

**Course Syllabus**  
**Political Philosophy**  
**PHIL 462, Spring, 2017**

**Instructor:** Dr. Matt Zwolinski

**Office Hours:** 1:00-3:30, Mondays and Wednesdays

**Office:** F167A

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**Required Readings:**

Matt Zwolinski, *Arguing About Political Philosophy*, **2nd edition (blue cover)** (Routledge, 2014) [AAPP]

Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty: The Definitive Edition* (Chicago, 2011)

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books, 2013)

G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (Cambridge, 1995)

**Recommended Reading:**

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*

**Content:**

Government is unlike anything else in society. It can take your money without your consent. It can order you to leave your home and fight its wars. And if you disobey it, it can imprison or even kill you. Why is it OK for governments to do these things? Or *is* it OK? How can we tell?

These are some of the basic questions of political philosophy. This course will explore these questions through the careful study of classic and contemporary texts in the field. Our reading list will include some of the founders of modern political philosophy such as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), along with some contemporary figures such as John Rawls (1921-2002), Robert Nozick (1938-2002), Friedrich Hayek (1899-1992), and G.A. Cohen (1941-2009).

In this course, you will learn both philosophic content and philosophic methodology. In terms of content, we will be primarily concerned with questions of *distributive justice* and *political authority*. Questions of distributive justice are questions about who should get what, morally speaking. Is capitalism a fair method of economic organization, if it results in the unequal distribution of wealth? Is it just for property to be held privately by individuals, or is a more collective form of ownership desirable? Should the state be concerned with promoting equality – and if so, what *kind* of equality should it promote? Questions of political authority, on the other hand, are concerned with why and to what extent the state has legitimate power over us. Do governments derive their authority from ‘the consent of the governed’? If so, what does that consent look like (I never signed anything!)? Can the state do anything it wants to us, or are there limits? If there are limits, where do those limits come from?

Apart from the content, you will also learn various skills in philosophic methodology in this course.

- First, you will learn how to read difficult philosophic texts. The readings for this course consist *entirely* of primary sources, and they can be trying. To help you with this, we will spend most of our class periods with the text close at hand, going over it line-by-line in many cases.
- Second, you will learn the skills of conceptual analysis and philosophic argumentation. Much time will be spent in this course getting clear about subtle distinctions between closely related concepts (justice, fairness, desert, etc.), and you will be expected both to be able to analyze the arguments of other philosophers, and to forge new arguments of your own. These are skills that will serve you well in life, from reading the op-ed page of your newspaper, to convincing others to see your point of view.
- Finally, you will learn how to write. Specifically, you will learn how to write analytic, argumentative essays which accurately represent philosophic positions and clearly articulate the reasons behind those positions. Again, this is a skill that will serve you well not only in this course, but in almost any endeavor you take on in life (from writing a cover letter to a resume, to getting yourself out of a parking ticket!).

## Course Requirements:

Philosophical readings are dense and difficult. It will probably take longer than you expect to read them once, and it will probably be necessary to re-read most pieces at least once in order to come to an adequate understanding of the material. You should expect to spend at least **six hours per week** outside of class time reading and re-reading the material. If you do this, you will have a much easier time with the short writing assignments, which should probably take up an additional **five to six hours each** in preparation time.

The requirements set out in this syllabus are subject to revision at the instructor's discretion.

- **Quizzes** – I will give **5-10 unannounced, multiple-choice quizzes** over the course of the semester. The purpose of these quizzes is to test your completion and comprehension of the day's reading assignment, and to encourage attendance at class. Three things to note about them:
  - First, quizzes are given at the very beginning of class. You will not be allowed extra time to take them if you are late, and **you will not be allowed to make them up** if you miss them. So it is to your advantage to show up and be seated on time every day.
  - Second, **you will receive a zero for any quiz that you miss, for any reason.** However, at the end of the semester, I will **drop your two lowest quiz scores.** Missing a quiz will thus not destroy your grade. But you will have a better chance of excelling in the course if you show up regularly.
  - Finally, these quizzes are very difficult, so it is vital that you read the material carefully and in advance of class. Read the material actively, with pen (or computer) in hand to take notes. And feel free – encouraged, even – to come to office hours any time to discuss any difficulties you might be having with the readings or the quizzes.
- **Papers** – I will assign three writing assignments over the course of the semester. These papers will be relatively short – **no less than two and no more than three pages** (typed, double-spaced, 1 inch margins and normal fonts) in length. I will assign a topic for these papers which will involve two tasks: 1) **reconstructing an argument** or arguments from one or more of the readings we have covered in class, and 2) providing an **original critical evaluation** of that/those argument(s). These papers are short not to make life easy for you but in order to force you to think carefully about what is essential to an argument and what is not. I will grade these papers with an eye to *detail* and *conceptual rigor*. Expect to be challenged.
  - **Late papers:** Papers are due on Turnitin.com (see below) at the beginning of the class period on the day indicated on the schedule below. **Late papers will be penalized 5 percentage points per day**, without exception.
- **Final Exam** – Your final exam will be a **take-home, essay-based exam.** This exam will test your understanding of and ability to critically engage with the material we have covered over the course of the semester. I will give you a list of possible essay questions toward the end of the semester, three of which will appear on the exam itself. Then, on the date and time of your scheduled final exam (**Monday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 11:00 AM**), I will post the exam to Blackboard. You will have **two hours to complete and return the exam.** External research is permitted, but not required. You may talk with other students about the exam questions, so long as the final essays are your own work.
- **Participation** – Philosophy is best learned through active conversation with others. It is therefore important that you be a regular participant in classroom discussions. Ideally, you will be sufficiently engaged with the material to contribute to these discussions spontaneously and voluntarily. As an additional stimulus, however, I will engage in regular Socratic questioning of students – typically one lucky student per class period. This process will involve me asking you questions about both what the readings said and what you think about them. These questions will become increasingly difficult as the process continues, but the point is not for you to get the answers “right,” so don't be afraid to stumble. The point is for you to demonstrate preparation and thoughtfulness, and to help your fellow students think through some very difficult issues. To the extent that you do this, you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade. Well thought-out contributions to the website will also count toward your participation grade.

## Your Grade

Each activity in this class is worth a certain number of points. Your grade will be determined based on a straight (un-curved) analysis of percentage of points earned vs. total points possible.

Quizzes 5-10 @ 5 points each	25-50
3 Short Papers @ 20 points each	60
Participation	20
Final Exam	40
Total Points:	145-160

A+	97 - 100%
A	93 - 96.9
A-	90 - 92.9
B+	87 - 89.9
B	83 - 86.9
B-	80 - 82.9
C+	77 - 79.9
C	73 - 76.9
C-	70 - 72.9
D+	67 - 67.9
D	63 - 66.9
D-	60 - 62.9
F	59.9 or below

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course...

- Students should be able to describe, in essay form, the major types of political theory: e.g., libertarian, liberal egalitarian, socialist.
- Students should be able to identify and discuss the different moral foundations of various political theories: e.g., utilitarian, contractarian, natural rights.
- Students should be able to critically evaluate some of the particular positions taken by political philosophers in essay form.

## Respect

This is a course in ethics, broadly construed, and one of the fundamental ethical values we will study is *respect*. I will treat you with respect in this course, and expect you to do the same for me and your fellow students. What this means in practice is (at a minimum):

*For me:*

- I will arrive on time and prepared for each class meeting scheduled on the syllabus.
- I will take student questions seriously and attempt to address them as helpfully as I can within the constraints of class time.
- I will keep my scheduled office hours, or provide advance notice if this is not possible.
- I will return written assignments within a reasonable time and provide you with ample constructive criticism and an adequate explanation of your grade.
- I will treat you as an adult. Part of what this means is taking your philosophical opinions seriously. But taking your views seriously does not mean treating you with kid gloves. It means that I will assume that you have put some thought into your position and that I will hold you accountable for it, and challenge you when appropriate. I expect the same from you.
- I will respect your time and not give you “busy work.”

*For you:*

- You will respect the opinions of your classmates, and respond to them with seriousness, courtesy, and charity.
- You will show up to class on time.
- You will read the material assigned for class prior to the meeting at which we are scheduled to discuss it.
- You will take responsibility for turning in your written assignments on time.
- You will respect my time and the time of your fellow students by helping to make our time together as productive and conducive to learning as possible.

## Integrity

Doing your own work is part of what it means to have respect for me, for your fellow students, and for yourself.

As above, my treating you with respect involves treating you like an adult. As an adult, you are responsible for knowing the University’s regulations concerning Academic Integrity. **“I didn’t know it was plagiarism” is not an excuse.** Any violation of the Code of Academic Integrity is grounds for failure from the class in addition to any further penalties deemed appropriate by the Academic Integrity Committee.

USD subscribes to a service called Turnitin.com. Turnitin.com is a web-based application that compares the content of submitted papers to the Turnitin.com database and checks for textual similarities. All required papers for this course may be subject to submission to Turnitin.com for textual similarity review and to verify originality. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting textual similarities and verifying originality. Each student is responsible for submitting his or her papers in such a way that no identifying information about the student is included. A student may not have anyone else submit papers on the student’s behalf to Turnitin.com. A student may request in writing that his or her papers not be submitted to Turnitin.com. However, if a student chooses this option, the student may be required to provide documentation in a form required by the faculty member to substantiate that the papers are the student’s original work.

## KEY DATES AT A GLANCE

Feb 17	-	First Writing Assignment Due
Mar 6 – Mar 10	-	No class: Spring Break
Mar 20	-	Second Writing Assignment Due
Apr 7	-	No class: instructor away
Apr 13 – Apr 17	-	No class: Easter Break
May 1	-	Third Writing Assignment Due
May 22	-	Take Home Final Exam: 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

### Schedule of Readings for PHIL 462: Political Philosophy Spring, 2017 Professor Matt Zwolinski

#### Introduction

1 Jan 27 Course Overview / What's Your Political Philosophy?

#### Hobbes

2 Jan 30 The State of Nature as a State of War  
Thomas Hobbes, excerpts from *Leviathan* [AAPP, pp. 7-10]

3 Feb 1 The Laws of Nature  
Thomas Hobbes, excerpts from *Leviathan* [AAPP, pp. 10-14]

4 Feb 3 The Social Contract  
Thomas Hobbes, excerpts from *Leviathan* [AAPP, pp. 14-22]

#### Locke

5 Feb 6 The State of Nature and the Law of Nature  
John Locke, excerpts from *Second Treatise* [AAPP, pp. 41-46]

6 Feb 8 Property  
John Locke, excerpts from *Second Treatise* [AAPP, pp. 359-366]

7 Feb 10 The Social Contract  
John Locke, excerpts from *Second Treatise* [**Blackboard**, chapters 7, 9, 11, 19]

#### Mill

8 Feb 13 Utilitarianism  
John Stuart Mill, excerpts from *Utilitarianism* [AAPP, pp. 194-196]

9 Feb 15 The Harm Principle  
John Stuart Mill, excerpts from *On Liberty* [AAPP, pp. 447-452]

10 Feb 17 The Limits of Authority  
**First Writing Assignment Due**  
John Stuart Mill, excerpts from *On Liberty* [AAPP, pp. 452-462]

#### Smith and Marx

- 11 Feb 20 The Wealth of Nations  
Adam Smith, excerpts from *The Wealth of Nations* [AAPP, pp. 318-329]
- 12 Feb 22 The Communist Manifesto  
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels [AAPP, pp. 295-308]
- 13 Feb 24 Exploitation and Alienation  
Karl Marx, excerpts from *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* [Blackboard]

### Rawls

- 14 Feb 27 The Original Position  
John Rawls, excerpts from *A Theory of Justice* [AAPP, pp. 211-217]
- 15 Mar 1 The Right and the Good  
John Rawls, excerpts from *A Theory of Justice* [AAPP, pp. 217-223]
- 16 Mar 3 The Two Principles of Justice  
John Rawls, excerpts from *A Theory of Justice* [AAPP, pp. 223-235]

### **March 6-10 – Spring Break – No classes**

### Hayek

- 17 Mar 13 Liberty and Creativity  
Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, chapters 1-2
- 18 Mar 15 Freedom, Reason, and Tradition  
Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, chapter 4
- 19 Mar 17 Responsibility and Equality  
Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, chapters 5-6
- 20 Mar 20 Democracy and Independence  
**Second Writing Assignment Due**  
Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, chapters 7-8
- 21 Mar 22 Coercion and Law  
Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, chapters 9-10
- 22 Mar 24 The Safeguards of Individual Liberty  
Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, chapter 14
- 23 Mar 27 Economic Policy and the Rule of Law  
Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, chapter 15
- 24 Mar 29 Social Security  
Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, chapter 19
- 25 Mar 31 Liberalism vs. Conservatism  
Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, Postscript, “Why I Am Not a Conservative”

### Nozick

- 26 April 3 The State of Nature  
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Preface and chapters 1-2

27 April 5 Moral Constraints and the State  
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, chapter 3

***April 7 – Instructor Away – No class***

28 April 10 Prohibition, Compensation, and Risk  
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, chapter 4

29 April 12 The State  
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, chapter 5

***April 13-17 – Easter Break – No classes***

30 Apr 19 Liberty and Pattern  
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, chapter 7, pp. 149-164

31 Apr 21 Property Rights  
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, chapter 7, pp. 167-182

32 Apr 24 Against Rawls' Theory  
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, chapter 7, pp. 183-231

33 Apr 26 Equality, Envy, Exploitation, Etc.  
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, chapter 8

34 Apr 28 A Framework for Utopia  
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, chapter 9

**Cohen**

35 May 1 Wilt Chamberlain Revisited: How Patterns Preserve Liberty  
***Third Writing Assignment Due***  
G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*, Introduction and chapter 1

36 May 3 Justice, Freedom, and Market Transactions  
G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*, chapter 2

37 May 5 Self-Ownership, World-Ownership, and Equality  
G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*, chapter 3

38 May 8 Are Freedom and Equality Compatible?  
G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*, chapter 4

39 May 10 Why Nozick Exercises some Marxists More than he Does Any Egalitarian Liberals  
G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*, chapter 6

40 May 12 Self-Ownership: Delineating the Concept  
G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*, chapter 9

41 May 15

Self-Ownership: Assessing the Thesis

G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*, chapter 10

Final Exam: May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM