

PHIL 2217: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
T/Th Laurel Hall 307
Fall 2016

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Introduction

The first half of this course surveys some of the most influential figures in western political thought: Hobbes, Locke, and Rawls. We will focus primarily on their use of the social contract to justify the state. The second half of the course will address questions of race, class, and gender as sites of oppression. Throughout the course we will consider whether and how philosophy can help us think about contemporary US political issues, paying particular attention to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Required Materials

- Bailey, Brennan, Kymlicka, Levy, Sagar, and Wolf (eds), *The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Philosophy*, Broadview Press, 2012
- Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Cornell University Press, 1999
- All other readings will be available online. If you have trouble accessing Husky CT, please contact the help desk (486-1187)

Assessment

There are three components to the assessment for this class:

1. Argument Reconstructions and Objections
2. Reflective Essay
3. Term Paper

Each of these forms of assessment will be testing a different philosophical skill. Since there are many different ways to be a good philosopher, I do not expect you to be able to excel at all of these. As such, only your best two forms of assessment will count – your best will be worth 60%, your second-best will be worth 40%, the third won't count at all.

- Argument Reconstructions and Objections
 - This assessment tests your ability to clearly articulate the content of a philosophical argument, and identify an objection to it. Your first task is to identify one conclusion

drawn in the week's reading. Your second task is to summarise the argument the philosopher puts forward to justify that claim. This can be done as a formal argument reconstruction, or as a prose summary. Your third task is to develop an objection to that argument. ****The objection should constitute at least half of the paper.****

(If you are unfamiliar with argument reconstructions, I highly recommend Jim Prior's introductions, available [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).)

- Recommended length: 750 words per paper
 - Due date: Sundays, midnight. You may submit as many weeks as you wish; only your best three papers will count, and they will be equally weighted.
 - Submissions: Submit your papers through Husky CT.
- Reflective Essay
 - This assessment tests your ability to draw creative connections between philosophical ideas and everyday life. Your task is to write an essay exploring a connection between one of the course readings and a current issue in the US or abroad. While there are no restrictions on how you do this, a couple of ways to approach this assessment would be a) to show how a particular theory helps make sense of a current event; or b) to show how a current event reveals problems in a particular theory.
 - Recommended length: 2000-2500 words
 - With prior permission, you may submit a portfolio of creative work, such as a video or poetry, instead of an essay
 - Due date: Oct 16, midnight
 - Submissions: Submit your essay through Husky CT.
- Term Paper
 - This assessment tests your ability to engage in extended philosophical analysis, and to develop an original line of argument. Before writing your paper will need to decide on your own essay topic, and meet with me to discuss the direction of your paper. There are no restrictions on the topic you write on, provided it connects in some way to the class materials.
 - Recommended length: 2000-2500 words
 - Due dates:

Topic Approval:	November 14
Final Submission:	Dec 12, midnight
 - Submissions: Submit your essay through Husky CT

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism

Academic Misconduct in any form is violation of the University of Connecticut Student Code and will not be tolerated. Depending on the act, a student could receive an F grade on a test/assignment, an F grade for the course, and could be suspended or expelled from the University. For more details, please see the Student Code at http://www.community.uconn.edu/student_code.html

Disabilities

The Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at UConn provides accommodations and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability for which you wish to request academic accommodations and have not contacted the CSD, please do so as soon as possible. The CSD is located in Wilbur Cross, Room 204 and can be reached at (860) 486-2020 or at csd@uconn.edu. Detailed information regarding the accommodations process is also available on their website at www.csd.uconn.edu.

Important Numbers

University can be a difficult time in life, but there are many services on campus that are set up to help you. The following are good sources to turn to in case of any difficulties, either academic or personal:

- Counseling and Mental Health Services: 486-4705 (after hours: 486-3427) or www.cmhs.uconn.edu
- Alcohol or Other Drug Services: 486-9431 or www.aod.uconn.edu
- Dean of Students Office: 486-3426 or www.dos.uconn.edu
- The Writing Center: 486-4387 or <http://www.writingcenter.uconn.edu>

Grade Scheme

94 - 100	A
90 - 93	A-
86 - 89	B+
82 - 85	B
78 - 81	B-
74 - 77	C+
70 - 73	C
66 - 69	C-
62 - 65	D+
58 - 61	D
54 - 57	D-
< 54	F

Reading Schedule

UNIT 1: JUSTIFYING THE STATE? SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORIES

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION

AUG 30: No reading required

SEP 1: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (Broadview), The Introduction; Chap 13; Chap 14 [secs 1-5]; Chap 15 [secs 1-3; 30-41]

WEEK 2 HOBBS' LEVIATHAN

SEP 6: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, (Broadview), Chap 17-18; Chap 21 [secs 10-25]

SEP 8: Elias Rodriquez, '[Fear and Aggression in Florida](#)'

WEEK 3 LOCKE'S SECOND TREATISE

SEP 13: John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, (Broadview), Chap 1-5

SEP 15 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, (Broadview), Chap 7 [sec 89-94]; Chap 8 [sec 95-99; 113-122]; Chap 9

WEEK 4 WHOSE SOCIAL CONTRACT?

SEP 20 Emma Goldman, '[Anarchism: What it Really Stands For](#)'

SEP 22 James Baldwin, '[A Report From Occupied Territory](#)'
Ta-Nehisi Coates, '[The Paranoid Style of American Policing](#)'

WEEK 5 THE RAWLSIAN SOCIAL CONTRACT

SEP 27: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, (Broadview), Sec 3-6; 24

SEP 29: Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, (Husky CT), pp.96-140

WEEK 6 THE RAWLSIAN SOCIAL CONTRACT

OCT 4: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, (Broadview), Sec 11; 14-15; 17

OCT 6: Susan Moller Okin, 'Justice as Fairness, For Whom?' (Husky CT)

UNIT 2: AXES OF OPPRESSION

WEEK 7 RACE

OCT 11: Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Introduction
Toni Morrison, '[A Humanist View](#)'

OCT 13 : Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Chapter 1

WEEK 8 **RACE**

OCT 18: Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Chapter 2

OCT 20: Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Chapter 3

WEEK 9 **CLASS**

OCT 25: Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, (Broadview, or [here](#)), Sec 1-2

Rutger Bregman, '[Why We Should Be Giving Everyone a Basic Income](#)'

OCT 27: Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, (Broadview)

WEEK 10 **GENDER**

NOV 1: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 'Introduction', (Husky CT)

Sojourner Truth, 'Ain't I a Woman?' (Broadview)

NOV 3: Kate Manne, '[Misogyny](#)'

Rebecca Traister, '[What Mass Killers Really Have in Common](#)'

UNIT 3: **CONTEMPORARY ISSUES**

WEEK 11 **WHO DO WE BELIEVE?**

NOV 8: Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 'Testimonial Injustice' (Husky CT)

NOV 10: Jessica Testa, '[The 13 Women Who Accused A Cop Of Sexual Assault, In Their Own Words](#)'

WEEK 12 **WHO SHOULD WE DISTRUST?**

NOV 15: Meena Krishnamurthy, '(White) Tyranny and the Democratic Value of Distrust' (Husky CT)

NOV 17: Noah Gordon, '[Deep Racial Divide on Trusting the Police](#)'

THANKSGIVING

WEEK 13 **POLICE SHOOTINGS**

NOV 29: Rene Bolinger, 'Reasonable Mistakes and Regulative Conventions' (Husky CT)

DEC 1: Sky News, '[Hard Wire: Law of the Gun](#)'

WEEK 14 **PROTEST**

DEC 6: Tommy Shelbie, 'Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto' (Husky CT)

DEC 8: Brittney Cooper, '[I Am Utterly Undone](#)'