

College of Arts – Online Course Outline Template

Course Code: PHIL*4230	Section: 01	Semester: F12
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Course Title:
Social & Political Philosophy

Instructor: J. Harvey

The following are required in order to register in this course:

Prerequisites: PHIL2120 or 3230 AND in either case: ALSO 1.00 credits in Philosophy at the 3000 level

Brief Course Description:

The course is centred around less obvious kinds of harm and wrongdoing so that we can explore the issues involved in non-violent oppression. We will work on some fairly traditional moral issues, as well as some topics that have been taken seriously in the philosophical literature only in fairly recent years. We will look at less obvious types of harm and injustice and the vehicles by which they are inflicted, e.g., by looking at such matters as invasions of privacy, at the often unrecognized re-victimization that occurs in “blaming the victim” incidents, and by looking at the ethics of humour (one of the most usual vehicles for inflicting non-violent harm). Since examining these issues seems to suggest that inappropriate relationships, rather than simply isolated incidents, are heavily involved, we will examine the concepts of moral personhood and moral community to see what kinds of basic relationships and what correlated obligations they point to, and how these relationships and obligations connect with self-respect. If time permits, then towards the end of the course we will consider whether victims of non-violent oppression themselves have any prima facie obligations to do with amending the inappropriate relationships.

The two main goals are to ensure coverage of some of the most crucial material on the topics, and to explore and work further on the issues raised. So in addition to knowing what is happening philosophically on the issues, this seminar-mode course calls upon all students to explore and think about the issues themselves so as to make philosophical contributions in a field of social philosophy that is becoming increasingly important in current western philosophy, namely that of non-violent oppression.

This is a **seminar-mode course**, so if you want a class where you sit and listen, take notes, learn the material, and write exams and/or papers, then this is definitely *not* the right class for you. In this course you will need to do some serious thinking and exploring of issues yourself, and you will also be working on developing certain skills. You will also need to do ongoing, week to week work, and you will need to make regular and thoughtful contributions in classes. (This of course is what makes it interesting.)

The very first session will be in lecture-&-discussion format (just to get the course going) and the second will be an open seminar (with preparation required ahead of time), but nearly all of the sessions afterward will consist of student presentation-papers, discussion, and open seminars (with the occasional small piece of lecture material if something crucial has not been covered by other modes, e.g., in the discussions).

So students in this class will need to be involved and committed throughout, and participation is essential. Skipping classes will radically affect your grade and make it very difficult to pass the course. So will attending classes but without coming prepared and with substantial and *thoughtful* contributions to make! The preparation, thinking, contributions, and attendance not only affect your own learning experience (and your grades), but that of your fellow students. For these reasons, the commitment to the whole course and the variety of work involved is very important. It will greatly affect how rewarding you find the course experience and it will greatly affect your grade for the course. It's best that this be explained here, so that there is no misunderstanding as to the nature of the course. So it's a course for students who genuinely wish to think, explore, and participate in discussions in class, and who will also commit to doing the basic week to week work faithfully. Such students usually get a lot out of a course of this kind.

Laptop Free Course

Laptop computers may only be used in class with the written permission of the instructor. Such permission will be granted only when there is demonstrated need to use a computer for note taking, as verified by the Centre for Students with Disabilities.

PLEASE NOTE: ***** This is the kind of course where it's vital to keep up with the work as we go along. That means doing the **week-to-week work and not allowing it to be set aside**. With a serious component of the grade given to **preparation and contribution**, the course cannot be taken successfully in "catch up" mode.

Required Readings and Text:

(1) There is one required text: J. Harvey, *Civilized Oppression* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield: 1999), ISBN 0-8476-9275-2 (paperback), and (2) There will also be required readings from selected books and articles on reserve in the library.

Formal Evaluation:

It is a seminar-mode course. As is usual with fourth year philosophy courses, a major part of the ongoing work, therefore, consists of the preparation for and contributions to seminar-classes where you are *not* a presenter. This work will significantly affect the course grade (i.e., it's not a "lecture course" where the grade is achieved by written work alone). There are three components to the formal evaluation:

1. Preparation and contribution (30%)
2. Presentation-paper & Presentation with Question Period (30%)
3. Term paper (40%) ---With a very different focus from the presentation-paper.