



PHIL*4230 Current Debates in Social and Political Philosophy

Fall 2018

Section(s): C01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - September 05, 2018

1 Course Details

1.1 Calendar Description

This is an advanced level course that examines in detail selected historical or contemporary treatments of specific issues in social and political philosophy.

Pre-Requisite(s): 1.00 credits in Philosophy at the 3000 level or 12.50 credits

1.2 Course Description

This course will focus on two concepts that are central to both contemporary political philosophy and the political realities of modern life: the *political* and *crisis*. What is the sphere that we call the "political"? What makes it a space of human action distinct from, for instance, economics or medicine? Alternatively, how far does the domain of the political extend in relation to these other practices, knowledges, and systems? We will closely study a discourse amongst philosophers concerned about the general crisis developing in the political domain. This crisis concerns not merely concrete political instabilities (for instance, which show themselves in protests, rebellions, or periods of economic crises). Rather, these thinkers are concerned with a crisis in the very concept of the political itself, of what it has meant historically and the way it has changed. We will think seriously about issues like political governance, the public realm, the diverse modes of power that control human life, sovereignty and the state, war, and resistance.

John Dewey's work draws our attention to the disparity that has developed in the West between the public and the political realms, offering a critique of the state-form and a defense of collective democratic ideals. Following from Dewey, Hannah Arendt takes up the importance of political stability for modern democracies while also reserving the space for change. We will then critically evaluate Carl Schmitt's perspective on political sovereignty that critiques the values of liberal democracy in favor a state power defined by inclusion and exclusion. We will conclude with Giorgio Agamben's engagement with and critique of Schmitt's thought. We will focus specifically on how Agamben sees this distinction between including the citizen and excluding the other as both a constitutive element of the concept of the political in the West, and also an immanent source of democratic crises and forms of oppression. Our goal will be to develop an understanding of these concepts and problems and to employ them regularly

through political examples such as immigration, imprisonment, war, protest, and violence.

1.3 Timetable

Timetable is subject to change. Please see WebAdvisor for the latest information.

1.4 Final Exam

There is no final exam for this course. A final research essay will be due at the end of the semester.

2 Instructional Support

2.1 Instructor(s)

Casey Ford PhD

Email: ford@uoguelph.ca

Office: MCKN 355

Office Hours: Monday, 1:00 - 2:00

3 Learning Resources

3.1 Required Resource(s)

Required Textbooks (Textbook)

- John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* Swallow (1954)
- Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* Mariner (1972) 978-0156232005
- Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* University of Chicago (2007) 978-0226738925
- Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Saver: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* Stanford University (1998) 978-0804732185

* Additional readings available on CourseLink

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- (1) to do close **textual analysis** of some of the most important and influential texts in the history of metaphysics
 - (2) to **write clear and sophisticated explanatory essays** on the central ideas and arguments
 - (3) to identify and **articulate philosophical problems** to begin individual research
 - (4) to **design and execute research and original scholarship** around this problem in order to compose a developed research paper.
-

5 Teaching and Learning Activities

5.1 Course Format:

This course will be a combination of lectures, group discussion, and student-directed teaching activities. Each meeting will be devoted to a portion of text specified in the reading schedule below. Together we will work through the problems and questions motivating each work, explain their important ideas, critically assess their arguments, and think about the significance of these ideas and arguments in the context of the history of philosophy.

5.2 Course Schedule

<u>Week</u>	<u>Assigned Reading</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
1	Introduction to Course Thurs. Sept. 6 Syllabus Review John Dewey, <i>The Public and Its Problems</i> , Chs. 1-2,	

		"The Search for the Public" and "Discovery of the State"	
2	Thurs. Sept. 13	Dewey, <i>Public and Its Problems</i> , Chs. 3-4, "The Democratic State" and "The Eclipse of the Public"	
3	Thurs. Sept. 20	Dewey, <i>Public and Its Problems</i> , Ch. 5, "Search for the Great Community"	Explication 1 Due
4	Thurs. Sept. 27	Hannah Arendt, <i>The Crises of the Republic</i>, "Lying in Politics: Reflections on the Pentagon Papers"	
5	Thurs. Oct. 4	Arendt, <i>Crises</i>, "Civil Disobedience"	
	Thurs.		Explication 2 Due

6	Oct. 11	Arendt, <i>Crises</i> , "On Violence"	
7	Thurs. Oct. 18	Carl Schmitt, <i>The Concept of the Political</i> , pp. 19-37.	
8	Thurs. Oct. 25	Schmitt, <i>Concept of the Political</i> , pp. 37-68.	
9	Thurs. Nov. 1	Schmitt, <i>Concept of the Political</i> , pp. 69-79. Schmitt, <i>Political-Theology</i> , "Preface" and "The Definition of Sovereignty," pp. 1-15 *	Explication 3 Due
10	Thurs. Nov. 8	Giorgio Agamben, <i>Homo Sacer</i> , "Introduction" and "The Logic of Sovereignty," pp. 1-67.	Presentations
11	Thurs.	Agamben, <i>Homo Sacer</i> , "Homo-Sacer," pp. 71-115.	Presentations

	Nov. 15		
12	Thurs. Nov. 22	Agamben, <i>Homo Sacer</i> , "The Camp as Biopolitical Paradigm of the Modern," pp. 119-188	Presentations
	TBD	Final Paper Due (as hardcopy to my office)	

6 Assessments

6.1 Assessment Details

Class Participation (25%)

General Responsibilities. The study of philosophy is an essentially collaborative practice. It requires one to encounter the ideas of another and to develop responses that are personal, critical, and charitable. Active participation in the classroom, in relation both to the texts being studied and your colleagues, will be a significant part of a rewarding experience in this course. Serious philosophical involvement will mean making your ideas, interests, and interpretations known, and in working with others to challenge them. It is your responsibility as a student to determine the level and quality of your participation, and to communicate regularly with the instructor about the required work to receive the grade you desire. Students will be expected to attend *all* class sessions. Moreover, you will be expected to come to class having read the assigned material with careful notes from your readings.

Teaching Modules. Your participation grade will involve delivering a teaching style presentation in the final component of the course with a small group of your colleagues. A sign-up sheet will be made available at the midpoint of the semester, and suggested questions for discussion will be provided (though you are encouraged to develop your own). The goal of this exercise is pedagogical: to put yourselves in the position of a teacher responsible for guiding your colleagues in understanding the insights and importance of a text. You will be evaluated on your ability to work collectively, and on your explanations of the texts, your questions posed, and your ability to facilitate collective philosophical discussion. You will be given a half a course session (50-70 minutes) for each presentation and discussion. Since there will be multiple presentations on a single text in a particular week,

your assessment will require that each individual must be present in class for all of the other presentations on the text your group will be working on. Each individual will submit a short written reflection on their contribution to the presentation.

Explication Essays (35%)

To “explicate” something literally means to unfold it. In the first half of the course, these short writing assignments will be exercises in *explanation*. You will be given short passages or complicated ideas that you must unpack in a clear, nuanced, and sophisticated explanation. You will be asked not to consult or reference secondary scholarship and to focus on the primary text as something to interpret on your own. These explications will be assigned prior to discussing this material in seminar, allowing you to come to seminar with an already developed interpretation. The first two papers should be exactly 1 page single-spaced (worth 10% each), and are devoted to simply explaining single concepts or arguments. The third should be 2 pages single-spaced (worth 15% each) and require you to both explicate an idea and pose a critical challenge to it.

Research Proposal (10%)

The goal of this assignment is to set out a research idea and to delineate the steps necessary to complete this project. A list of possible paper topics and problems will be made available to you to choose from. You will be required to isolate a question or problem, to explain why it is important, and to consider possible challenges to answering this question. In short, you should think of your task as not only outlining your paper, but of justifying the importance of writing on this topic. This proposal should also include a brief consideration of some secondary scholarly work that you think will be resourceful to supplement your own interpretation and argument. You are encouraged to find material that will both challenge and support your position. Feedback will be provided to assist you in developing your project. The proposal should not be longer than 1.5 pages, single-spaced.

Final Research Essay (30%)

This paper is an opportunity for you to exercise your skills in the explanation of specific philosophical ideas and arguments, and to develop a brief but specialized interpretation and research program around it. A substantial portion of the paper should be devoted to explicating these ideas and arguments about it in your own words. The second portion of the paper should be devoted to analyzing these ideas, critically assessing them, and considering scholarship that speaks to this problem. Your final paper should thus be an expansion and realization of your proposal. You are encouraged to use and further develop the analyses done in one or more of your explications. The length of the paper will be determined by the scope of your project and the necessary steps to complete your proposal effectively; however, the final paper should be roughly 10 pages double-spaced.

7 Course Statements

7.1 Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

7.2 Course Policies

- Assignments. All assignments must be submitted as hardcopies in class by the due date specified on the schedule below. Late assignments will only be accepted on compassionate grounds with approval from the instructor *prior to* the due date.
 - Conduct. All students are expected to engage respectfully with their colleagues in philosophical discussion. Any student disrupting the attention, work, and personal safety of the class will be asked to leave.
 - Electronic Devices. Computers are permitted only for note-taking purposes and should not be used to the distraction of the class. *Cellphones are strictly not permitted* during class. Please excuse yourself from the room in the case of an emergency.
 - Assistance. If you require any special assistance as a student, I will make my best effort to help you in any way I can to succeed and find the classroom to be an accessible and rewarding space. Please contact me with any information that would assist me in this.
-

8 University Statements

8.1 Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

8.2 When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. The regulations and procedures for [Academic Consideration](#) are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

8.3 Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the fortieth class day; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of the add period in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for [Dropping Courses](#) are available in the Undergraduate Calendar.

8.4 Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

8.5 Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required, however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance, and not later than the 40th Class Day.

More information: www.uoguelph.ca/sas

8.6 Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

8.7 Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

8.8 Resources

The [Academic Calendars](#) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.
