addition to the short and final essays, students must submit **two** essay outlines. These outlines should be one Letter Size page each, written in bullet point form, and single-spaced. They must also include some short quotes from source texts, which flesh out the proposed argument. One of these outlines (worth **10%**) must be submitted along with the short essay, and must sketch an essay response to one of the 5-10 eligible short essay questions (this obviously cannot be the same question as the one answered by the student's short essay itself). The second outline (also worth **10%**) must be submitted along with the final essay, and must outline an essay response to one of the (remaining) 5-10 questions eligible for the final essay. The outline must present a concise summary of the student's argument, clearly relate that argument to the course reading material, and employ short quotes from the relevant readings to highlight the positions being discussed. The goal of these outlines is to enhance the breadth of the student's familiarity with the course topics.

Note: Essays and outlines submitted late will be penalized by 1/3 grade per day (e.g. A- instead of A if the paper is one day late).

## COURSE MATERIALS

You must acquire the following three books at “The Word” Bookstore on 469 Milton Street (payment in cash or cheque):

### MANDATORY TEXTS:

- (1) Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Revised Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Hereafter: *IPP*.
- (2) *Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), eds. Jonathan Wolff and Michael Rosen. Hereafter: *PT*.
- (3) Adam Swift, *Political Philosophy: A Beginners’ Guide for Students and Politicians: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006). Hereafter: *PP*.

### SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS:

- (a) Gerald Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
- (b) Steven Lukes, *The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat* (New York: Verso Press, 2009)

All other recommended texts will be made available on WebCT for download. They will also be made available, if the students wish, in the form of a printed course pack.

# SYLLABUS

## SEPTEMBER

1 INTRODUCTORY CLASS SESSION

### I. THE STATE OF NATURE

6 HOBBS AND LOCKE:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 1-23.
- (2) *PT*, §1-3.

8 ROUSSEAU AND THE ANARCHISTS:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 24-33.
- (2) *PT*, §4-10.

## II. JUSTIFYING THE STATE

### 13 SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY:

(1) *IPP*, pp. 34-48.

(2) *PT*, §18-23.

#### Supplementary Reading

(a) Jeremy Waldron, "Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism" in *Liberal Rights: Collected Papers 1981-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 35-63.

### 15 UTILITARIANISM AND FAIRNESS:

(1) *IPP*, pp. 48-61.

(2) *PT*, §24-27.

#### Supplementary Reading

(a) Steven Lukes, *The Curious Enlightenment of Professor Caritat* (New York: Verso Press, 2009), pp. 41-115.

### 20 CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE:

(1) John Simmons, "Civil Disobedience and the Duty to Obey the Law" in *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), eds. R.G. Frey and C.H. Wellman, pp. 50-62.

(2) *PT*, §30-33.

#### Supplementary Reading

(a) Kimberley Brownlee, "Conscientious Objection and Civil Disobedience" Forthcoming in *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Law*. Andrei Marmor (ed.)

## III. DEMOCRACY

### 22 PLATO'S CHALLENGE:

(1) *IPP*, pp. 62-77.

(2) *PT*, §34-35.

#### Supplementary Reading

(a) Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), Chs. 4 & 5.

27 ROUSSEAU AND THE GENERAL WILL:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 77-90.
- (2) *PT*, §36-39.

Supplementary Reading

- (a) Gopal Sreenivasan, "What is the General Will?" in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 109, No. 4 (Oct., 2000), pp. 545-581.

29 GENERAL ISSUES:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 90-103.
- (2) *PT*, §40-48.

Supplementary Reading

- (a) *PP*, Ch. 5, pp. 179-222.

## IV. FREEDOM

### OCTOBER

4 THE HARM PRINCIPLE:

- (1) *IPP*, pp. 104-128.
- (2) *PT*, §53-56

Supplementary Reading

- (a) David van Mill, "Freedom of Speech" in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (available online), §2-3.
- (b) Jeremy Waldron, "Mill and the Value of Moral Distress" in *Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1987, pp. 410-423.

6 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE LIBERTY:

- (1) *PP*, pp. 51-68, 77-89.
- (2) *IPP*, pp. 128-133.
- (3) *PT*, §49-52.

Supplementary Reading

- (a) Lukes 2009, pp. 175-249.

11 TOLERATION:

- (1) Catriona McKinnon, "Toleration: A Call to Arms" in *Toleration: A Critical Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 3-18.
- (2) *PT*, §57-60.

Supplementary Reading

(a) Karl Popper, "Toleration and Intellectual Responsibility" in *On Toleration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), eds. Susan Mendus & Dave Edwards, pp. 17-35.

13 The PUNISHMENT OF EVIL AND THE DEATH PENALTY:

(1) Louis P. Pojman, "A Defense of the Death Penalty" in *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), eds. A.I. Cohen & C.H. Wellman, pp. 107-124.

(2) Stephen Nathanson, "Why We Should Put the Death Penalty to Rest" in *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), eds. A.I. Cohen & C.H. Wellman, pp. 124-139.

(3) *PT*, §70-72.

Supplementary Reading

(a) Terry Eagleton, *On Evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), "Introduction."

## V. JUSTICE

18 PRIVATE PROPERTY:

(1) *IPP*, pp. 133-143.

(2) *PT*, §73-81.

Supplementary Reading

(a) Jeremy Waldron, "Property Rights and Welfare Redistribution" in *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), eds. R.G. Frey and C.H. Wellman, pp. 38-50.

20 THE FREE MARKET:

(1) *IPP*, pp. 143-152.

(2) *PP*, pp. 68-77.

(3) *PT*, §82-86.

Supplementary Reading

(b) Richard E. Miller, "Capitalism and Marxism" in, in *A Companion to Applied Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), eds. R.G. Frey and C.H. Wellman, pp. 62-75.

25 RAWLS AND NOZICK:

(1) *IPP*, pp. 152-176.

(2) *PT*, §87-97.

Supplementary Reading

(a) *PP*, Ch. 1, pp. 9-49.

27      EGALITARIANISM:

- (1) *PP*, Ch. 3, pp. 91-132.
- (2) *PT*, §118-123.

Supplementary Reading

- (a) Gerald Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

## VI. LIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS

### NOVEMBER

1      FEMINISM:

- (1) *IPP*, Ch. 6, pp. 177-199.
- (2) *PT*, §11-17.

Supplementary Reading

- (1) Jane Mansbridge and Susan Moller Okin, "Feminism" in, *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, eds. R.E. Goodin, P. Pettit, T. Pogge, pp. 332-360.
- (2) Susan Moller Okin, "Justice and Gender" in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1987, pp. 42-72.

3      COMMUNITARIANISM:

- (1) *PP*, Ch. 4, pp. 133-177.
- (2) *IPP*, pp. 129-131.
- (3) *PT*, §115-117.

Supplementary Reading

- (a) Michael Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self" in *Political Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1984, pp. 81-96.
- (b) Allen Buchanan, "Assessing the Communitarian Critique of Liberalism" in *Ethics*, Vol. 99, No. 4 (Jul., 1989), pp. 852-882.

## VII. CULTURE

8      MINORITY RIGHTS:

- (1) Joseph Raz, "Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective" in, *Ethics in the Public Domain: Essays in the Morality of Law and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 155-176.
- (2) *PT*, §104-105.

Supplementary Reading

- (a) Jeremy Waldron, "Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative" in *The Rights of Minority Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), edited by Will Kymlicka, pp. 93-123.
- (b) Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition" in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), ed. Amy Guttmann, pp. 25-75.

10 NATIONALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM:

- (1) Thomas Pogge, "Cosmopolitanism" in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, eds. R.E. Goodin, P. Pettit, T. Pogge, pp. 312-332.
- (2) Thomas Hurka, "The Justification of National Partiality" in *The Morality of Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), eds. R. McKim & J. McMahan, pp. 139-158.

Supplementary Reading

- (a) *PP*, pp. 168-174.
- (b) *PT*, §102-103, 107-108.

## VIII. RIGHTS

15 THEORIES OF RIGHTS:

- (1) Joel Feinberg, "The Nature and Value of Rights" in *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1970, pp. 243-260.
- (2) *PT*, §66-69.

Supplementary Reading

- (a) Hillel Steiner, "Moral Rights" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ed. D. Copp, pp. 459-480.

17 HUMAN RIGHTS:

- (1) James Nickel, "The Contemporary Idea of Human Rights" in *Making Sense of Human Rights: Second Edition* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), Ch. 1, pp. 7-21.
- (2) *PT*, §136-140.

Supplementary Reading

- (a) John Stuart Mill, "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" in *Foreign Policy Perspectives*, No. 8, 1859, pp. 2-6.
- (b) Michael Walzer, "Self-Determination and Self-Help" in *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 2006) Fourth Edition, pp. 86-91.



- (c) Michael Walzer, "The Case Against our Attack on Libya" in *The New Republic*, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011.
- (d) Michael Doyle, "Sovereignty and Humanitarian Military Intervention" in, *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, eds. R.E. Goodin, P. Pettit, T. Pogge, pp. 781-792.

## IX. META-ETHICS

### 22 REALISM, SCEPTICISM, AND RELATIVISM:

- (1) Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "Moral Realism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ed. D. Copp, pp. 39-63.
- (2) James Dreier, "Moral Relativism and Moral Nihilism" in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ed. D. Copp, pp. 240-265.

#### Supplementary Reading

- (a) Nicholas Sturgeon, "Moral Disagreement and Moral Relativism" in *Social Policy and Philosophy*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1994, pp. 80-115.
- (b) Susan Wolf, "Two Levels of Pluralism" in *Ethics*, Vol. 102, No. 4, July 1992, pp. 785-798.

### 24 MORAL ARGUMENT ACROSS CULTURES:

- (1) Yael Tamir, "Hands Off Clitoridectomy" in *The Boston Review*, Summer 1996.
- (2) Jeremy Waldron, "How to Argue for a Universal Claim" in *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1999, pp. 305-314.

#### Supplementary Reading

- (a) Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, 1993, pp. 22-49.
- (b) Thomas Franck, "Is Personal Freedom a Western Value?" *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 91, No. 4, 1997, pp. 593-627.

## X. HUMAN PROGRESS

### 29 MORAL PROGRESS:

- (1) *PT*, §127-135.

#### Supplementary Reading

- (a) Joshua Cohen, "The Arc of the Moral Universe" in *The Arc of the Moral Universe and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 15-75.
- (b) John Tasioulas, "Consequences of Ethical Relativism" in *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1998, pp. 186-191.
- (c) Peter Singer, "Is There Moral Progress?" online at *Project Syndicate*.  
<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/singer35/English>

DECEMBER

1 COURSE CONCLUSION