

# SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PHI 2400-002

SPRING 2015

INSTRUCTOR: GABRIEL ROCKHILL

**Time:** M/W 1:30 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.

**Location:** Tolentine Hall 310C

**Office Hours:** M 11-12, W 3-4 or by appointment (St. Augustine Center, office 171)

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## OVERVIEW

This course explores the historical evolution of “political cultures,” understood as the practical modes of intelligibility that dictate the very nature of politics by determining who qualifies as a political subject, what is visible as a political action, and how the spatio-temporal framework of politics is structured.

The first section of the course is dedicated to analyzing the historical emergence and evolution of three major political configurations that have marked the history of the Euro-American world: cosmological political culture, ecclesiastical political culture, and contractual political culture. This macroscopic overview of the history of political cultures will allow us to highlight the specificity of the contractual political culture that emerged during the Enlightenment. We will focus most notably on the links between a series of unique characteristics of modern politics: the development of the bourgeois public sphere, the appearance of modern democracy and social contract theory, the “birth” of public opinion, the formation of the nation-state, the transformation of the notion of revolution, the gradual displacement of the limits of political visibility (which opened up to workers, women, foreigners, and other so-called “minorities”), and the emergence of a battery of new concepts for thinking politics, including the modern concepts of race, culture, civilization, ideology, popular sovereignty, and terrorism.

The second section of the class will adopt a microscopic perspective by concentrating on the specificity of our own contemporary socio-political ethos and how it may or may not distinguish itself from modern contractual political culture. We will examine most notably changes in the *what* (redistributive justice versus cultural justice), the *when* (revolutionary versus post-revolutionary politics), and the *where* (the nation-state versus globalization) of politics. This will allow us to investigate some of the underlying themes in contemporary debates regarding political liberalism, pragmatism, communitarianism, multiculturalism, radical social transformation, minority rights, gender and racial equality, terrorism, environmentalism, freedom of information, and globalization.

Students should come away from this course with a general understanding of the history of social and political philosophy as well as with a solid grasp of contemporary debates in this area. They will be provided with philosophical tools that will allow them to critically assess the current socio-political conjuncture.

## REQUIRED MATERIAL

1. John Locke. *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
2. John Grafton, Ed. *The Declaration of Independence and Other Great Documents of American History 1775-1865*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000.
3. Mary Wollstonecraft. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Hints*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
4. *Optional*: Vaughn, Lewis. *Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophy Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
5. Essays and articles will be made available to you electronically and placed on reserve in the library. **It is required that you print them so that you can bring them to every class.** It is highly recommended that you collect them all together in a binder so that you have all of the course readings in one place.
6. It is highly recommended that the students keep abreast of current events through the course of the semester by consulting and comparing various media sources (conservative and progressive, American and foreign, etc.). In addition to well-known sources of news (NY Times, Washington Post, major network news, BBC, etc.), it is recommended that you look at alternative sources like [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org), [www.english.aljazeera.net](http://www.english.aljazeera.net), [www.truthdig.com](http://www.truthdig.com), [www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org) and [www.informationclearinghouse.info](http://www.informationclearinghouse.info).

## REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation – 15%.** The class will be conducted as a seminar so it will be very important for you to come to class having engaged with the required material. This means taking notes on the readings, preparing informed questions and comments, and re-reading the material after class discussion. A cursory, passive overview of the material will prove insufficient. In addition, you should make sure that you organize your time wisely since some sessions will require more out-of-class work than others.
2. **Collective Action Campaign 20%.** You will be asked to participate in a semester-long, self-defined action campaign that will require working in groups. The parameters of the campaign will be described early in the semester. You will be asked to keep a personal notebook with weekly entries in which you document your thoughts on the process and discuss its development.
3. **Mid-Term Paper – 20%.** You will be expected to write a 4-page double-spaced mid-term paper that critically responds to and engages with one of the readings in the first half of the semester. You will need to carefully review the material you choose and consult other relevant sources. The aim of this exercise is to have you succinctly present a core theme or issue and carefully work through its implications via rigorous philosophical argumentation and precise textual analysis. You can choose any of the required material from the first half of the semester.
4. **Debate – 20%.** You will be expected to participate in the debates at the end of the semester. Guidelines for the debates will be provided.
5. **Final Exam – 25%.** A **comprehensive** final oral exam will be scheduled at the end of the semester. I will provide you with guidelines and study hints in advance of the exam. The best way to ensure a solid performance on your final exam is to take detailed notes on the lectures and readings. With the exception of students with disabilities that require alternative test-taking arrangements or other university

approved exceptions, all tests must be taken in class at the day and time listed on the syllabus. No other make-up tests will be administered.

#### **POLICY ON E-MAILS AND COMPUTER USE**

1. I will try to respond to all e-mails in a reasonable time frame. As a general rule of thumb, this means that you will get a response within 24 to 48 hours. If you send an email over the weekend or late at night, do not expect to receive a response back immediately, even if you deem it to be an emergency.
2. I will **not grant extensions via e-mail** except for in very extreme cases.
3. In general, I will not provide my lecture notes or other material that you could have obtained in class. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain this material.
4. I will not provide information already available in the syllabus via e-mail.
5. Please do not take offense to laconic e-mails since I find it preferable to respond to as many e-mails as possible within the shortest amount of time.
6. **No computers, tablets, cell phones or other electronic devices** will be allowed in the classroom unless you obtain explicit consent from the instructor.

#### **POLICY ON GRADE CHANGES, LATE WORK AND ABSENCES**

1. 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.
2. **No late work will be accepted.**

#### **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 without proper citation as well as handing in someone else's work as your own. This also includes using any part of an Internet resource without proper citation. Any assignment that is at all plagiarized will automatically receive an F and, depending on the circumstances, may constitute grounds for failing the course. Moreover, every incident will be reported to the university and could constitute grounds for expulsion. For a good list of resources on what counts as plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarizing see <http://directory.google.com/Top/Reference/Education/Educators/Plagiarism/Prevention>

You should be aware of the fact that not all of the information on the internet is equally accurate. This is why I strongly encourage library research—with includes electronic databases—over the use of standard research engines. Of course, you should also be wary of the quality of published sources and try to get a feel for what is reliable (based on the author's name, the publisher, journals' reputations, etc.). If you have any questions regarding the quality of resources, please contact me.

**PROGRAM** (subject to change)

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

- |      |                                                                                              |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1/12 | <b>Introduction to the History of Political Cultures</b>                                     |
| 1/14 | <b>On the Nature of Political Philosophy</b><br>Leo Strauss. "What Is Political Philosophy." |
| 1/19 | <i>No Class: MLK Day</i>                                                                     |

## SECTION I: HISTORY OF POLITICAL CULTURES

### PART 1: COSMOLOGICAL POLITICAL CULTURE

- 1/21 **Politics in the Abstract: Plato and the Greek World**  
Plato. *The Republic* (Book III).
- 1/26 **The Divorce between *Poēsis* and *Politeia***  
Plato. *The Republic* (Book X).
- 1/28 **The Nature of the *Polis* and the Status of Slavery**  
Aristotle. *Politics* (Book I).

### PART 2: ECCLESIASTICAL POLITICAL CULTURE

- 2/2 ***Civitas***  
Augustine. *The City of God* (selection of Book VIII on Plato and Book XI).
- 2/4 *Research workshop with Nikolaus Fogle from Falvey Library (please bring your personal computer or tablet)*  
**New Worlds: Barbarians and Pagans**  
Anthony Pagden. “The Image of the Barbarian” in *The Fall of Natural Man*.

### PART 3: CONTRACTUAL POLITICAL CULTURE

- 2/9 **Politics as Contract**  
John Locke. *The Second Treatise of Government* (Chapters I-VII).
- 2/11 **Politics as Contract**  
John Locke. *The Second Treatise of Government* (Chapters VIII-X).
- 2/16 **Commonwealth, *Civitas*, *Polis***  
John Locke. *The Second Treatise of Government* (Chapters XVI-XIX).
- 2/18 **The American “Founding Fathers”**  
“The Declaration of Independence” and “The Constitution of the United States.”  
*The Federalist Papers* nos. 9 and 10.
- 2/23 **MID-TERM PAPER DUE**  
**Field Trip to the African American Museum in Philadelphia**  
**The Meaning of Equality**  
Mary Wollstonecraft. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Hints* (Introductory Material and Chapter 1, or p. 65-86).
- 2/25 **The Meaning of Equality**  
Mary Wollstonecraft. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Hints* (Chapter 2, or p. 87-108).

*Semester Recess (3/2-3/6)*

- 3/9 **The Meaning of Equality**  
Mary Wollstonecraft. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Hints* (Chapter 3, or p. 109-125).

- 3/11 **The Meaning of Equality**  
Mary Wollstonecraft. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Hints* (Chapter 4, or p. 126-155).
- 3/16 **The Time of Revolution**  
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. “Manifesto of the Communist Party.”  
Peter Kropotkin, “The Spirit of Revolt”

## SECTION II: CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ETHOS

### PART 1: THE *WHAT* OF POLITICS

- 3/18 **Liberalism**  
John Rawls. *A Theory of Justice* (selection).
- 3/23 **Communitarianism and Multiculturalism**  
Charles Taylor. *Multiculturalism* (selection).
- 3/25 **Postcolonialism**  
Frantz Fanon, “Introduction” in *Black Skin, White Masks*
- 3/30 **Racism and Neo-Racism**  
Etienne Balibar, “Is There a Neo-Racism?” in *Race, Nation, Class*.
- 4/1 **Environmental Politics**  
Murray Bookchin. “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought.”
- 4/8 **Queer Theory**  
Judith Butler, “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” in *Gender Trouble*.
- 4/13 **Terrorism and the Politics of Fear**  
Adam Curtis, *The Power of Nightmares* (a film in 3 parts).
- 4/15 **Debate 1: Race, Gender, Class**  
Angela Davis. “Class and Race in the Early Women’s Rights Campaign.”

#### *Optional Material to Be Used in the Debate:*

Nancy Fraser. “From Redistribution to Recognition?” in *Justice Interruptus*.

Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*.

Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*.

Gabriel Rockhill and Gomez-Muller (Eds.), *Politics of Culture and the Spirit of Critique: Dialogues*.

Axel Honneth, *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*.

Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*.

Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism*.

Cornel West, *Race Matters*.

#### **Debate 1: Cultural Politics**

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

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

4/20

**PART 2: THE *WHEN* OF POLITICS**

**Debate 2: Are We Living in a Post-Revolutionary Era?**

Perry Anderson, "On the Concatenation in the Arab World."

*Optional Material to Be Used in Debates:*

David Graeber, *Revolutions in Reverse*.

Alain Badiou. *The Rebirth of History*.

David Harvey, *Rebel Cities*.

Noam Chomsky, *Occupy*.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*.

Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History*.

Seyla Benhabib, "The Power and Paradox of Revolutions"  
(<http://www.resetdoc.org/story/00000021780>).

Jürgen Habermas, "The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State and the Exhaustion of Utopian Energies."

Daniel Singer, *Whose Millennium?*

Seyla Benhabib, "Public Sphere Forum" and "The Power and Paradox of Revolutions":

<http://www.resetdoc.org/story/00000021780>

Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Fantastic Success of Occupy Wall Street": <http://www.iwallerstein.com/fantastic-success-occupy-wall-street/>

***Debate 2: Post-Revolutionary Era***

*Position Defended by Group 1: Grand social revolutions are a thing of the past, and we are currently living in a post-revolutionary era.*

*Position Defended by Group 2: Revolutions are still possible within our historical era, and we are therefore not living in a post-revolutionary age.*

**PART 3: THE *WHERE* OF POLITICS**

4/22

**Debate 3: Globalization**

David Held and Anthony McGrew. "The Great Globalization Debate: An Introduction" in *The Global Transformations Reader*.

*Optional Material to Be Used in Debates:*

Immanuel Wallerstein, "After Developmentalism and Globalization, What?," *Social Forces*, vol. 83, no. 3, March 2005, p. 1263-1278.

Pierre Bourdieu. "The Myth of 'Globalization' and the European Social State."

Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents*.

Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, "NewLiberalSpeak: Notes on the New Planetary Vulgate."

David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism*.

Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice*.

***Debate 3: Globalization***

*Position Defended by Group 1: The phenomenon known as globalization has generally been a positive force in the world.*

*Position Defended by Group 2: The phenomenon known as globalization—whose very existence is debatable—has generally been a negative force in the world.*

**4/27**

*Final Discussion and Review*

**4/29**

*Final Exam*

**5/6 (2:30-5)**

*Final Exam*