



Social and Political Philosophy (Minor)

Winter 2015/2016 (Semester Ia)

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Faculty of Philosophy

INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social and political philosophy is concerned with asking philosophical questions about the different ways in which human beings live together. In particular, it focuses on the role which political institutions play in our societies. Political philosophers ask questions such as: What is the ultimate end of politics? How should we decide between different forms of government? Is there one single end that all governments should pursue - such as justice or equality - or should governments be only concerned with protecting the freedom of everyone to live as they please? To what extent may society limit the freedom of individuals? Is it ever justified to resist the state?

[In the course, we will focus on the different answers these questions have received throughout the history of philosophy and on how they inform contemporary debates about political issues.

COURSE FORMAT AND GENERAL RULES

This course is an introductory course for students with some general philosophy knowledge. It is thought of as an intensive lecture course with as much class discussion as I can get you interested in. Discussion will focus on how to apply such theories to contemporary political reality. It thus presumes an interest in politics generally and in current events.

One of the core ideas which will be discussed in this course is that relations of mutual respect entail obligations on both sides of a social relationship. In this spirit, I accept the obligation that I will come to each session prepared and on time, that I will try to design the course material and my contributions in a way which leads to all students' learning as much as possible, that I will be approachable for all questions of an academic or administrative nature in person and (to a reasonable extent) via e-mail. I will communicate expectations clearly and evaluate you fairly. My goal is to enable all students to finish the course with an excellent result.

In return, I expect from you to regularly attend all sessions, to arrive on time, to read all the required material, to come prepared with relevant questions and objections to what I say and to participate in the discussion with your fellow students. I also expect you to refrain from any kind of academic dishonesty and from any behavior which makes it for fellow students more difficult to learn or which makes them uncomfortable.

I am aware that persons learn in different ways and face different challenges and that the general rules in this course might not be best designed to ensure everyone's success. If you think you might

have reason to ask for a modification of the rules for your specific case, please do not hesitate to talk to me in private.

EXAMINATION

Examination will be done by an in-class exam on November 3rd, during the course hours. It will test your knowledge about basic concepts and the claims of different theories we discuss in the course and will also contain some discussion questions which ask for application of these theories. The exam will cover not only the readings, but also material we have only discussed in class. I suggest that you focus in your preparation on the notes you have taken in class, on the slides which will be available online and on the additional material which I will make available. Please note: The material covered in session 9 will not be part of the exam.

GENERAL READINGS

In addition, to the mandatory literature, I recommend the following three introductions into political philosophy. Each of them is so good that owning all of them is a valuable investment.

- John Christman, *Social and Political Philosophy. A Contemporary Introduction*, Routledge 2002. (Chapters 2,3 and 5 are especially relevant for our course)
- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*. 2nd ed., Oxford University Press 2002. (Chapters 2-6 and 9 cover topics from our course)
- John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, Harvard University Press 2007 (A good introduction to the thought of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill and Marx)

All required readings for the course and some recommended readings are available on Nestor, except the parts from the book Jonathan Wolf, *An Introduction into Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2006. There is a new 2015 edition available which might be equally suitable.

SYLLABUS

September 1 2015: Session 1: Introduction and the Anarchist Challenge

Required Reading:

- Robert Paul Wolff: *In Defense of Anarchism*, Section I, Section II.1-3 (without the Appendix), 1970 (available online at: <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/robert-paul-wolff-in-defense-of-anarchism.pdf>).
- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 32-36 (Ch. 1, Anarchism) and 37-42 (Chapter 2, Introduction).
- Handout with quotes about politics (distributed on Nestor).

Recommended Reading:

- M.B.E. Smith, "Is There a Prima Facie Duty to Obey the Law?", *The Yale Law Journal*, 82(5), 1973, pp. 950-976.
- John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, pp. 1-11.
- Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed., University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp. 22-58, 175-212 (=§§4-6, 24-29).

Further Watching:

- Steven B. Smith, "Introduction to Political Philosophy" (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD319499FC7F5813F>), lecture 1.

September 8 2015: Session 2: Happiness, Virtue and the Political: Plato and Aristotle

Required Reading:

- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 67-85 (Chapter 3, Introduction and Plato).
- Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. B. Jowett, available online at: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.html> (read: Book One, Part I-VII; Book Four, Parts IX-XIII)

Recommended Reading:

- Plato, *Republic*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett, 2004, pp. 46-56, 238-269 (parts of book 2, and book 8).
- Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve, Hackett, 1998, book III and book VII, ch. 1 and 2.
- Richard Arneson, "Perfectionism and Politics", *Ethics* 111(1), 2000, 37-63.

Further Reading:

- Eric Brown, "Plato's Ethics and Politics in The Republic", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-ethics-politics/>.
- Fred Miller, "Aristotle's Political Philosophy", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics/>.
- Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, Clarendon Press, 1981
- Ryan K. Balot, *Greek Political Thought*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2006.
- Richard, Kraut, *Aristotle. Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, chapter 12.

Further Watching:

- Steven B. Smith, “Introduction to Political Philosophy” (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD319499FC7F5813F>), lectures 2-9.
- Michael Sandel, “Justice” (<http://www.justiceharvard.org/watch/>), lecture 10.

September 15 2015: No meeting

September 22 2015: Session 3: The Social Contract and Political Authority

Required Reading:

- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 8-18 (Ch 1, Hobbes), 42-43 (Ch 2, Social Contract) and 85-93 (Ch 3, Rousseau).
- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, available online at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3207/3207-h/3207-h.htm>, chapters 13, 17 and 18.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Social Contract”, available online at http://www.gutenberg.org/files/46333/46333-h/46333-h.htm#BOOK_I (read only Book 1)

Recommended Reading:

- Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, chapters 19 and 21.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Social Contract”, in *Discourse on Political Economy and The Social Contract*, Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 63-79.
- John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, pp. 23-102 (on Hobbes) and 191-250 (on Rousseau).

Further Reading:

- Sharon A. Lloyd, “Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes-moral/>.
- Christopher Bertram, “Jean Jacques Rousseau”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rousseau/>.
- Steven Kuhn, “Prisoner's Dilemma”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/prisoner-dilemma/>.
- Richard Dagger/David Lefkowitz, “Political Obligation”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/political-obligation/>.
- Deborah Baumgold, *Hobbes' Political Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Christopher Bertram, *Routledge Guidebook to Rousseau and the Social Contract*, Routledge, 2004.
- Andrew Levine, *The General Will: Rousseau, Marx, Communism*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Further Watching:

- Steven B. Smith, “Introduction to Political Philosophy” (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD319499FC7F5813F>), lectures 12-14 (Hobbes) and 18-20 (Rousseau).

September 29 2015: Session 4: Natural Rights and Property

Required Reading:

- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 18-26 (Ch. 1, Locke), 138-152 (Ch 5, Distributive Justice and Property).
- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, available online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm>, (read chaps. II, V, VII, VIII [but only sect. 95-99 and 118-122] and IX).

Recommended Reading:

- Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Blackwell, 1974, pp. 174-182.
- John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, pp. 101-155.
- Alexander Tuckness, "Locke's Political Philosophy", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-political/>.
- Jeremy Waldron, "Property and Ownership", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/property/>.

Further Reading:

- James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and His Adversaries*, Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- John Dunn, *Locke: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

Further Watching:

- Steven B. Smith, "Introduction to Political Philosophy" (<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD319499FC7F5813F>), lectures 15-17.
- Michael Sandel, "Justice" (<http://www.justiceharvard.org/watch/>), lecture 3 and 4.

October 6, 2015: Session 5: Utilitarianism, Liberty, and Freedom of Speech

Required Reading:

- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 48-55 (Utilitarianism), and Ch 4.
- John Stuart Mill: *On Liberty*, available online at: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/34901/34901-h/34901-h.htm#Page_140 (read: chapter I, chapter II, but only pp. 28-36, 64, 65, 84-87, 97-102)

Recommended Reading:

- David Brink, "Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill-moral-political/>.
- David van Mill, "Freedom of Speech", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/freedom-speech/>.
- John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, pp. 249-315.

Further Reading:

- John Skorupski, *John Stuart Mill*, Routledge, 1989.
- Joel Feinberg, *Offense to Others*, Oxford University Press, 1985.

Further Watching:

- Michael Sandel, “Justice” (<http://www.justiceharvard.org/watch/>), lecture 1 and 2.

October 13, 2015: Session 6: Liberal Social Justice

Required Reading:

- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 168-195 (ch.5, Rawls and Conclusion)
- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. Revised Edition; Belknap Press, 1999, pp. 10-13, 15-18, 52-54, 118, 119, 122, 130-135 (available on Nestor)

Recommended Reading:

- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, ch. 3.
- Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 160-164.

Further Reading:

- Philip Pettit/Chandran Kuthakas, *John Rawls*. Stanford University Press, 1990-
- Norman Daniels (ed.), *Reading Rawls*, Basic Books, 1989.

Further Watching:

- Michael Sandel, “Justice” (<http://www.justiceharvard.org/watch/>), lecture 8.

October 20, 2015: Session 7: Marxism

Required Reading:

- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 196-202 (Ch. 6, Anti-individualism)
- Karl Marx, “Wage Labor and Capital”, in Robert C. Tucker (ed.), *The Marx-Engels-Reader*, 2nd ed. 1978, pp. 203-218.

Recommended:

- Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, available online at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/61/pg61.html>
- Karl Marx, *Value, Price and Profit*, available online at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/> (see esp. sections 6-9 and 14).
- Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, available online at: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/>

Further reading

- Allen W. Wood, *Karl Marx*, Routledge, 1981.
- Allen W. Wood, “Justice and Class Interests”, <http://logica.ugent.be/philosophica/fulltexts/33-2.pdf>
- Jonathan Wolff, *Why Read Marx Today?*, Oxford University Press, 2003
- John Roemer, *Free to Lose*, Harvard University Press, 1988, chap. 2 and 5.
- G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, expanded edition, Oxford University Press, 2000.

October 27, 2015: Session 8: Feminist Political Theory

Required Reading:

- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp.202-220 (ch. 6, Rights for Women)
- Susan Moller Okin, "Justice and Gender", *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 16(1), 1987, pp. 42-72, available online at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2265205> (read p. 42-52, and 64-72)

Recommended:

- Noelle McAfee, "Feminist Political Philosophy", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-political/>
- John Christman, *Social and Political Philosophy. A Contemporary Introduction*, chaps. 6 and 7.
- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, chaps 5 and 9.

Further Reading:

- Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Stanford University Press, 1988.
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Cape, 1953.

Political philosophy, branch of philosophy that is concerned, at the most abstract level, with the concepts and arguments involved in political opinion. The central problem of political philosophy is how to deploy or limit public power so as to maintain the survival and enhance the quality of human life. Political philosophy, however, is not merely unpractical speculation, though it may give rise to highly impractical myths: it is a vitally important aspect of life, and one that, for good or evil, has had decisive results on political action, for the assumptions on which political life is conducted clearly must influence what actually happens.