

Political Philosophy
PHIL 3700 Section 1
TR 3-4:15
Main 326

Fall 2015

Instructor: Erica Holberg (erica.holberg@usu.edu)

Instructor's Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3 in Old Main 002K and by appointment

Course Description:

This course will consider the following questions: What makes political authority legitimate? What is the purpose of government? What does political philosophy aim to do? What counts as a *political* act, claim, practice, subject, institution and why? We will start by considering two broad aims in political philosophy: first, political philosophy as a description of the ideal political arrangement, and second, political philosophy as a guide for managing political power given the real weaknesses and vices in ourselves and our fellow citizens. We will then consider two political systems/ideals: liberalism and democracy. The aim is to better understand the values motivating these two systems/ideals and to think critically about how these systems and their corresponding values shape our own political concerns and possibilities.

Course Objectives:

1. *Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.* We will be reading crucial texts in the history of political philosophy. The goal is to understand the aims of the arguments presented, evaluate the arguments for their strengths and weaknesses, and to understand what assumptions underlie the argumentative steps taken.
2. *Develop skills in expressing oneself orally and in writing.* You cannot do well in this class if you do not participate in class discussion. Just as importantly, you will have four chances to get better at making a clear, persuasive, sophisticated argument in writing. Your grade is a direct result of your efforts and successes in communicating your thoughts clearly in class and in writing.
3. *Acquire an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers.* One guiding question for this course is how, or even if, political philosophy matters. The aim is to be able to make connections between what we are reading and talking about in the classroom with various political interests and values outside the classroom. Students are encouraged to bring in materials they feel are relevant to the themes of the class and explain the connection to their classmates. Students are also encouraged to come to class with questions, either about the previous class discussion or about the readings for that day.

Texts: (books available at the USU Bookstore)
Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Bondanella (Oxford)
Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings* (Cambridge)
Plato, *Republic*, trans. Reeve (Hackett)
Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, trans. Cress (Hackett)

*All other course readings will be available on the Canvas site.

Grading:

First Paper: 16%
Second Paper: 20%
Third Paper: 20%
Fourth Paper: 20%
Class Participation: 14.9%
Canvas Question and Answer: 3.9%
Homework: 5.2%

Class participation requires that you 1) ask questions, 2) contribute your own ideas and interpretations of the readings, and 3) follow up on the ideas of others. “Show and tell” and bringing questions to class are excellent ways to improve your participation grade.

There will be 13 weeks of Canvas Question and Answer, worth 3 points each. During these weeks, you must 1) post a question about the readings for that week, or about something that came up in class, or about a possible connection between the class content and some contemporary political issue by **3 p.m. Wednesday**. You must also 2) post an answer to a question raised by your classmates by **1 p.m. Thursday**.

There will be 13 homework assignments, worth 4 points each. The days homework are due are marked with a (HW).

The first three papers are to be 5 pages long, and the fourth paper should be 6-7 pages long. Paper topics will be distributed about a week before the draft is due. Four paper drafts and participation in the writings seminars are required. Papers are to be submitted on Canvas by **7 p.m.** I would also appreciate it if you bring one paper copy to class the next day. If you are sick and cannot attend class, you must submit a copy to me electronically using either Canvas or email, and then bring a paper copy to the next class. Students are responsible for making sure the electronic file submitted is readable by the instructor (a file I cannot open is a late paper).

Drafts are also to be distributed to other classmates by **7 p.m.** on the due date. Please be thoughtful of others and respect this deadline, so that everyone has a chance to print and read the drafts in time for the workshop. The easiest way to distribute your draft to all your classmates is by using Canvas to send an email to

your writing seminar group. Please print a copy of each person's drafts (including your own) and bring them to the writing seminar prepared to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each draft.

Plagiarism is forbidden. Plagiarism is a sign that the person has lost sight of one's role as a student and the ends of education. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask the instructor.

Schedule:

Tuesday, September 1st – Introduction

Idealism

Thursday, September 3rd – Plato, *Republic*, Book I (Q and A #1)

Tuesday, September 8th – Plato, *Republic*, Book II (HW #1)

Thursday, September 10th – Plato, *Republic*, Books III-IV (Q and A #2)

Tuesday, September 15th – Plato, *Republic*, Books V-VII (HW #2)

Thursday, September 17th – Plato, *Republic*, Books VIII-IX (Q and A #3)

Tuesday, September 22nd – Plato, *Republic*, Book X; Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Letter to Geneva, Preface, Introduction, and Part I (HW #3)

Thursday, September 24th – Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part II (Q and A #4)

Monday, September 28th – First paper drafts distributed to classmates by 7 p.m.

Tuesday, September 29th – Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book I and Book II (HW #4)

Thursday, October 1st – Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace"* (Q and A #5)

Realism

Tuesday, October 6th – Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 5-52 (HW #5)

Wednesday, October 7th – First papers due by 7 p.m.

Thursday, October 8th – Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 53-90 (Q and A #6)

Tuesday, October 13th – Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I. 1-7, 12-13, Book II. 1-5, and Book IV. 1-5 (HW #6)

Thursday, October 15th – Friday Schedule. No class.

Tuesday, October 20th – Weber, “Politics as a Vocation” * and “The Nature of Charismatic Domination”, Part I * (HW #7)

Thursday, October 22nd – Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, I-IV * (Q and A #7)

Monday, October 26th – Second paper drafts distributed to classmates by 7 p.m.

Tuesday, October 27th – Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, VII-IX* and *The Ego and the Id*, III, V * (HW #8)

Thursday, October 29th – Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, V * (Q and A #8)

Liberalism

Tuesday, November 3rd – Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 1 (HW #9)

Wednesday, November 4th – Second paper due by 7 p.m.

Thursday, November 5th – Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 2 (Q and A #9)

Tuesday, November 10th – Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters 3 and 4 (HW #10)

Thursday, November 12th – Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 5 (Q and A #10)

Monday, November 16th – Third paper drafts distributed to classmates by 7 p.m.

Tuesday, November 17th – Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty” * and “Realism in Politics” *

Thursday, November 19th – Brown, “Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism’s Remaking of State and Subject” * (Q and A #11)

Democracy

Tuesday, November 24th – Plato, *Apology* * (HW #11)

Wednesday, November 25th – Third paper due by 7 p.m.

Thursday, November 26th – No class. Thanksgiving Break.

Tuesday, December 1st – Plato, *Crito* * (HW #12)

Thursday, December 3rd – Hamilton and Madison, Federalist Papers 10 and 51*
(Q and A #12)

Monday, December 7th – Fourth paper drafts distributed to classmates by 7 p.m.

Tuesday, December 8th – MLK, Letter from Birmingham Jail; MLK, I Have a Dream
Speech; Lincoln, Second Inaugural; Lincoln, Cooper Union
Address; RFK, Day of Affirmation Speech* (HW #13)

Thursday, December 10th – Simpsons, “Mr. Lisa Goes to Washington”;
Nietzsche, The Figure of Socrates * (Q and A #13)

Tuesday, December 15th – Final paper due by 7 p.m.