

PHIL 508: Social and Political Theory

Fall 2021

Instructor: Tony Reeves

Email: areeves@binghamton.edu

Office: LT 1217

Office Hours: Wednesday noon – 1:00 PM (Zoom); Thursday 1:00 – 2:15 (LT 1217).

Also available by appointment.

Course Description

The course will consider some of the major topics, approaches, and thinkers in the social and political philosophy of the last half-century. The course aims to both familiarize students with some current theoretical terrain of the disciplines and to prepare students for advanced work in philosophy. The course is partially organized around various kinds of skepticism in political theory: general skepticism about political argument, skepticism about rights, skepticism about the legitimacy of a non-minimal state, skepticism about the legitimacy of appeals to the good in political justification, and skepticism about state authority. Hopefully, such a focus will make it clearer what we are looking for when we ask fundamental normative questions about rights, legitimacy, justice, authority, equality, toleration, and the like.

Objectives

Students will:

- Be familiar with central recent philosophical work in social and political philosophy
- Be able to explicate the basic concerns that have driven theorists to write on these topics
- Develop and be able to articulate cogent and defensible views on these topics
- Improve ability to write analytical papers
- Develop an ability to read and critically consider difficult texts
- Improve ability to reason through and intelligently talk about complex problems generally

Readings

As a graduate seminar, there will be a focus on in-class discussion rather than lecture. Careful and reflective reading of the texts prior to our meetings, then, is essential. Below are the required texts. Many can be found quite cheaply online.

Also, most are available electronically through the library – these are indicated with an asterisk below.

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books, 1974)
G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (Cambridge, 1995)*
John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Harvard, 2001)
Anna Stilz, *Liberal Loyalty* (Princeton, 2011)*
Philip Pettit, *On the People's Terms* (Cambridge, 2012)*

In addition to these texts, many of the readings will be available through Brightspace (marked “[ER]” on reading schedule).

Requirements

Grade Breakdown:

Short Paper	25%
Long Paper	50%
Participation	25%

Participation: Regular and informed participation on the part of everyone is essential. A large part of your grade will be based on your contributions in seminar. The grade will be based on the frequency and quality of your verbal contributions to the class. Such contributions include informed responses to my questions, participation in classroom discussions, responding to your peers, and raising relevant and cogent questions. Familiarity with the readings is, naturally, crucial.

Short Paper: The short paper is a two-stage process. I will assign a paper topic. Stage One is writing the best 5 to 7 page first draft you are able – you will have two weeks. I will then provide you with feedback on your draft. Stage Two is revising to produce the best final draft you are able.

Long Paper: The long paper is a similar two-stage process, except you will have to identify your own topic. You'll submit the initial draft for comments, and then revise your draft in light of my comments. You're certainly welcome/encouraged to discuss potential topics with me in advance.

Course Policies

Attendance: Attendance in class is mandatory. Each unexcused absence beyond one will result in a 1/3 letter grade reduction in the final grade.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will be dealt with harshly in accordance with SPEL policies. At minimum, the student would fail the course. See the SPEL Handbook for a description of official policy.

Papers Drafts: Drafts are to be submitted electronically, by email. When I receive a paper draft, I will confirm with an email.

COVID safety requirements

Binghamton University follows the recommendations of public health experts to protect the health of students, faculty, staff, and the community at large. Safeguarding each of us depends on each of us strictly following requirements as they are instituted and for as long as they remain in force. Health and safety standards will be enforced in this course. Non-compliance with safety requirements constitutes a public health risk and a disruption of the learning experience. The consequences in this course for non-compliance are supported by the University.

Face coverings (masks) and distancing

Current rules require everyone to wear a face covering that completely covers both the nose and mouth while indoors. A face shield is not an acceptable substitute. Removing your face covering in the classroom is not permitted, and thus none of us may eat or drink in the classroom. If you need to remove your face covering, please leave class (and leave the building) to do so.

University policy requires that anyone who does not comply with the face covering requirement be asked to leave the room immediately. Deliberate refusal to comply will result in the class meeting being cancelled, and to my informing the dean's office, which would work with the Student Records office to issue a failing grade for the course regardless of when in the semester the incident occurs. The dean's office would also inform the Office of Student Conduct. If a student's refusal to comply is a second offense, the Office of Student Conduct may recommend dismissal from the University.

Students whose vaccination status is unknown or who are not fully vaccinated are required to "maintain six feet of social distancing... at all times the student is indoors on campus" whenever such distancing is possible. That means that if you are not fully vaccinated (or have not submitted proof of vaccination), and if there is space in the classroom to do so, you must stay six feet away from other people. I am vaccinated.

Missing class due to symptoms / quarantine etc.

Students who experience any symptoms that could be symptoms of COVID-19 should *not* come to class. According to the CDC, these symptoms include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough

- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Students who have any of these symptoms should contact the Decker Student Health Services Center (DSHSC) during the first day they are ill, even if symptoms are mild. This applies regardless of vaccination status. Symptomatic students can be tested on campus, free of charge, at the DSHSC. They should isolate until tested. Students who have been told by the Health Department that they have been exposed to COVID-19 (even if they do not have symptoms) should also be tested at DSHSC. You may not return to class unless and until you have a negative test result.

Class Schedule

The following plan is subject to revision – I will let you know of any changes as we go. Listed on the left are the dates of the meetings, on the right are the readings that will be discussed on those dates. Items marked [ER] are available on Brightspace.

Date	Reading
Aug 24	Methodology in Normative Philosophy <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John Rawls, “Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics” <i>Philosophical Review</i> 60, 2 (1951), 177-197 [ER] 2. Charles Taylor, “What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty?” in <i>Philosophy and the Human Sciences</i>, 175-194 [ER]
Aug 31	Rights <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HLA Hart, “Are There Any Natural Rights?” <i>The Philosophical Review</i>, 64, 2 (1955), 175-191 [ER] 2. Joel Feinberg, “The Nature and Value of Rights,” <i>The Journal of Value Inquiry</i>, 4 (1970) 243-251 [ER] 3. Ronald Dworkin, “Is There a Right to Pornography?” <i>Oxford Journal of Legal Studies</i> 1, 2 (1981), 177-212 [ER] 4. Suggested: Reeves, “Ronald Dworkin’s Theory of Rights” <i>Encyclopedia of the Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy</i> (2017) [ER]
Sep 7	No class, Rosh Hashanah
Sep 14	Libertarianism <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Robert Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i>, 3-53, 88-119, 149-164, 167-182

Sep 21	Analytical Marxism; Property <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. G.A. Cohen, <i>Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality</i>, 1-91 2. Leif Wenar, "Original Acquisition of Private Property", <i>Mind</i> (1998) [ER] <i>Short Paper Assigned</i>
Sep 28	Rawls I <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John Rawls, <i>Justice as Fairness</i>, 1-134
Oct 5	Rawls II <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rawls, <i>Justice as Fairness</i>, 135-179 2. Charles Mills, "Race in Rawls/Rawls on Race" in <i>Black Rights/White Wrongs</i> (2017) [ER] 3. Erin Kelly, "The Historical Injustice Problem for Political Liberalism" <i>Ethics</i> (2017) [ER] <i>Short Paper Due</i>
Oct 12	No class, Thursday classes meet
Oct 19	Public Reason/Toleration <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jeremy Waldron, "Locke, Toleration and the Rationality of Persecution" in <i>Justifying Toleration: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives</i>, ed. Susan Mendus (1988) [ER] 2. Rawls, <i>Justice as Fairness</i>, 180-202 3. David Enoch, "Against Public Reason", <i>Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy</i> (2015) [ER] 4. Kyla Ebels-Duggan, "The Beginning of Community: Politics in the Face of Disagreement" <i>Philosophical Quarterly</i> (2010) <i>Short Paper Returned</i>
Oct 26	The Political and the Good: Perfectionism <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joseph Raz, "Autonomy, Toleration, and the Harm Principle" (1988) [ER] 2. Martha Nussbaum, "Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defense of Aristotelian Essentialism" <i>Political Theory</i> 20 (1992), 202-246 [ER] 3. Nussbaum, "Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism" <i>Philosophy & Public Affairs</i> (2011) [ER]
Nov 2	Equality I <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cohen, <i>Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality</i>, 144-164 2. Dworkin, "Equality of Resources" in <i>Sovereign Virtue</i> (2000) [ER] 3. <u>Suggested</u>: Reeves, "Ronald Dworkin's Theory of Equality" [ER] <i>Short Paper Revision Due</i>
Nov 9	Equality II <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elizabeth Anderson, "What's the Point of Equality?" <i>Ethics</i> (1999) [ER] 2. Philip Pettit, <i>On the People's Terms</i>, 1-129
Nov 16	Authority & Anarchism I <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reeves, "Practical Reason and Legality" <i>Law and Philosophy</i> (2015), need read only pgs. 257-268. 2. Robert Paul Wolff, selections from <i>In Defense of Anarchism</i> [ER] 3. Joseph Raz, "Authority and Justification" <i>Philosophy & Public Affairs</i> (1985) [ER] 4. A. John Simmons, selection from <i>The Duty to Obey and Our Natural Moral Duties</i> (2005) [ER] 5. Candice Delmas, "Political Resistance: A Matter of Fairness" <i>Law and Philosophy</i> (2014) [ER]
Nov 23	Authority & Anarchism II

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anna Stilz, <i>Liberal Loyalty</i>, 3-110 <p><i>Long Paper Due</i></p>
Nov 30	<p>Democracy & Legitimacy I</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stilz, <i>Liberal Loyalty</i>, 113-212 2. Thomas Christiano, selection from <i>The Rule of the Many</i> (1996) [ER]
Dec 7	<p>Democracy & Legitimacy II</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lea Ypi, “What’s Wrong with Colonialism” <i>Philosophy & Public Affairs</i> (2013) 2. Laura Valentini, “On the Distinctive Procedural Wrong of Colonialism” <i>Philosophy & Public Affairs</i> (2015) <p><i>Long Paper Returned</i></p>

Final Paper Due December 17, by noon