

# SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PHI 2400-002

VILLANOVA AT GRATERFORD

SPRING 2014

INSTRUCTOR: GABRIEL ROCKHILL

**Time:** W 1:30 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

## OVERVIEW

This course explores and philosophically reflects upon the profound changes that have marked the modern sociopolitical world. It will be particularly concerned with the social revolutions that introduced modern 'democracy' and the various philosophic accounts of their ultimate meaning (ranging from Liberalism to Marxism and Anarchism). This historical background will then be used to analyze the contemporary historical conjuncture and current debates in social and political philosophy. We will discuss, for instance, the apparent re-emergence of revolutionary politics, the relationship between violence and social change, the status of the law and social norms, the persistence of imperialism, the military-industrial and prison-industrial complexes, the role of race and gender in sociopolitical struggles, as well as the possibility of class-based social transformations.

## REQUIRED MATERIAL

- Locke, John. *The Second Treatise of Government*. New York; London: Macmillan; Collier Macmillan, 1952.
- Marx, Karl, Friedrich Engels, and Robert C Tucker. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: Norton, 1978.
- Bakunin, Mikhail Aleksandrovich, Marshall Shatz, and Paul Avrich Collection (Library of Congress). *Statism and Anarchy*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Kafka, Franz. *The trial*. Translated by Breon Mitchell. [S.l.]; London: Schocken; Kuperard, 1999.
- Davis, Angela Y, and Joy James. *The Angela Y. Davis Reader*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998.

## REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation – 15%.**
2. **Response Paper – 15%.**
3. **In-Class Exam – 25%.**
4. **Debate – 20%.**
5. **Final Essay Exam – 25%.**

## POLICY ON GRADE CHANGES, LATE WORK AND ABSENCES

- I will not change grades based on oral negotiation. If you feel that I have overlooked something in my grading policy, please submit a detailed written explanation of what has been overlooked along with the graded copy of your work.
- No late work will be accepted unless there are significant extenuating

circumstances.

#### **POLICY ON PLAGIARISM AND RESEARCH RESOURCES**

Any form of plagiarism is unacceptable. This includes, but is not limited to, referencing or paraphrasing someone else's ideas or work without proper citation as well as handing in someone else's work as your own. Any assignment that is at all plagiarized will automatically receive an F and, depending on the circumstances, may constitute grounds for failing the course.

**PROGRAM** (subject to change)

#### **INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

§1. **Politics of Consent in the Modern Age: Liberalism – Marxism – Anarchism**

John Locke. *The Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters I-VII.

- *First in-class response paper (1 page): Why have you enrolled in this course?*

#### **PART 1: CONTRACTUAL POLITICAL CULTURE AND LIBERALISM**

§2. **Politics as Contract**

John Locke. *The Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters VIII-X.

§3. **Right to Resistance**

John Locke. *The Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters XVI-XIX.

- *Response paper due (1-2 pages): Explain how John Locke understands the "right to resistance"*

#### **PART 2: REVOLUTIONARY POLITICAL CULTURE: MARXISM AND ANARCHISM**

§4. **Estranged Labor and Communism**

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, selection from "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," "Society and Economy in History" and "Theses on Feuerbach" (p. 66-93, 136-145)

§5. **Capitalism and the Production of Surplus-Value**

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, selection from "Capital, Volume One" and "Capital, Volume Three" (p. 294-361, 439-442)

§6. **Revolution**

*The Marx-Engels Reader*, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," "The Possibility of Non-Violent Revolution," "After the Revolution: Marx Debates Bakunin" and "Versus the Anarchists" (p. 469-500, 522-524, 542-548, 728-729)

§7. **Marxism and the Failure of Revolution**

Michael Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, Sections V-VI (p. 129-168)

§8. **The Problems of State Dictatorship**

Michael Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, Section VII (p. 168-197)

§9. **The Anarchist Revolutionary Program**

Michael Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, Sections V-VI (p. 198-220)

- *In-class exam on Marxism and Anarchism*

#### **PART 3: WRITING RESISTANCE AND THE LAW**

§10. **Bureaucracy**

Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (first half of the book: p. 5-79)

§11. **Before the Law**

Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (second half of the book: p. 80-165)

- *Debate 1: The Status of the Law*

*Position defended by Group 1 (law as transcendent, singular, absolute): Kafka presents his reader with a conception of the law as Absolute and all-encompassing, like a transcendent Law of God that governs the entire world from a position above and beyond it.*

*Position defended by Group 2 (law as immanent, multiple, contingent): Kafka presents his reader with a depiction of the law in which there is never a final and Absolute Law. Instead, there is an endless series of different laws, anchored in the concrete world of the here-and-now, which form a never-ending labyrinth with no absolute foundation or final resting point.*

#### **PART 4: CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION**

**§12.**

##### **Incarceration: Repression and Resistance**

*The Angela Y. Davis Reader, Chapters 1-2, 4*

- **Debate 2: Justice in the Case of Unjust Laws**

*Position defended by Group 1: If a law is judged to be unjust, it may be justifiable to break the law.*

*Position defended by Group 2: It is not acceptable that people break laws if they perceive them to be unjust because they will thereby be led to justify any of their criminal activities by saying that they were contesting unjust laws.*

**§13.**

##### **Racism and Criminalization**

*The Angela Y. Davis Reader, Chapters 5-6, 8*

- **Debate 3: Race and Crime**

*Position defended by Group 1: Race has little or nothing to do with crime, and it should not play a significant role in the identification of criminals.*

*Position defended by Group 2: There are important parallels between race and crime, and racial issues should therefore play a role in the assessment of criminal activity.*

**§14.**

##### **Race, Gender, Class and Cultural Transformation**

*The Angela Y. Davis Reader, Chapters 9, 11, 15*

- **Debate 4: Cultural Politics**

*Position defended by Group 1 (the “separatists”): Race, gender and class are issues that are separate, and they should be kept apart in political debates and struggles.*

*Position defended by Group 2 (the “intersectionalists”): Race, gender and class intersect and intertwine to such an extent that it is necessary to analyze them in conjunction with one another.*

- **Final Essay Exam**