



Social and Political Philosophy (BA Honours)

Winter 2014/2015 (Semester Ia)

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Faculty of Philosophy

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 9-10 am., Philosophy Building, Room 1.21 (*please e-mail me in advance as I occasionally might be out of office due to other commitments. We can also arrange an appointment for a different time if required*)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social and political philosophy is concerned with asking philosophical questions about the different ways in which human beings live together. In particular, it focuses on the role that political institutions play in our societies. Political philosophers ask questions such as: What is the ultimate end of politics? How should we decide between different forms of government? Is there one single aim that all governments should pursue - such as justice or equality - or should governments be only concerned with protecting the freedom of everyone to live as they please? To what extent may society limit the freedom of individuals? Is it ever justified to resist the state?

In the course, we will focus on the different answers these questions have received throughout the history of philosophy and on how they inform contemporary debates about political issues.

COURSE FORMAT AND GENERAL RULES

This course is an introductory course for students with some general philosophy knowledge. It is designed as an intensive course. Approximately half of the course will have the format of a lecture in which concepts and theories are introduced. The other half will be a seminar focusing on how to apply such theories to contemporary political reality. The course thus presumes an interest in politics in general and in current affairs.

One of the core ideas which we will discuss in this course is that relations of mutual respect entail obligations on both sides of a social relationship. In this spirit, I accept the obligation to arrive on time and well-prepared to each session. I will do my utmost to design the course material and my contributions in a way which leads to all students' learning as much as possible. I will be approachable for all questions of an academic or administrative nature in person and (to a reasonable extent) via e-mail. I communicate expectations clearly and will evaluate you fairly. My goal is to prepare all students for finishing the course with an excellent result.

In return, I expect from you to regularly attend all sessions, to excuse yourself in person or via e-mail in case you cannot attend a session, to arrive on time, to read all the required material, to come prepared with relevant questions and objections to what I say and to participate in the discussion

with your fellow students. I also expect you to refrain from any kind of academic dishonesty and from any behavior which makes it for fellow students more difficult to learn or which makes them feel uncomfortable.

I am aware that students have different needs in order to be able to learn and face different challenges and that the general rules of this course might not be best designed to ensure everyone's success. If you think you may have reason to ask for a modification of the course rules for your specific case, please do not hesitate to talk to me in private.

EXAMINATION

Exams are taken in form of a final essay of no more than 2000 words, to be submitted on **November, 18, 2014**. If your plan of study requires it, I will ensure that you can start working on the essay in time to submit it in the last week of the lecture. The essay should critically evaluate one or more theories which we discussed in class in relation to current affairs. A list of essay questions of which you are to choose *one* will be distributed well in advance. The essay is expected to draw on a limited amount of primary and secondary literature. I will provide you with a list of recommended sources. You are, however, free to consult other scholarly articles and books related to your argument. There will be a guide outlining the evaluation criteria for the essay and advice on how to write it. This document will also be distributed via Nestor several weeks before the deadline.

I am willing to review a rough outline of your essay and give you advice on how to continue with writing it. This does not mean that I will read or comment on a finished essay. Please allow four to five days for my commenting on your outline. If you wish to use this opportunity, please ensure that there is enough time between receiving my comments and the deadline.

Please note that both explicit plagiarism (copying text from another author without attribution) and implicit plagiarism (appropriating ideas from another author without attribution, even if formulated in your own words) will be considered academic dishonesty and will be sanctioned according to the relevant university regulations.

Essays should be submitted via the Nestor Dropbox and will be scanned for plagiarism. If you foresee any problems with the essay deadline, please talk to me in advance. I will under almost no foreseeable circumstances retroactively extend the deadline.

GENERAL READINGS

I recommend the following three introductions into political philosophy. These are the best introductions and they cover different aspects. Thus, owning all of them is a valuable investment.

- John Christman, *Social and Political Philosophy. A Contemporary Introduction*, Routledge 2002. (Chapters 2,3 and 5 are especially relevant for our course)
- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*. 2nd ed., Oxford University Press 2002. (Chapters 2-6 and 9 cover topics from our course)
- John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, Harvard University Press 2007 (A good introduction to the thought of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill and Marx)

SYLLABUS

Session 1: What is Political Philosophy? What is Politics?

Recommended Reading:

- John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, pp. 1-11.
- Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed., University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp. 22-58, 175-212 (=§§4-6, 24-29).

Further Watching:

- Steven B. Smith, “Introduction to Political Philosophy” (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD319499FC7F5813F>), lecture 1.

Session 2: Happiness, Virtue and the Political: Plato and Aristotle

Required Reading:

- Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett, 1998, pp. 1-12 (book I, ch. 1-7); 79-91 (book IV, ch. 9-13)
- Martha Nussbaum, “Nature, Function, and Capability”, *WIDER Working Papers*, pp. 7-14; 20-36.

Recommended Reading:

- Plato, *Republic*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett, 2004, pp. 46-56, 238-269 (parts of book 2, and book 8).
- Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett, 1998, book III and book VII, ch. 1 and 2.
- Richard Arneson, “Perfectionism and Politics”, *Ethics* 111(1), 2000, 37-63.

Further Reading:

- Eric Brown, “Plato's Ethics and Politics in The Republic”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-ethics-politics/>.
- Fred Miller, “Aristotle's Political Philosophy”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics/>.
- Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, Clarendon Press, 1981
- Ryan K. Balot, *Greek Political Thought*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2006.
- Richard, Kraut, *Aristotle. Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, chapter 12.

Further Watching:

- Steven B. Smith, “Introduction to Political Philosophy” (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD319499FC7F5813F>), lectures 2-9.
- Michael Sandel, “Justice” (<http://www.justiceharvard.org/watch/>), lecture 10.

Session 3: The Social Contract and Political Authority: Hobbes and Rousseau

Required Reading:

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, chapters 13, 17, 18 and 21.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Social Contract”, in *Discourse on Political Economy and The Social Contract*, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 45-62 (=Book 1)

Recommended Reading:

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Social Contract”, in *Discourse on Political Economy and The Social Contract*, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 63-79.
- John Christman, *Social and Political Philosophy. A Contemporary Introduction*, pp. 25-41 and 48-59.
- John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, pp. 23-102 (on Hobbes) and 191-250 (on Rousseau).

Further Reading:

- Sharon A. Lloyd, “Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes-moral/>.
- Christopher Bertram, “Jean Jacques Rousseau”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rousseau/>.
- Steven Kuhn, “Prisoner's Dilemma”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/prisoner-dilemma/>.
- Richard Dagger/David Lefkowitz, “Political Obligation”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/political-obligation/>.
- Deborah Baumgold, *Hobbes' Political Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Christopher Bertram, *Routledge Guidebook to Rousseau and the Social Contract*, Routledge, 2004.
- Andrew Levine, *The General Will: Rousseau, Marx, Communism*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Further Watching:

- Steven B. Smith, “Introduction to Political Philosophy” (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD319499FC7F5813F>), lectures 12-14 (Hobbes) and 18-20 (Rousseau).

Session 4: Natural Rights and Property: Locke

Required Reading:

- John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Yale University Press, 2003, chaps. II (103-16), V (111-121), VII (133-141), VIII (141-143, 151-54) and IX (154-157).
- Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Blackwell, 1974, pp. 174-182.

Recommended Reading:

- John Christman, *Social and Political Philosophy. A Contemporary Introduction*, pp. 41-48
- John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, pp. 101-155.
- Alexander Tuckness, “Locke's Political Philosophy”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-political/>.
- Jeremy Waldron, “Property and Ownership”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/property/>.

Further Reading:

- James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and His Adversaries*, Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- John Dunn, *Locke: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

Further Watching:

- Steven B. Smith, “Introduction to Political Philosophy” (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD319499FC7F5813F>), lectures 15-17.
- Michael Sandel, “Justice” (<http://www.justiceharvard.org/watch/>), lecture 3 and 4.

Session 5: Utilitarianism and Freedom of Speech: Mill

Required Reading:

- Will Kymlicka: *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Chapter 2.

Recommended Reading:

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism and On Liberty*, ed. Mary Warnock, Blackwell, 2003, pp. 99-130 (ch 2 from *On Liberty*, concerning Freedom of Expression), pp. 216-235 (Utilitarianism, chapter on justice)
- David Brink, “Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill-moral-political/>.
- David van Mill, “Freedom of Speech”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/freedom-speech/>.
- John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, pp. 249-315.

Further Reading:

- John Skorupski, *John Stuart Mill*, Routledge, 1989.
- Joel Feinberg, *Offense to Others*, Oxford University Press, 1985.

Further Watching:

- Michael Sandel, “Justice” (<http://www.justiceharvard.org/watch/>), lecture 1 and 2.

Session 6: Liberal Social Justice: Rawls

Required Reading:

- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. Revised Edition; Belknap Press, 1999, pp. 10-19; 52-56; 102-105; 112-123; 130-139; 153-160 (§§3-4, 11, 20, 23, 24, 26, 29).

Recommended Reading:

- John Christman, *Social and Political Philosophy. A Contemporary Introduction*, ch. 3.
- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, ch. 3.
- Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 160-164.

Further Reading:

- Philip Pettit/Chandran Kuthakas, *John Rawls*. Stanford University Press, 1990-
- Norman Daniels (ed.), *Reading Rawls*, Basic Books, 1989.

Further Watching:

- Michael Sandel, “Justice” (<http://www.justiceharvard.org/watch/>), lecture 8.

Session 7: Political Liberalism vs. Communitarianism

Required Reading:

- Michael Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self", *Political Theory* 12(1), 1984, pp. 81-96.
- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 220-244

Recommended Reading:

- John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Columbia University Press, 1996, chapters II, IV, V and VI.

Further Reading:

- Amy Gutmann, "Communitarian Critics of Liberalism", *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14, 1985, pp. 308-322
- Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism," *Political Theory* 18(1), 1990, pp. 6-23
- Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate," in Nancy L. Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 159-182.
- Charles Larmore, "Political Liberalism," *Political Theory* 18(3), 1990, pp. 339 – 60.

Session 8: Marxism and Feminism

Required Reading:

- Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family*, Basic Books, 1989, chaps. 3 and 5.

Recommended:

- Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, available online at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/61/pg61.html>
- Karl Marx, *Value, Price and Profit*, available online at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/> (see esp. sections 6-9 and 14).
- Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, available online at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/>
- Noelle McAfee, "Feminist Political Philosophy", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-political/>
- John Christman, *Social and Political Philosophy. A Contemporary Introduction*, chaps. 6 and 7.
- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, chaps 5 and 9.

Further Reading:

- Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Stanford University Press, 1988.
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Cape, 1953.
- John Roemer, *Free to Lose*, Harvard University Press, 1988, chap. 2 and 5.
- G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, expanded edition, Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Allen W. Wood, *Karl Marx*, Routledge, 1981.
- Allen W. Wood, "Justice and Class Interests",

<http://logica.ugent.be/philosophica/fulltexts/33-2.pdf>

- Jonathan Wolff, *Why Read Marx Today?*, Oxford University Press, 2003

Session 9: Anarchism and Conclusion

Required Reading:

- Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*, University of California Press, 1998, pp. 3-58.

Further Reading:

- Christopher Wellman/A. John Simmons, *Is There a Duty to Obey the Law?*, Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- M.B.E. Smith, "Is There a Prima Facie Duty to Obey the Law?", *The Yale Law Journal*, 82(5), 1973, pp. 950-976.