

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 1010-01 “Introduction to Philosophy: Social and Political Issues”

Instructor: Niels Feuerhahn / MacKinnon 368 / email: nfeuerha@uoguelph.ca

Lecture: Thursdays 7:00 - 8:50pm ALEX 200

Office hours: Thursdays 4:00pm-6:00pm and by appointment

Description of Course:

The overall aim of this course is to give students the opportunity to study some of the most influential thinkers in the history of Western (political) philosophy, and to introduce them to and reflect on central issues of political discourse: e.g. justice, liberty, law/rights, power, oppression. Aristotle famously said that the human being is *phusei politikon zoon*, by nature a political animal. Starting with Plato's Republic we will study the origin and function of the state and arguments for and against various forms of governance. Next we will look at the origin and limits of legitimate political power by way of a study of the work of two of the most important early social contract theorists: Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. A significant portion of the course will be devoted to the study of the principles of political liberalism and Karl Marx's powerful and influential critique thereof. Further questions that will occupy us throughout the semester are: On what ground can we maintain that human beings are free and/or equal? On what principle and within what limits can we maintain a right of personal property? What is justice and what role ought justice play in society? Toward the end of the semester we will talk about what (if any) political standing the non-human (animals, ecosystems, etc.) ought to have and what unique political challenges are posed by our increasing dependence on digital realities. We will pay particularly close attention to the so-called “right to be forgotten”. -- In the weekly seminars students will be given the opportunity to closely read sections of John Stuart Mill's influential On Liberty, excerpts from several important works by Karl Marx, as well as other texts. The seminars are intended to complement the lectures and to allow students to develop and practice various elements of philosophical reasoning and writing.

Method of Evaluation:

2 writing assignments	=	40% (2 x 20%)
10 reflection papers	=	20% (10 x 2%)
1 book review	=	10%
1 final exam	=	30%

The submission deadline for the first writing assignment is Friday, October 3.

The submission deadline for the second writing assignment is Friday, October 31.

The submission deadline for the book review is Thursday, November 20.

The deadlines for the submission of the writing assignments is gauged generously. Therefore, late submissions without a valid excuse will be penalized with a deduction of 5% per overdue day.

Course requirements:

1. Reflection papers (20%)

Over the course of the semester you are expected to submit ten (10) reflection papers. These papers should be between 300 and 400 words in length. They are to be submitted at the end of your tutorial and are to be typed in 12 point font. (Please do not submit any handwritten papers.) The papers are based on the readings that are assigned in the week in which the respective reflection paper is due. Late submissions will not be accepted. At the end of each lecture I will post the question for the response paper that you are to submit in the following week's tutorial on Courselink. Each response paper is worth two marks. Your TA's will read the response papers, mark it, and return them to you at the start of the next tutorial. The idea behind the response papers is to make sure that you have read and thought about the assigned readings by the time you come to your tutorial. The format of the tutorials will differ quite significantly from that of the lectures. The aim of the tutorials is to provide a space in which you get to "do" philosophy, i.e. a space in which you get to discuss the texts and the issues they raise. Therefore, the quality of the individual tutorials will very much depend on your level of preparation and your participation.

2. Final exam (30%)

The final exam is cumulative and will cover the material that was presented in the lectures only. Further details will be announced later in the semester. There will be an exam review session sometime between the final lecture and the day of the exam.

3. Writing assignments/essays (40%)

The writing assignments will involve the explication of a key concept or idea and/or the reconstruction (and assessment) of an argument. The first essay will be about J.S. Mill's On Liberty. The topic of the second essay will be taken from the Marx readings that you will study and discuss in your tutorials from Week 6 to Week 9. For each paper you will be given the choice of two topics. The specific formal requirements of the essay will be posted along with a rubric on Courselink. The topic of your first writing assignment will be posted on Courselink in Week 2. All papers must be submitted as hard copies. You are welcome to submit your essay during your tutorial in the week in which they are due. Alternatively, you can also drop off your essay in the Department of Philosophy before closing on the date on which your paper is due. Late submissions without valid excuse will incur a late penalty of 5% per overdue day.

4. Book report (10%)

Over the course of the semester we will collectively compose a critical map of the most pressing social and political issues of our time. For this we will compile a reading list of works that discuss the pressing issues of our time in a meritorious way. The works in question should have been published in the last 30 years. We are not interested in intellectual fads but rather in issues that have had and will continue to have a lasting pertinence to our age. You have the option to submit an individual review, a review that you wrote in collaboration with a partner, or a group review (max. 4 people). If you choose to do a group review, you should review two books that advance divergent views on a common issue. The books that you review don't have to be academic books. They should be books whose primary target audience are educated adults. The book review is due at the end of the final lecture. Proposals for reviews are to be submitted to the instructor for approval no later than October 31.

Required texts:

There are two required texts for this course: John Stuart Mill's On Liberty and Other Essays (Oxford World's Classics) and The Marx-Engels Reader edited by Robert C. Tucker. Further readings will be announced in class and will be made available via Courselink.

Schedule of lectures

<u>Week 1</u> Thursday, Sep 4	Introduction
<u>Week 2</u> Thursday, Sep 11	Ancient political theory I
<u>Week 3</u> Thursday, Sep 18	Ancient political theory II
<u>Week 4</u> Thursday, Sep 25	Social contract theory I
<u>Week 5</u> Thursday, Oct 2	Social contract theory II
<u>Week 6</u> Thursday, Oct 9	Liberalism I
<u>Week 7</u> Thursday, Oct 16	Liberalism II
<u>Week 8</u> Thursday, Oct 23	Marx I
<u>Week 9</u> Thursday, Oct 30	Marx II
<u>Week 10</u> Thursday, Nov 6	Oppression and the politics of difference
<u>Week 11</u> Thursday, Nov 13	Politics and the non-human
<u>Week 12</u> Thursday, Nov 20	Political challenges in the Digital Age

Schedule of seminars/tutorials

Week 1:	No tutorials
Week 2:	J.S. Mill's <i>On Liberty</i> Ch.1 (pp.5-19)
Week 3:	J.S. Mill's <i>On Liberty</i> Ch.3 (pp.62-82)

Week 4:	J.S. Mill's <i>On Liberty</i> Ch.4 (pp.83-94)
Week 5:	J.S. Mill's <i>On Liberty</i> wrap-up
Week 6:	Selection from K. Marx's <i>Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts</i> (pp.70-81)
Week 7:	Selection from K. Marx's <i>Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts</i> (pp.70-81)
Week 8:	K. Marx's "Wage Labour and Capital" (pp.203-217)
Week 9:	K. Marx's "Wage Labour and Capital" (pp.203-217)
Week 10:	Selection from E. Canetti's <i>Crowds and Power</i> (tentative)*
Week 11:	Selection from S. Sontag's <i>Regarding the Pain of Others</i> (tentative)*
Week 12:	t.b.a.

* Readings will be made available via Courselink.

E-mail Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <mail.uoguelph.ca> email account regularly: email is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

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. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester **Fall '14** courses, without academic penalty, is **Friday, October 31 2014**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

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.

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins 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. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>