

**PHIL 174 Freedom, Equality, and Social Justice
Fall 2023**

Lectures: MWF 11am-11:50am (MHP 101)

All students must also register for one weekly discussion section

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Course Description and Learning Objectives

What is a just society? How should our political, economic, and legal institutions be designed if our goal is to live in a just society? As citizens, are we under a special duty to obey the laws of our society? What forms of resistance, if any, to unjust laws in a democracy are permissible? Is there any sense in which wages in a free market economy can be unjust or exploitative? What is the relationship between freedom and money? What restrictions on immigration, if any, are compatible with living in a just global community? Do we have duties of justice arising from wrongs committed by past generations?

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

Upon completion of this course you should be able to identify the central factors relevant in differentiating competing conceptions of justice and good citizenship. You should be able to engage in clear, careful analysis of how we, as moral agents and citizens, may be required to act to bring about a more just society and a more just world, and also be able to make informed contributions to debates about how we might improve legal, economic, and political institutions.

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

Participation:	10% of provisional grade
Quizzes:	30% of provisional grade
Midterm paper:	30% of provisional grade
Final exam:	30% of provisional grade

Your grades for participation, quizzes, the midterm, and the final exam constitute your *provisional* grade for the course. Your *final* grade can also be affected by your *attendance* and/or your participation in the JEP educational program. More on all this below.

Participation: Participation in discussion sections is an important part of making the course a success. Coming to your discussion section prepared, having done the required reading, and regularly making thoughtful contributions to the discussion is something on which you will be assessed. Your TA will provide more details on how participation will be assessed.

Quizzes: Each week (apart from the first week of semester) there will be a quiz during your discussion section. The quizzes will be short answer questions focused on the weekly reading. **Your grade on the quizzes will consist of your best 10 quiz scores.** Your TA will provide more details on how quizzes will be conducted and submitted.

The Midterm Paper: **is 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 September 29th no later than 5pm.**

The final exam will be **Wednesday Dec. 6th at 11am.**

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.

Attendance: **Attendance at lectures and discussion sections is mandatory.** If you are **absent from more than six lectures** without a valid and verifiable excuse your final grade will be **lowered by one grade increment**. If you are **absent from more than ten lectures** without a valid and verifiable excuse your final grade will be **lowered by two increments**. If you are **absent from more than two discussion sections** without a valid and verifiable excuse your final grade will be **lowered by one grade increment**. If you are **absent from more than four discussion sections** your final grade will be **lowered by two increments**.

JEP: Also, students who choose to participate in USC's **Joint Educational Project** paired with this class and successfully complete that program will receive an increase of one letter grade increment on their final grade. So, for example, if your provisional grade is a B+ but you successfully complete the JEP program this semester, you will receive a final grade of A-. Students who choose to register in the JEP program must inform their TA's of this fact at the start of semester.

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 the view fits (or doesn't fit) with the views of other philosophers we are reading.

Note: Lecture slides will be made available via Blackboard at the end of each week. You should check Blackboard and your University email account regularly for information about the course

Policies on Disability and Academic Integrity

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 presenting another's work (**including work produced by AI software**) as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of

plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>. 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/>

Schedule of Topics and Readings

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| Week 1 | <i>Course Introduction & Political Obligation</i> |
| • 08/21 | Introduction to Course |
| • 08/23 | Legitimate Authority |
| • 08/25 | Consent |
| • Reading: | No required reading |
| Week 2 | <i>Political Obligation</i> |
| • 08/28 | Fair Play |
| • 08/30 | Democracy |
| • 09/01 | Natural Duty |
| • Reading: | A. John Simmons, “Political Obligation and Authority” |
| Week 3 | <i>Dissent and Disobedience</i> |
| • 09/04 | Labor Day – No Class |
| • 09/06 | Civil Disobedience |
| • 09/08 | Uncivil Disobedience |
| • Reading: | Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” |
| Week 4 | <i>A Theory of Justice</i> |
| • 09/11 | <i>Theory of Justice</i> : Fundamental Ideas |
| • 09/13 | <i>Theory of Justice</i> : Fundamental Ideas |
| • 09/15 | <i>Theory of Justice</i> : Fundamental Ideas |
| • Reading: | John Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> , pp. 3-19 |
| Week 5 | <i>A Theory of Justice</i> |
| • 09/18 | <i>Theory of Justice</i> : Two Principles |
| • 09/20 | <i>Theory of Justice</i> : Two Principles |
| • 09/22 | <i>Theory of Justice</i> : Two Principles |

- Reading: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 52-78

Week 6***Libertarianism***

- 09/25 Self-Ownership
- 09/27 Rights
- 09/29 Taxation and World-Ownership
- Reading: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, & Utopia*, pp. 149-182

Week 7***Freedom, Money, and Property***

- 10/02 Theories of Freedom
- 10/04 Freedom and Money
- 10/06 Freedom and Property
- Reading: G.A. Cohen, "Freedom and Money"

Week 8***Socialism***

- 10/09 Cohen's Camping Trip
- 10/11 Equality and Community
- 10/13 Fall Recess – No Class
- Reading: G.A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?*

Week 9***Gender and Justice***

- 10/16 Feminism and Gender Justice
- 10/18 Families and Liberalism
- 10/20 Misogyny
- Reading: Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex"

Week 10***Crime and Punishment***

- 10/23 Consequentialism
- 10/25 Retribution
- 10/27 Duty
- Reading: Tommie Shelby, "Punishment"

Week 11***Free Speech***

- 10/30 Rationales
- 11/01 Speakers and Listeners
- 11/03 Limits
- Reading: Jeff Howard, "Dangerous Speech"

- Week 12** ***Borders and Immigration***
- 11/06 The Case for Open Borders
 - 11/08 The Case for Restrictions
 - 11/10 Veterans' Day – No Class
 - Reading: Sarah Fine, "The Ethics of Immigration: Self-Determination and the Right to Exclude"

- Week 13** **War**
- 11/13 Just War?
 - 11/15 The Moral Equality of Combatants
 - 11/17 Noncombatants
 - Reading: Helen Frowe, *The Ethics of War and Peace*, ch. 2

- Week 14** ***Justice and Past Generations***
- 11/20 Compensation for Past Harms
 - 11/22 Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class
 - 11/24 Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class
 - Reading: Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations"

- Week 15** ***Justice and Past Generations***
- 11/27 Do the Dead Have Rights?
 - 11/29 Inheriting Rights and Duties
 - 12/01 Exam Preparation and Review
 - Reading: Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations"

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu