

## PHIL 174 Freedom, Equality, and Social Justice

Fall 2015

Lectures: MW 2:00—3:20pm

Location: GFS 106

Discussions: T or TH 8am, 9am, or 10am in MHP 102

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### Course Description

What is a just society? How should our major political, economic, and legal institutions be designed if our goal is to live in a just society? How should we understand the relationship between allegedly conflicting political values or ideals within a just society? In particular, how should we balance the demands of freedom and equality? What does equality of opportunity mean, and is this a social ideal to which we should aspire? Is there any sense in which wages in a free market economy can be unjust or exploitative? How does any government gain the authority to make laws and coercively impose those laws on citizens? Can laws ever be legitimate if they are not just? Do we have duties of justice arising from wrongs committed by past generations? Do we owe duties of justice to future generations?

This course will focus on these questions, among others, and in doing so, provide you with the opportunity to think critically about questions that are both philosophically interesting and politically important.

### Required Texts

All the required texts will be posted on Blackboard.

*Note that it is strictly forbidden to use and/or distribute these texts for any purpose other than reading for the class. Doing so would constitute a copyright violation.*

## Grading

Midterm paper: 1/3 of provisional grade  
 Final exam: 2/3 of provisional grade

Your grades on the midterm and the final exam constitute your *provisional* grade for the course. Your *final* grade can also be affected by your *preparation*, *participation*, and *attendance* during discussion sections. More on all this below.

The midterm paper must be 2,000-2,300 words in length. You are required to submit the essay via Blackboard. There will be a penalty of one letter grade increment for every day after the deadline an essay is submitted. So, for example, if you submit your paper one day late, and the paper is judged to be worth an A, you will only receive an A- grade for the paper. If you submit the same paper two days late, it will receive a grade of B+, and so on. Note that a submission on the correct date but after the 5pm deadline will count as one day late.

The midterm paper is due **Friday October 02, at 5pm.**

The final exam will be **Friday December 11, 2-4pm.**

Further details about the content of the midterm paper and the final exam will be provided in due course. Please see the University Catalogue or Grade Handbook for definitions of particular grades.

*Preparation:* Each week, except for the first week, you must write approximately 250-300 words on the week's readings, which must be submitted to your discussion section instructor at the outset of class. You can choose to provide a brief summary of one part of the week's reading, or you can provide your own analysis or critique of some part of the weekly reading (e.g. explain why you think the author is mistaken about some point, or discuss some point that is puzzling you). These assignments will not be graded, but they must be completed each week to a minimal standard. Students who fail to submit their weekly writing assignment (or hand in assignments that fails to meet the minimum standard) more than twice will have their final grade *lowered by one grade increment*. So, for example, if your provisional grade is a B+, but you fail to submit your writing assignments three or more times, then your final grade will drop to a B. Successfully completing the weekly writing assignments is thus a way of *maintaining* your provisional grade. These weekly assignments provide

you with an extra incentive to keep up with the weekly readings and come prepared to each discussion section.

*Participation:* Participation in discussion sections is an important part of making the course a success. Students who regularly make excellent class contributions in discussion sections will, at the end of the course, have their overall grade increased by one letter grade increment. So, for example, if your provisional grade is a B+ but you regularly make excellent contributions to your discussion section, your final grade will be an A-. Note: *your performance in class discussion can only improve your final grade*—it cannot diminish your final grade.

*Attendance:* Class attendance is *mandatory*. I reserve the right to lower your final grade if you are repeatedly absent from your discussion section without a valid and verifiable excuse.

### **Preparation for Class/Class Format**

The format for the course is a combination of lectures and discussion, and you are encouraged to ask questions of me, your discussion instructor, and of each other whenever something is puzzling, or whenever you feel an important point is being overlooked. The aim of the course is to have thoughtful and well-reasoned discussions and arguments about the issues, and the course will be more intellectually rewarding the more each person joins in the discussion. Participating in discussion sections is also a small part of how you will be assessed (see above). If you are particularly uncomfortable with public speaking, please speak to your discussion section instructor about this.

You will be expected to come to the discussion sections having done the required reading. When you prepare for class, it's important not simply to read the assigned material, but to read it carefully and critically. This may be the first time you have read philosophical work, and the style of writing and argument can take some getting used to. You will see from the syllabus that I have not assigned a great deal of reading for each week measured in terms of the number of pages, but the material is sometimes dense and difficult: a lot of complicated arguments can be found in the space of just a few pages, and this means you may need to read the material more than once to gain a clear understanding of an author's argument. I strongly encourage you to make careful notes as you read. Of course different people have different methods of note-taking, but whatever your method, you should be taking notes in a way that will help you achieve the following aims:

- Gain a clear understanding of the author's main claims and the arguments the author uses to try and establish these claims. You have a clear understanding when you can accurately summarize the author's key claims and arguments in your own words.
- Identify any terms/claims/ideas that remain puzzling to you.
- Try to understand how the author's view might be challenged. This means you must read with a critical eye. Try to identify the weak points in an argument or think of counterexamples to what the author is saying, or look for implications of their view that might seem unacceptable or inconsistent.
- Try to understand the wider implications of the author's position—see how his/her view fits (or doesn't fit) with the views of other philosophers we are reading.

### **Policies on Disability, Academic Integrity, and Electronic Devices**

Students who need to request accommodations based on a disability are required to register each semester with the Disability Services and Programs. In addition, a letter of verification to the instructors from the Disability Services and Programs is needed for the semester you are enrolled in this course. If you have any questions concerning this procedure, please contact the course instructor and Disability Services and Programs at (213) 740-0776, STU 301.

No form of plagiarism or other type of academic dishonesty will be tolerated, and **ignorance of the rules regarding plagiarism is no excuse**. If in any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism or any other question about academic integrity, please ask your discussion section instructor or me. Do not assume the answer can be obtained from another source. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic

dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>

**The use of tablets, laptops, cell phones, and other electronic devices in lectures is prohibited.** The use of these devices is distracting for other students, and studies have shown that students who take notes by hand tend to do better learning the material being discussed. Lecture slides will be made available via Blackboard. You should check Blackboard and your University email account regularly for information about the course.

## Topics and Readings

### *Week 1*

#### *Course Introduction and Political Obligation*

- Aug. 24 Introduction to Course
- Aug. 26 Consent and Tacit Consent
- Reading: No required reading

### *Week 2*

#### *Political Obligation*

- Aug. 31 Fair Play and Associative Duties
- Sept. 02 Natural Duty and Particularity
- Reading: A. John Simmons, "The Duty to Obey and Our Natural Moral Duties" pp. 93-120

### *Week 3*

#### *A Theory of Justice*

- Sept. 07 No Class (Labor Day)
- Sept. 09 Fundamental Ideas
- Reading: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 3-19

### *Week 4*

#### *A Theory of Justice*

- Sept. 14 The Two Principles
- Sept. 16 The Two Principles
- Reading: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 52-78

### *Week 5*

#### *Libertarianism*

- Sept. 21 Self-Ownership
- Sept. 23 World-Ownership
- Reading: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, & Utopia*, pp. 149-182

- Week 6**                      ***Freedom, Money, and Property***
- Sept. 28                      Defining and Measuring Freedom
  - Sept. 30                      Distributing Freedom
  - Reading:                      G.A. Cohen, "Freedom and Money"
- Week 7**                      ***Socialism***
- Oct. 05                      Principles
  - Oct. 07                      Limits
  - Reading:                      G.A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?*
- Week 8**                      ***Luck, Responsibility, and Equality***
- Oct. 12                      Chance and Choice
  - Oct. 14                      Equality of Resources
  - Reading:                      Ronald Dworkin, "What is Equality? Part 2: Equality of Resources" pp. 283-304
- Week 9**                      ***What Should Be For Sale?***
- Oct. 19                      Market Limits
  - Oct. 21                      Freedom and Paternalism
  - Reading:                      Debra Satz, *Why Some Things Should Not be For Sale*, pp. 91-112
- Week 10**                      ***Gender and Justice***
- Oct. 26                      The Family and The Basic Structure
  - Oct. 28                      Liberalism, Feminism, and Culture
  - Reading:                      Susan Moller Okin, "Justice and Gender: An Unfinished Debate"
- Week 11**                      ***Religion, Politics, and Public Reason***
- Nov. 02                      Why Public Reason?
  - Nov. 04                      Objections
  - Reading:                      John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp. 212-240
- Week 12**                      ***Global Justice***
- Nov. 09                      Moral Universalism
  - Nov. 11                      The Scope of Justice
  - Reading:                      Thomas Pogge, "Moral Universalism and Global Economic Justice"

**Week 13*****Justice and Past Generations***

- Nov. 16 Inheriting Rights
- Nov. 18 Inheriting Duties
- Reading: Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations"

**Week 14*****Justice and Future Generations***

- Nov. 23 Justice Between Generations
- Nov. 25 No Class (Thanksgiving)
- Reading: Tim Mulgan, *Ethics for a Broken World*, pp. 1-16, 173-178, 181-184

**Week 15*****Justice and Future Generations, and Review***

- Nov. 30 The Non-Identity Problem
- Dec. 02 Review
- Reading: No required reading