# Introduction to Philosophy: Social and Political Issues

## Phil 1010 Syllabus

**Section 02**

**Winter 2023**

**0.50 credit**

MCKN 228 (87 Trent Lane)

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| Instructor: Dr. Jason C. Robinson | Office Hours: Virtual, by appointment. |
| Email: [robinsoj@uoguelph.ca](mailto:robinsoj@uoguelph.ca) | Delivery Method:   * Campus Lectures: Mondays 3:30-5:20 on campus * Virtual Seminars: Fridays 11:30-12:20 and 1:30-2:20  (See WebAdvisor for your section/seminar) |

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# Course Details

## Course Description

This course introduces philosophy through an examination of important issues in politics and society, such as punishment, animal rights, discrimination, war and violence, equality and property. These issues may be introduced through contemporary or historical philosophical writings.

## Expanded Course Description

Have you thought about what the good life might look like? We have obvious cultural assumptions about wealth and power that inform our answers. But what if these are wrong or flawed? How do we know which laws are good and which bad? How do we know which forms of democracy and capitalism are best? In a world full of propaganda, fake news, and outright lies, how might we discern the truth about social and political issues? This course is an interdisciplinary examination of important ideas about how we ought to live. We will be reading many relative short but challenging readings by important thinkers trying to answer—What is the good life? How ought we to structure society (laws, norms, institutions)?

## Required Textbook

* No textbook required.
* Readings will be provided through ARES (link in CourseLink).

## Course Website

CourseLink (powered by D2L’s Brightspace) is the course website.

<https://courselink.uoguelph.ca>

# Timetable

There are two methods of delivery this term.

1. Lectures: Mondays 3:30-5:20 on campus
2. Virtual Seminars: Fridays 11:30-12:20 and 1:30-2:20   
   (See WebAdvisor for your section/seminar)

# Teaching and Learning Activities

*Reading and Viewing Activities*

There are four key sources of learning in this course.

1. The primary readings (selections) from major thinkers in social and political thought. Readings are posted in CourseLink.
2. Lectures that help you interpret the readings and to gain helpful context about the authors themselves.
3. Lecture notes are fairly exhaustive and provide an additional means of interpreting and understanding our thinkers in the course.
4. Finally, seminars/tutorials are incredibly important. These are your opportunities to meet and discuss materials and course-related questions with other students.

What are seminars?

* Seminars are one of the most important elements of the course.
* These are your chance to sit down face-to-face to process the deep thoughts we are considering.
* Each seminar has two general purposes:

To answer,

1. What? and
2. So What?

***What?*** What might that thinker mean? Are these philosophers crazy or is there something intelligible going on?

***So What?*** Why does it matter today? Is there something relevant, applicable to my life today?

Seminars are a chance, as a group, to sort through the maze of complexities and boil things down to something meaningful and relevant.

## Learning Outcomes

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

1. comprehend the history and importance of social and political issues,
2. critically examine contemporary social and political issues,
3. develop and express your own thoughts on social and political issues,
4. apply major questions in philosophy to your own life, and
5. demonstrate improved reading and writing skills.

# Schedule of Dates, Readings, and Assignments

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| **Units** | **Topics** | **Readings** | **Assignments** |
| **Unit One**  Course lectures begin January 9th | **Intro. to Course**  What you need to know.  **Intro. lecture:**  What is philosophy? | Please read all materials ***before*** related seminars. | No seminars/tutorials for the first week.  **Seminar Tutorials on Zoom begin the second week**  (see WebAdvisor for your group) |
| **Unit Two**  January 16th | **Socrates and Plato** Historical Origins of Social and Political Thought | **Plato’s *Republic***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings) | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation in Seminars ongoing throughout term.  ***Weekly Reflection Papers are due by the start of your seminar (uploaded to dropbox in CourseLink)*** |
| **Unit Three**  January 23rd | **Aristotle’s Political Animals**  Human flourishing and your life. | **Aristotle’s *Politics***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings) | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation |
| **Unit Four**  January 30th | **Machiavelli** | **Machiavelli’s *The Prince***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings) | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation |
| **Unit Five**  February 6th | **Hobbes**  What is a “State of Nature?”  Do we need a sovereign/absolute leader? | **Hobbes’ *Leviathan***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings) | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation  **Begin writing major paper by at least this date (see due date below).** |
| **Unit Six**  February 13th | **Arendt** | **Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings) | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation |
| **Unit Seven**  February 27th  (Feb. 20th-24th Reading Week) | **Chomsky and Herman**  Propaganda and a Broken World | **Chomsky and Herman’s *Manufacturing Consent***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings) | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation  **Online Midterm Exam**   * It will cover materials up to and including Unit Six (so Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Arendt). * Questions will be posted in CourseLink by **9am on** **Monday, Feb. 27th** * Your exam must be uploaded to the relevant dropbox in CourseLink ***no later than* 6pm March 6th.** * *It is recommended that you complete the assignment early in order to focus on writing the major assignment.* |
| **Unit Eight**  March 6th | **Bentham and Mill**  What is Happiness? | **Mill’s *Utilitarianism***,  ***The Subjection of Women*,** and  ***On Liberty***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings)  You are not expected to read all of this material. Start by focusing on *On Liberty* and try to read as much as possible. | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation |
| **Unit Nine**  March 13th | **Nietzsche** | **Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings) | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation  **Research and Argumentation Paper**   * Due **March 13th** uploaded to dropbox by 11:59pm. |
| **Unit Ten**  March 20th | **Rousseau** | **Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings) | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation |
| **Unit Eleven**  March 27th | **Foucault** | **Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings) | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation |
| **Unit Twelve**  April 3rd | **Freud** | **Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents***  (See “Readings—Ares” for links to readings) | Weekly Reflection Paper and Participation  Take-Home Final Exam  The final exam will be posted in CourseLink by 6pm by **April 11th**  You must submit your exam to the dropbox of CourseLink **by 11:59pm April 21st (Friday)** |
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# Assessments

\*Students who are unable to complete a course requirement due to medical reasons must submit a

medical certificate/documentation. Students who are unable to write the final exam due to medical (or other) reasons must follow the guidelines set out in Undergraduate calendar.

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| **Tutorial Reflection Papers**  **and Participation**  (20%)  Reflection Papers: 10%  (1 mark each; maximum 10 papers over the term)  Participation: 10%  (1 mark each seminar) | ***Reflection Papers***   * Upload to relevant weekly dropbox “before” your seminar meeting. * 1 page, 250 words, double-spaced. * Each is Pass/Fail for 1 mark.   Each reflection paper must answer two questions (half the paper devoted to each one):   1. ***What?*** *Explain one or two ideas from the thinker we are exploring.*   What might the ideas mean? Are these philosophers crazy or is there something intelligible going on?  ***So What?*** *Why does it matter today?* Is there something relevant, applicable to my life today?  Don’t overthink the papers. Just answer the two questions, showing you have done the readings.  There are no comments given to these papers, but you are encouraged to discuss them during your seminar with other students.  ***Participation***  If you hand in a reflection paper “and” participate in the seminar, you will receive 2 marks (1 mark for each).  NOTE:  **Both a reflection paper and your participation are necessary to receive any marks.**  **Either 2 marks for both elements or no marks at all (even if you do one of the two things), i.e., if you do not plan on attending the seminar, doing a reflection cannot earn you 1 mark on its own.**  **Both or nothing.**  *You must “****participate****” to get a participation mark, e.g., asking questions, offering comments, providing insight into the material, even just pointing out confusing areas of the material counts.*  *\*It is expected that your camera for our Zoom sessions will be on, just as if we are participating on campus.* |
| **Midterm Exam**  (30%) | * Online exam (take-home) found in “Content” section of CourseLink. * It will contain short-answer questions. * It will cover materials up to and including Unit Six  (Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Chomsky, and Arendt). * *The exam will be open-book*, which means you are free to use your notes and course materials. * But you are expected to work independently. * You will be given a window in which to write the midterm. * Questions will be posted in CourseLink by **9am on** **Monday, Feb. 27th** * Your exam must be uploaded to the relevant dropbox in CourseLink ***no later than* 6pm March 6th.** * *It is recommended that you complete the assignment early to focus on writing the major assignment.* |
| **Research and Argumentation Paper**  (20%) | * 3 pages, about 750 words. * Topics will be posted in CourseLink. * You will research something and then argue for a position. * This assignment will graded with feedback. * Details on format, etc., provided in CourseLink. * To be fair to all students, 2% late deduction per day is necessary (unless accompanied by medical justification). * Due **March 13th** uploaded to dropbox by 11:59pm. |
| **Final Exam**  (30%)  Take-Home | * This will be a take-home exam. * Questions will be provided on CourseLink. * Format will be short-answer essays. * *It will be open-book*. * You must work independently!   **Due Date**  The final exam will be posted in CourseLink by 6pm **April 11th**  You must submit your exam to the dropbox of CourseLink **by 11:59pm April 21st (Friday)** |
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# University Statements

### 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.

### 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 grounds for

Academic Consideration are detailed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.   
Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml Associate

Diploma Calendar - Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/index.shtml

### Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all students (undergraduate, graduate and diploma) except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars. Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml Associate Diploma Calendar - Dropping Courses https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/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.

### 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 make a booking at least 14 days in advance, and no later than November 1 (fall), March 1 (winter) or July 1 (summer). Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time. For Guelph students, information can be found on the SAS website https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas For Ridgetown students, information can be found on the Ridgetown SAS website https://www.ridgetownc.com/services/accessibilityservices.cfm

### Academic Integrity

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 encourages academic integrity. 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. Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml

### Recording of Materials

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

### Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph’s procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs.

Academic Calendars https://www.uoguelph.ca/academics/calendars

### Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings, changes in classroom protocols, and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. This includes on-campus scheduling during the semester, mid-terms and final examination schedules. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/) and circulated by email.

### Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed   
assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g.. final exam or major assignment).

### Covid-19 Safety Protocols

For information on current safety protocols, follow these links:

https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/how-u-of-g-is-preparing-for-your-safe-return/

https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/spaces/#ClassroomSpaces

Please note, these guidelines may be updated as required in response to evolving University, Public Health or government directives.