

PHILOS 355: Political Philosophy

Instructor: Eric Wilkinson
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Lectures: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10:00am
Office Hours: By Appointment

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Course Description:

This course examines several topics central to political philosophy through the works of prominent political philosophers from multiple traditions. In particular, we will discuss the origin of the state, the justification of political authority, the nature of freedom, and approaches to political economy. These subjects are introduced through writings of some of the most influential political thinkers in Western philosophy, including Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, and John Stuart Mill, among others. Additionally, the class explores parallels and critiques of these thinkers' views from other traditions, such as Chinese and North American Indigenous philosophy. Upon completing this course, students will have both a strong foundation in the canonical writings of political philosophy, and will be familiar with a range of approaches to key political questions.

Assessment & Grading:

<i>Assignment:</i>	<i>Due Date:</i>	<i>Weight:</i>	<i>Description:</i>
Reading Responses	Weekly	10%	Weekly reading responses of about 250 words.
Short Answers	September 30 th	20%	A take-home test of short-answer questions.
Midterm Paper	October 31 st	25%	A 5-page, double-spaced argumentative paper
Paper Proposal	November 21 st	10%	A one-page proposal for the final paper.
Final Paper	December 15 th	35%	A ten-page argumentative paper.

Communication Policy: Before emailing, please consult the syllabus for an answer to your query. When emailing, use your university email address and allow at least 48 hours to receive a response.

Late Policy & Extensions: The penalty for late assignment submission is five percent (5%) a day. Extensions will be assessed individually and granted mainly for medical reasons or bereavement.

Disability Accommodations: Those who require disability accommodations must register with the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC). ARC will assist students in determining their needs and will help to communicate the accommodations registered students require to the course instructor.

Academic Integrity: The University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee values academic integrity. Thus, students should understand the consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offences.

Course Schedule
September 5th – December 12th, 2024

Date:	Lecture Topic:	Required Readings:	Supplemental Readings:
September 5 th	Introduction	• Course Syllabus	• No Readings
September 10 th	The Nature of the State	• Excerpts from <i>Leviathan</i> (Thomas Hobbes)	• <i>Leviathan</i> – Book I, Chapter VI (Thomas Hobbes)
September 12 th			
September 17 th	Disorder and Moral Unity	• Exalting Unity I-III (Mozi)	• “Order, Objectivity, and Efficacy” (Chris Fraser)
September 19 th			
September 24 th	Property and the Origin of the State	• <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (John Locke)	• <i>The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism</i> (C.B. Macpherson)
September 26 th			
October 1 st	Social Order and Liberty	• Excerpts from <i>Dialogues</i> (Kondiaronk & Lahontan)	• <i>For An Amerindian Autohistory</i> (Georges Sioui)
October 3 rd			
October 8 th	The General Will	• <i>On the Social Contract</i> (Jean-Jacques Rousseau)	• <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> (Jean-Jacques Rousseau)
October 10 th			
October 15 th	Conceptions of Liberty	• <i>The Liberty of Ancients Compared with that of Moderns</i> (Benjamin Constant)	• “Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Benjamin Constant” (M.E. Brint)
October 17 th			
October 22 nd	Rights, Revolution, and Tradition	• <i>The Rights of Man</i> (Thomas Paine)	• <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> (Edmund Burke)
October 24 th			
October 29 th	The Rights and Equality of Women	• <i>The Vindication of the Rights of Women</i> (Mary Wollstonecraft)	• “On the Equality of the Two Sexes” (François Poullain de la Barre)
October 31 st			

November 5 th	A Defence of Liberty	• <i>On Liberty</i> – Chapter IV (John Stuart Mill)	• <i>On Liberty</i> – Chapter II (John Stuart Mill)
November 7 th			
November 12 th	Classical Political Economy	• <i>The Wealth of Nations</i> (Adam Smith)	• “A Classical Garden of Liberal Economics” (Colander & Freedman)
November 14 th			
November 19 th	Critiques of Capitalism	• Excerpts from Various Works (Karl Marx)	• <i>The Conquest of Bread</i> (Peter Kropotkin)
November 21 st			
November 26 th	Fall Recess – No Lecture	• No Readings	• No Readings
November 28 th			
December 3 rd	Distributive Justice	• <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (John Rawls)	• <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> (Robert Nozick)
December 5 th			
December 10 th	Review	• No Readings	• No Readings
December 12 th			

Remote Delivery:

This is an asynchronous online course. Therefore, there is no in-person instruction or assessments. Each week, the lectures are posted to the course website on Tuesdays and Thursdays by 10:00am. All readings are also available on the course website; the reading schedule is found in this syllabus.

Reading Responses:

Beginning in the second week of the course (September 10th), students must post a weekly reading response on Canvas on its Discussion Board. The reading responses can take the form of questions, comments, or counter-arguments to the readings, but must illustrate engagement with the material.