

**PHIL 4414: Political Philosophy
Stoner/Fall 2010**

M/W/F 1:25–2:15, Heller Hall 731

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Office hour: Friday, 10:00-11:00, and by appointment.

Course Description

This course surveys important papers in post-World-War-II political philosophy. We will use these papers to help us think through a series of long-contested concepts: authority, democracy, justice, rights, liberty, and equality.

Required texts

Goodin and Pettit, eds, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, 2nd edition.

Course requirements

Final Exam:	150 pts.
Participation:	150 pts.
Short Paper 1:	150 pts.
Short Paper 2:	150 pts.
Semester paper:	400 pts.

Final exam. The final is an in-class written exam. I'll hand out review questions ahead of the exams, and the test questions will be drawn from the review sheet.

Participation. Small-group discussions are the centerpiece of the course. For these discussions to succeed, your attendance alone is insufficient. You must come prepared and contribute positively.

Short papers. At our second meeting, you will sign up for two weeks in which you will turn in a 3-page paper. These short papers must be written on one of the assigned readings for your week, and must be turned in on the day your reading of choice is assigned. Short papers should identify and explore some interesting and important aspect of the reading. The summarize-&-critique format will be the best format in most cases.

Semester paper. The semester paper is your opportunity to grapple with a reading in some depth. Feel free to draw on work from one of your short papers.

Calendar of readings and important dates

Prologue:

- 09/10: Niven, "Cloak of Anarchy" (handout)
Sartre, excerpt from *A Critique of Dialectical Reason* (handout)

The State

- 09/13: Gauthier, "The Social Contract as Ideology"
09/20: Pateman, "The Fraternal Social Contract"
Nordberg, "Afghan Boys Are Prized, So Girls Live the Part" (online)

Democracy

- 09/27: Sunstein, "Preferences and Politics"
Recommended: Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy"

Distributive Justice

- 10/04: Rawls, "Justice as Fairness"
10/11: Nozick, "Distributive Justice"

Rights

- 10/18: Hart, "Are There Any Natural Rights?"
Shue, "Basic Rights"
10/25: Dworkin, "Taking Rights Seriously"
11/01: Okin, "Mistresses of Their Own Destiny: Group Rights, Gender and Realistic Rights of Exit"

Liberty

- 11/08: Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty"
11/15: Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?"
Skinner, "A Third Concept of Liberty"
11/22: Cohen, "Are Freedom and Equality Compatible?"
11/24: Class canceled.
11/26: Thanksgiving Holiday

Equality

11/29: Williams, “The Idea of Equality”
Sen, “Equality of What?”

12/06: Parfit, “Equality or Priority?”
Vonnegut, “Harrison Bergeron” (online)
Final exam review sheet handed out

12/13: Final papers due

Final Exam

12/20: Final exam at 10:30

Course Policies

Late papers. Short papers must be turned in on the day of their associated reading. (For example, if you write on Dworkin's “Taking Rights Seriously,” you must turn in your paper on October 27th.) If you are unable to turn in your short paper on the appropriate day, I will allow you to sign up for a make-up day later in the semester. However, the maximum points available on the make-up will be 100 instead of 150. This is a severe penalty, and this option should be used only in the direst circumstances.

I will accept late semester papers at a penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade per day late. (For example, a C+ paper turned in on Friday when it was due Wednesday will be scored a C-.)

Attendance. I don't take attendance. If you choose not to attend, you'll miss important content. I'm not interested in re-capping for you the days you missed. Please don't ask. If you make a habit of skipping class—particularly on small-group discussion days—your participation grade will suffer.

Small group discussions. Small-group discussions are the core of this course. Disagreement is an inevitable and desirable consequence of any serious philosophical discussion. Disagreement can be fruitful, it can be fun, and it can also be frustrating. I expect you to be—always and without fail—respectful, thoughtful, and kind in discussion, even in the face of frustrating disagreements. This isn't hard to do. If at any point you feel the temptation to sneer, or get angry or hurt, or raise your voice, take a moment to calm down. Then offer, as clearly and generously as you can, the *reasons* you disagree with the trend of the discussion.

Writing support. Most of your course grade is based on your writing. Don't hesitate to seek writing help from me, or any of UMN's writing support programs.

- Student Writing Support: 306b Lind Hall (and other locations) (612.625.1893)

<http://writing.umn.edu>. This is a service offering face-to-face tutoring for all University of Minnesota students by appointment in Lind Hall and walk-in at satellites around campus. Two ESL specialists and one IT specialist are on staff. There is also online writing help.

- The Student Writing Guide: A guidebook providing student writers with detailed, step-by-step guidance through the writing process and lists numerous writerly resources. Available on the web in pdf at: <http://writing.umn.edu/docs/sws/swgpdf.pdf> or at the Center for Writing, 207a Lind Hall, (612.626.7579), writing@umn.edu.
- Non-native speakers in need of assistance or guidance with writing concerns can contact Sheryl Holt, the Coordinator for Non-Native Speakers (holtx001@tc.umn.edu). 337 Nolte Center (612.624.4524).

Scholastic Dishonesty. According to the Board of Regents, "Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; or altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying of data, research procedures, or data analysis."

The upshot, in the context of this course: don't plagiarize. Don't copy another author's words, or paraphrase another author's ideas without citing your sources. Citations should be thorough enough to allow your readers to locate the passage you are quoting or paraphrasing. There's no shame in understanding, appreciating, and incorporating another writer's views, so long as you give credit where it's due. There is much shame in passing off someone else's work as your own.

If I discover you've plagiarized any part of any assignment, you'll automatically fail the course, and I'll file a report with the University.