

The following syllabus is a proposed syllabus for a semester-long historical introduction to political philosophy.

## **Introduction to Political Philosophy (lower-division course)**

### **INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

Meetings: TBA  
Instructor: Jonathan Gingerich, [jgingerich@humnet.ucla.edu](mailto:jgingerich@humnet.ucla.edu)  
TAs: TBA  
Cell: [see course website] (I'm unlikely to answer texts and calls after 7 PM)  
Office Hours: TBA  
Website: TBA

### **Course Description**

This course provides a historical introduction to political philosophy. We will focus our attention on the question: how best can we live together in a society? We will consider how a wide variety of philosophers throughout history have answered this question and, along the way, we'll learn what philosophers have thought about related questions like "what is justice?," "what is equality?," "what is freedom?," and "what is oppression?" This course will address these questions by reading historical texts in political theory, including Plato, Rousseau, Kant, Marx, Du Bois, and Selma James. We'll also read a science fiction novel by Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, which will provide an opportunity to think about other methodological approaches to answering the question of how best to live together in a society.

By taking this class, students will learn: how to think philosophically about politics, how to communicate clearly and persuasively about theoretical topics (orally and in writing), how to think independently about arguments and decisions, how to read historical texts with the aim of identifying their philosophical assumptions and arguments, how to write a political philosophy essay, and how to take pleasure in the challenges of careful and rigorous reading and thinking.

### **Texts**

The following books need to be purchased for the class:

Plato, *Republic*, translated by C.D.C. Reeve, ISBN 978-0-87220-736-3

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*, translated by Donald A. Cress, ISBN 978-1603846738

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ISBN 0-300-09610-0

Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*, ISBN 978-0061054884

All other readings will be available on the course website.

These books will be available through the campus bookstore, and they are available used from Amazon and many other online booksellers. You will also need a notebook for the commonplace book assignment (described below). If it is difficult for you to obtain these texts for financial reasons or otherwise, please contact me and I will make arrangements to ensure that you have access to the texts.

It is important that you get a copy of the precise edition of these books listed here (that is, your copy should have the ISBN number listed above), because our discussion of these books will go best if everyone is working with the same page numbers.

It is essential that you complete the assigned reading in advance of the lectures that are devoted to the material. Many of the texts are dense, and I encourage you to read them at least twice. We'll discuss strategies for reading these texts during the first week of class.

### **Screen Free Classroom**

To avoid distractions and to promote lively participation, thoughtful note taking, and good cheer, I ask that you bring (1) a paper notepad, (2) a writing utensil, and (3) a paper copy of the reading to every class meeting, and **refrain from using your cell phones, tablets, and laptops in class**. Please notify me if special circumstances, such as an injury or a disability, require you to take notes electronically. Please also notify me if obtaining hard copies of the course materials poses a problem for you.

### **Graded Coursework**

- 5% Attendance and participation
  - 20% Commonplace book (making regular entries in a notebook used to collect observations, notes, quotations or images along a common theme)
  - 15% Midterm Exam
  - 10% Short essay (2 pages)
  - 20% Final exam
  - 30% Final essay (7-8 pages)
- Breakdown of Final Essay Grade:
- 5% Rough draft (pass/fail)
  - 15% Peer editing assignment
  - 80% Final draft

### **Participation**

By attending class and talking through the texts that we read with me and your fellow students, you will improve your ability to clearly orally articulate views and arguments about political philosophy. To participate effectively, it is essential to carefully read the assigned reading before section meetings.

Attendance and participation grades will be based on engagement in class discussion, including actively listening to and supportively engaging with other participants, arriving fully prepared for discussion, and routinely making comments that advance the discussion. Failure to attend class, failure to participate, and failure to engage with other participants can negatively affect your section attendance and participation grade, while particularly insightful contributions and attentive engagement with other participants can positively affect your grade. I will advise you of where your participation grade stands throughout the quarter.

### **Commonplace Book**

A commonplace book is a notebook that collects ideas, observations, quotations and arguments and organizes them thematically. Many students and scholars kept commonplace books in the European

Renaissance and early modern period, using them as a resource to store and retrieve information. You will keep a commonplace book for this class.

The goal of this assignment is to help you draw connections across the books and stories that we read, to provide a store of information and ideas that you can draw on when you write your term paper, and to provide you with an opportunity to reflect on connections between the material that we discuss in class and your own life.

There is not a single method for creating a commonplace book, but it is important that you use it regularly (every day or every other day) and that you systematically organize it.

Some suggestions for ways in which you might use your commonplace include:

- Think about the overarching philosophical questions that we consider in class (What is freedom? What is democracy? How are freedom and equality related?) and create pages or sections of your commonplace book with these headings. As you read, when you find something that is related to the topic, write down the quotation or your idea along with the author and the page number.
- If you find a particularly interesting topic or question as you read, make a new page or section in your commonplace book focused on that topic. As you find related quotations in other books that we read, add them to that section of your commonplace book.
- When you come across a related idea in reading that you're doing for another class or for fun or a movie or TV show that you're watching or a conversation with friends over lunch or dinner, jot it down in the commonplace book.
- You can also use your commonplace book in class or in section—for instance, to jot down a question that you don't get a chance to ask, or a connection that you notice between readings and lecture.

*Grading:* A few times during the term, at unspecified times, they will be collected and graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis for evidence that you have put effort into compiling a commonplace book that works for you. Commonplace books will be graded using the rubric that appears at the end of this syllabus.

You should **bring your commonplace book with you to lecture every day**, both so that you can use it to take down ideas that you have during lecture and so that you can hand it in if commonplace books are collected that day.

### Examinations

There will be two examinations, **a midterm administered in class at the end of week 9 and a final exam.**

### Short Essay

A short expository essay, of 2 pages, double-spaced, will be **due through the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of week 6.** Topics will be announced at the beginning of week 5.

### Long Essay

An essay is required, of 7-8 pages, double-spaced, in which you will construct your view about what a utopian state would look like. Further details about this assignment will be provided by the end of week 9.

**Abstract:** A 300 word abstract of your final paper is due through the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of week 11. The abstract is not a commitment, and you may change your mind about what you write in your final paper, but you will receive feedback to help you improve your final paper.

**Rough Draft:** You will develop your essay ideas by helping one another with feedback on a rough draft. Giving feedback on your peers' writing also helps you to take up the perspective of the reader in thinking through what makes for a good philosophy essay. To be ready for the collaborative editing process, you will submit a **rough, partial draft of your final essay (around 5-6 pages long), due on the course website by 5 PM on Friday of week 13. Also bring two hard copies to class for our first lecture in week 14.** This draft will not be letter-graded: everyone who turns in a satisfactory draft by the deadline will get full credit, whereas those not turning in a draft will receive a zero for this portion of the grade. You must complete your draft on time to participate in the peer editing exercise.

**Peer Editing Exercise:** We will have a **collaborative editing exercise in class for our second lecture of week 14.** In addition to the in-class exercise, you will **submit written comments on another student's paper by 5:00 pm on Monday of week 15.** You will submit your comments by email to your partner as well as through the course website. Because your partner will rely on your comments in revising their paper, extensions will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances.

**Final Essay:** The final essay is **due on the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of the final week of class.** Aside from last minute emergencies, extensions must be arranged at least 24 hours in advance. Essays will be graded using the rubric that appears at the end of this syllabus.

### **Academic Integrity**

You are expected to abide by the university's policies on academic misconduct. A few important reminders about academic integrity are relevant to the writing assignments for this seminar: You should write your own papers and properly attribute ideas and words that you include in your writing. If you copy someone else's words into your assignment word for word, indicate that these words are a quotation, by enclosing them in quotation marks or setting them off from the text. Also provide a citation that includes enough information that your reader could locate the material that you're citing. (I don't care what style of citation you use. For our course materials, you can just give the author's last name and a page number.) You should also provide a citation if you paraphrase someone else's idea in your own writing. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please ask.

### **Schedule of Lectures and Reading Assignments**

- I. UNIT 1: Introduction to the Course; The Greeks
  - A. Lecture 1
    - 1. Introductory lecture; no assigned reading
  - B. Lecture 2
    - 1. Thucydides, "The Melian Dialogue" (course website)
    - 2. Paul Cartledge, "The Greek Invention of the *Polis*, of Politics and of the Political"
- II. UNIT 2: What is Justice?
  - A. Lecture 3
    - 1. Plato, *Republic* book I
  - B. Lecture 4
    - 1. Plato, *Republic* book II

- C. Lecture 5
  - 1. Plato, *Republic* book III
- D. Lecture 6
  - 1. Plato, *Republic* book IV
- E. Lecture 7
  - 1. Plato, *Republic* book V
- F. Lecture 8
  - 1. Plato, *Republic* book VI
- G. Lecture 9
  - 1. Plato, *Republic* book VII
- H. Lecture 10
  - 1. Plato, *Republic* book VIII
  - 2. **TOPICS FOR SHORT ESSAYS ANNOUNCED**
- I. Lecture 11
  - 1. Plato, *Republic* book IX
- J. Lecture 12
  - 1. Plato, *Republic* book X
  - 2. **SHORT ESSAYS DUE THROUGH TURNITIN BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- III. UNIT 3: Equality and Inequality
  - A. Lecture 13
    - 1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, books II (ch. 1-3), V (ch. 3), X (ch. 1-3) (course website)
  - B. Lecture 14
    - 1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Mankind*, Preface and First Part
  - C. Lecture 15
    - 1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Mankind*, Second Part
  - D. Lecture 16
    - 1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, Book I
  - E. Lecture 17
    - 1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, Book II
  - F. Lecture 18
    - 1. **MIDTERM EXAM, TO BE HELD IN CLASS**
- IV. UNIT 4: Liberalism and its Critics
  - A. Lecture 19
    - 1. Immanuel Kant, "Of the Relation of Theory to Practice in the Right of a State" (course website)
  - B. Lecture 20
    - 1. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chapter 1
  - C. Lecture 21
    - 1. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chapter 2
  - D. Lecture 22
    - 1. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chapters 3-4
    - 2. **FINAL ESSAY ABSTRACTS DUE ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
  - E. Lecture 23
    - 1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, parts 1-2, 4 (course website)
  - F. Lecture 24
    - 1. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, selections (course website)
- V. UNIT 5: Race, Sex, Oppression, Utopia

- A. Lecture 25
  - 1. Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, ch 1-4
- B. Lecture 26
  - 1. Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, ch 5-8
  - 2. **FINAL ESSAY ROUGH DRAFT DUE ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- C. Lecture 27
  - 1. Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, ch 9-13
- D. Lecture 28
  - 1. **PEER EDITING WORKSHOP IN CLASS (BRING TWO HARD COPIES OF YOUR ROUGH DRAFT TO CLASS)**
  - 2. **PEER EDITING COMMENTS DUE TO YOUR PARTNER AND ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON MONDAY**
- E. Lecture 29
  - 1. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, forethought and chapters 1-2 (course website)
- F. Lecture 30
  - 1. Catharine MacKinnon, *Sex Equality*, 2nd edition, chapter 1 (course website)
- G. Lecture 31
  - 1. Selma James, "Sex, Race, and Class" (course website)
- H. Lecture 32
  - 1. Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference" (course website)
  - 2. **FINAL ESSAY DUE ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- VI. EXAM WEEK
  - A. **FINAL EXAMINATION (DATE AND TIME TBA)**

## Grading Rubric for Essays

|             |                  |   |
|-------------|------------------|---|
| A, A-       | Excellent essay  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is straightforward and easy to read.</li> <li>• Essay is clearly organized so that paragraphs clearly flow from one another and the reader is never lost.</li> <li>• Essay topic clearly sets out a significant political problem or question and makes the reader care about it.</li> <li>• Exposition shows mastery of the materials used and conveys complete comprehension to the reader. Exposition provides a new point of access to the material discussed.</li> <li>• Essay advances an insightful, creative, or very thoughtful theoretical argument that is well supported. Demonstrates awareness of significant objections to the position it advances and responds effectively to them.</li> </ul>  |
| B+, B, B-   | Good essay       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is readable, although some sentences may be difficult.</li> <li>• Essay is coherently organized, but the reader is sometimes lost.</li> <li>• Essay topic sets out a significant political problem or question, although the essay may fail to show the reader why they should care about the topic.</li> <li>• Exposition of materials contains no major mistakes and effectively conveys the central arguments and themes to the reader.</li> <li>• Essay advances a theoretical argument and provides support for it although the argument might contain minor errors or need more development in places. Demonstrates independent thought about the topic and awareness of significant objections to the position it advances.</li> </ul>  |
| C+, C, C-   | Adequate essay   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Many sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical.</li> <li>• Essay is poorly organized and the reader is often lost.</li> <li>• Essay topic provides an opportunity to exposit and argue about course materials but is not otherwise politically significant.</li> <li>• Exposition shows a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical and literary texts discussed but does not effectively convey it to the reader.</li> <li>• Essay advances a theoretical argument. There may be serious problems with the argument, but the argument has promise of amounting to more than mere counter-assertion. Essay rehashes reading or lecture material rather than demonstrating independent thought about the topic.</li> </ul> |
| D+ or lower | Inadequate essay | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Most sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical and it is very difficult for the reader to understand the author's meaning.</li> <li>• Essay is unorganized and it is unclear to the reader why one paragraph follows another.</li> <li>• Essay topic poses a coherent question but is unrelated to the political themes of the course.</li> <li>• Exposition fails to show a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the texts discussed.</li> <li>• Essay makes large argumentative errors or amounts to mere counter-assertion and fails to demonstrate original thought about the material.</li> </ul>   |
| F           | Failing essay    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essay does not make a good faith effort to meet the requirements of the assignment.</li> </ul>   |

## Grading Rubric for Essays

|             |                  |  |
|-------------|------------------|--|
| A, A-       | Excellent essay  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is straightforward and easy to read.</li> <li>• Essay is clearly organized so that paragraphs clearly flow from one another and the reader is never lost.</li> <li>• Essay topic clearly sets out a significant philosophical problem or question and makes the reader care about it.</li> <li>• Exposition shows mastery of the philosophical materials used and conveys complete comprehension to the reader. Exposition provides a new point of access to the material discussed.</li> <li>• Essay advances an insightful, creative, or very thoughtful philosophical argument that is well supported. Demonstrates awareness of significant objections to the position it advances and responds effectively to them.</li> </ul>   |
| B+, B, B-   | Good essay       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is readable, although some sentences may be difficult.</li> <li>• Essay is coherently organized, but the reader is sometimes lost.</li> <li>• Essay topic sets out a significant philosophical problem or question, although the essay may fail to show the reader why they should care about the topic.</li> <li>• Exposition of philosophical materials contains no major mistakes and effectively conveys the central arguments and themes to the reader.</li> <li>• Essay advances a philosophical argument and provides support for it although the argument might contain minor errors or need more development in places. Demonstrates independent thought about the topic and awareness of significant objections to the position it advances.</li> </ul>                     |
| C+, C, C-   | Adequate essay   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Many sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical.</li> <li>• Essay is poorly organized and the reader is often lost.</li> <li>• Essay topic provides an opportunity to exposit and argue about course materials but is not otherwise philosophically significant.</li> <li>• Exposition shows a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed but does not effectively convey it to the reader.</li> <li>• Essay advances a philosophical argument. There may be serious problems with the argument, but the argument has promise of amounting to more than mere counter-assertion. Essay rehashes reading or lecture material rather than demonstrating independent thought about the topic.</li> </ul> |
| D+ or lower | Inadequate essay | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Most sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical and it is very difficult for the reader to understand the author's meaning.</li> <li>• Essay is unorganized and it is unclear to the reader why one paragraph follows another.</li> <li>• Essay topic poses a coherent question but is unrelated to the philosophical or literary themes of the course.</li> <li>• Exposition fails to show a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed.</li> <li>• Essay makes large argumentative errors or amounts to mere counter-assertion and fails to demonstrate original thought about the material.</li> </ul>  |
| F           | Failing essay    | Essay does not make a good faith effort to meet the requirements of the assignment.  |

### Grading Rubric for Attendance and Participation

|   |                          |   |
|---|--------------------------|---|
| A | Excellent participation  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student almost always attends class.</li> <li>• Student is engaged in discussion, including actively listening to and supportively engaging with other participants, arriving fully prepared for discussion, and routinely making comments that advance the discussion.</li> </ul> |
| B | Good participation       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student attends class most of the time.</li> <li>• Student treats other students respectfully but does not regularly engage with other participants or contribute to discussion.</li> </ul>  |
| C | Adequate participation   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student only irregularly attends class.</li> <li>• Student treats other students respectfully but does not regularly engage with other participants or contribute to discussion.</li> </ul>  |
| F | Inadequate participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student never attends class or does not treat other students respectfully in discussion.</li> </ul>  |

### Grading Rubric for Commonplace Books

|   |                            |  |
|---|----------------------------|--|
| A | Excellent commonplace book | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonplace book shows evidence of thinking deeply and independently about philosophical questions considered in class and how they connect to the literary texts that we read.</li> <li>• Commonplace book engages with all or almost all of the assigned reading for the course.</li> <li>• Commonplace book shows evidence of regular, ongoing student engagement.</li> </ul>                      |
| B | Good commonplace book      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonplace book shows evidence of thinking about philosophical questions considered in class and how they connect to the literary texts that we read.</li> <li>• Commonplace book engages with the majority of the assigned reading for the course.</li> <li>• Commonplace book shows evidence of moderate student engagement.</li> </ul>  |
| C | Adequate commonplace book  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonplace book shows intermittent evidence of thinking about philosophical questions considered in class and how they connect to the literary texts that we read.</li> <li>• Commonplace book engages with some of the assigned reading for the course.</li> <li>• Commonplace book shows evidence of student engagement.</li> </ul>  |
| F | Inadequate participation   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonplace book does not show evidence of thinking about philosophical questions considered in class and how they connect to the literary texts that we read.</li> <li>• Commonplace book does not show evidence that that the student has completed assigned reading for the course.</li> <li>• Commonplace book does not show evidence of regular engagement with readings or lectures.</li> </ul> |