

## Political Philosophy

PHIL 3700 Section 1

MW 2:30-3:45

HH 160

Fall 2017

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

Instructor's Office Hours: Fridays 2:30-3:30 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: 14.6%  
Canvas Question and Answer: 4.2%  
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 14 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 **5 p.m. Tuesday**. You must also 2) post an answer to a question raised by your classmates by **11 a.m. Wednesday**.

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:**

Monday, August 28<sup>th</sup> – Introduction

Wednesday, August 30<sup>th</sup> – Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (Q&A #1)

Monday, September 4<sup>th</sup> – Labor Day, No Class

### **Idealism**

Wednesday, September 6<sup>th</sup> – Plato, *Republic*, Books I-II (Q&A #2)

Monday, September 11<sup>th</sup> – Plato, *Republic*, Books III-IV (HW #1)

Wednesday, September 13<sup>th</sup> – Plato, *Republic*, Books V-VII (Q&A #3)

Monday, September 18<sup>th</sup> – Plato, *Republic*, Books VIII-IX (HW #2)

Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup> – Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Letter to Geneva, Preface, Introduction, and Part I (Q&A #4)

Monday, September 25<sup>th</sup> – Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part II (HW #3)

Tuesday, September 26<sup>th</sup> – First paper drafts distributed to classmates by 7 p.m.

Wednesday, September 27<sup>th</sup> – Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book I and Book II (Q&A#5)

### **Realism**

Monday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> – Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 5-52 (HW #4)

Tuesday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> – First papers due by 7 p.m.

Wednesday, October 4<sup>th</sup> – Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 53-90 (Q&A #6)

Monday, October 9<sup>th</sup> – Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I. 1-7, 12-13, Book II. 1-5, and Book IV. 1-5 (HW #5)

Wednesday, October 11<sup>th</sup> – Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*\* (Q&A #7)

Monday, October 16<sup>th</sup> – Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" \* and "The Nature of Charismatic Domination", Part I \* (HW #6)

Wednesday, October 18<sup>th</sup> – Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, I-IV \* (Q&A #8)

Monday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> – Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, VII-IX\* and *The Ego and the Id*, III, V \* (HW #7)

Tuesday, October 24<sup>th</sup> – Second paper drafts distributed to classmates by 7 p.m.

Wednesday, October 25<sup>th</sup> – Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, V \* (Q&A #9)

### **Liberalism**

Monday, October 30<sup>th</sup> – Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 1 (HW #8)

Tuesday, October 31<sup>st</sup> – Second paper due by 7 p.m.

Wednesday, November 1<sup>st</sup> – Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 2 (Q&A #10)

Monday, November 6<sup>th</sup> – Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters 3 and 4 (HW #9)

Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup> – Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 5 (Q&A #11)

Monday, November 13<sup>th</sup> – Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty” \* and “Realism in Politics” \* (HW #10)

Tuesday, November 14<sup>th</sup> – Third paper drafts distributed to classmates by 7 p.m.

Wednesday, November 15<sup>th</sup> – Brown, “Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism’s Remaking of State and Subject” \* (Q&A #12)

### **Democracy**

Monday, November 20<sup>th</sup> – Plato, *Apology* \* (HW #11)

Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup> – Third paper due by 7 p.m.

Wednesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> – No class. Thanksgiving Break.

Monday, November 27<sup>th</sup> – Plato, *Crito*\* (HW #12)

Wednesday, November 29<sup>th</sup> – Hamilton and Madison, Federalist Papers 10 and 51\* (Q&A#13)

Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup> – 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)

Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup> – Fourth paper drafts distributed to classmates by 7 p.m.

Wednesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> – Simpsons, “Mr. Lisa Goes to Washington”; Nietzsche, The Figure of Socrates \* (Q&A #14)

Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup> – Final paper due by 7 p.m.