PHIL 2020 Practical Philosophy: The Social Contract

- Winter 2023 Monday/Wednesday 11:35-12:55 SA 318
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- Office hours: Paterson 3A55 Wednesday 1:30-2:30

Official Calendar Description:

PHIL 2020 [0.5 credit] Issues in Practical Philosophy
Issues drawn from ethics, social and political philosophy, and related fields will be examined through careful study of significant philosophical texts after 1900, along with some ensuing debates. Prerequisite(s): enrolment in Honours or Combined Honours Philosophy programs, or in Philosophy, Ethics, and Public Affairs, or with permission of the Department. Lectures and discussion three hours a week.

Course Overview:

Social Contract Theory (SCT) addresses itself to a key question of practical philosophy, namely, what is the source of the state's legitimacy, and thus the source of our duty to obey it. According to SCT, the legitimate authority of government is grounded in the hypothetical consent of the governed, where the form and content of this consent derives from the idea of a contract or mutual agreement. Proponents of the theory have provided diverse and conflicting accounts of the nature of consent and the conditions under which it should be given, as well as diverse conceptions of what it means for a legitimate state to treat all those on whom it depends for its authority with an equal concern and respect. This course will track the development of social contract theory from the ancient period to the present, while exploring some of its moral and political limitations with respect to disability, animal rights, race, and global justice.

Course Outcomes:

In this course students will learn about the history of and arguments for (and against) social contract theory as an account of state legitimacy. Students will also learn to employ and enhance their use of the fundamental tools of philosophical analysis. This learning will be accomplished through the assigned readings, the weekly lectures, and the course assignments. There will be two essay assignments for this course, one group presentation, and a final take-home exam. In the essays and final exam students will be asked to reconstruct, in logical form, key arguments from course materials, and to raise brief criticisms of the argument. The purpose of these writing assignments is to accustom new philosophers to the basic structure of analytic philosophical writing, which will improve with each assignment. For their presentations students will work in small groups and present on issues of practical concern to which they will apply the philosophical view under consideration. They will thereby gain the experience of applying philosophical tools and ideas to practical issues of social importance.

Course Evaluation:

See assignment instructions following course schedule

- **Essay 1: 20%** Due February 8
- **Essay 2: 20%** Due March 15
- **Presentation**: **15%** Presentation days: Feb 13, 15, 27, Mar 20.
- **Attendance on Presentations Days: 5%**
- **Take-Home Exam: 40%** Posted on April 5, due April 27

Course Readings:

All readings for the first half of the course are linked from the schedule below, and all readings for the second half of the course are available as PDFs on Brightspace.

Course Schedule:

All classes are in person except for presentation days indicated with **

Week 1:

Jan 11: Introduction to the Course

Week 2:

Jan 16: Plato, *Crito* http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/crito.html

Jan 18: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan,* Part I ch. 13-15

https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hobbes1651part1.pdf

Week 3:

Jan 23: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan,* Part I ch. 16-21; 28-29 (see link above)

Jan 25: John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, ch. 1-8

https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1689a.pdf

Week 4:

Jan 30: John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government,* ch. 9-19 (see link above)

Feb 1: JJ Rousseau*, On the Social Contract*, Book I ch. 1-9

https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/rousseau1762.pdf

Week 5:

Feb 6: JJ Rousseau*, On the Social Contract*, Book II ch. 1-8 (see link above)

Feb 8: Immanuel Kant, *From Theory to Practice*, pp. 290-304 (**first essay due today**)

https://hesperusisbosphorus.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/theory-and-practice.pdf

Week 6:

Feb 13: **Hobbes Presentations online – https://carleton-ca.zoom.us/j/91557204919

Feb 15: **Locke Presentations online – https://carleton-ca.zoom.us/j/98680754797

Week 7: Feb 20/22 Reading Break

Week 8:

Feb 27: **Rousseau Presentations online - https://carleton-ca.zoom.us/j/92172899854

March 1: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* pp. 3-19

Week 9:

Mar 6: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* pp. 47-81

Mar 8: John Rawls*, A Theory of Justice*, pp. 102-135

Week 10:

Mar 13: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia,* pp. 3-25 (**second essay due today**)

Mar 15: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 108-119; 149-164

Week 11:

Mar 20: Rawls Presentations** online – https://carleton-ca.zoom.us/j/96966304458

Mar 22: Anita Silvers and Leslie Francis, "Disability and the Outlier Problem in Social Contract Theory"

Week 12:

Mar 27: Mark Rowlands, "Contractarianism and Animal Rights"

March 29: Charles Mills, "Racial Liberalism"

Week 13:

April 3: Thomas Pogge, "Eradicating Systemic Poverty: Brief for a Global Resources Dividend"

April 5: Exam review (and potential make up class)

Essays:

There are two essays for this course. They will be 5 pages in length, and due on the dates identified above. **Note: the first paper will be on Hobbes or Locke. If you sign up for a presentation on Hobbes, you must write on Locke and vice versa. The second paper will be on Rousseau or Rawls. If you sign up for a presentation on Rousseau, you must write on Rawls and vice versa.**

In your essays you will be asked to 1) schematize, 2) exposit and 3) evaluate a text, or portion thereof. To **schematize** means to reproduce an argument in its logical form: identifying its ultimate conclusion and supporting premises. You should use as few premises as possible and organize them in the most logical order possible. To **exposit** means to explain, using your own words, the author's argument. You can elaborate here on the schema's structure, explain the author's intentions, and identify any missing premises (that the author may need or assume but not actually include). And finally, to **evaluate** means to critically engage with the argument. Is it valid (if the premises are true, does the conclusion follow)? Is it sound (are the premises and conclusion all true)? What challenges can you raise against one of the argument's premises, or its conclusion, and what implications does this challenge have for the argument as a whole? **The final exam** will ask essay questions that will require you do all of these things as well, with an added focus on **evaluation**.

Case Study Presentations:

Students will work in groups of 2 or 3 and run presentations of 25 minutes, *including* time for discussion, on one of the designated presentation days. Students must **sign-up on Brightspace by Jan 25 for their preferred presentation day and must contact the instructor regarding the topic of their presentation by February 1**. When your group selects a topic, it will be noted on Brightspace as having been reserved and not available to the other groups that day. The topics recommended below are merely suggestions, and each topic could work for one author as easily as for any of the others.

The purpose of your case study presentation is to identify the practical relevance of philosophical ideas, and to demonstrate the effectiveness of employing philosophical methodology to addressing intractable social problems. Through the application of philosophical ideas and methodology to social and political problems, we are best able to appreciate the essential role they can play in practical problem-solving across a diversity of applied and professional fields.

In your presentation you should: 1) **explain** the nature of the practical dilemma and the moral, social, political, and/or legal issues it raises; 2) **exposit** the relevant author's views; 3) **apply** the author's views to the dilemma and suggest how the author's views might help resolve the dilemma in questions; 4) **evaluate** the appropriateness and validity of the author's views as applied to the dilemma

The presentations will take place over zoom for a number of reasons. One is efficiency: we can move more quickly through multiple presentations in this modality. Another is comfort: students who experience anxiety around public speaking are more at ease when presenting from a comfortable and familiar environment. The third is that given the new virtual landscape, it is important for professional and pedagogical reasons to develop online communication skills.

Suggested Presentations Topics

Hobbes' *Leviathan*

- **The Death Penalty**: is it right to kill as punishment for killing?
- **Just War and Terrorism**: if war is the state of nature, is there such thing as a just war?
- **The Free Rider Problem**: how to resolve collective action problems (eg the prisoner's dilemma) where self-interest makes parties worse off than they would be if they cooperated?

Locke's *Treatise*

- **Global Poverty:** should we share resources with those who have none? What if we failed to leave enough and as good?
- **Environmentalism**: does private property protect or threaten the environment?
- **Revolution**: do citizens have a right/obligation to revolt against unjust regimes?

Rousseau's *Social Contract*

- **Inheritance and Inequality**: should the rich be allowed to inherit /bequeath?
- **Gender Inequality:** how does it originate and what should be done about it?
- **Censorship**: can/should the state censor views that don't support state values?
- **Voting and Electoral Practices:** does campaign financing undermine democracy?
- **Separation of Church and State:** should the state support one religion?

Rawls' *Theory of Justice*

- **Multiculturalism**: should we protect religious freedom when it threatens equality?
- **Public Education:** can we really achieve equal opportunity through education?
- **Public/Private Health Care:** does justice demand public health care?
- **Black Lives Matter:** where is race in the social contract?
- **The Welfare State:** can the state force the 1% to help the 99%?

Department of Philosophy and Carleton Policies (Fall/Winter 2022-23)

Assignments: Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

Evaluation: Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work: If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams: Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar). Visit the Registrar's Office for further information.

Plagiarism: It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. (Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations)

Academic Accommodation: You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation*: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the EDC website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

- *Survivors of Sexual Violence*: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy.
- *Accommodation for Student Activities:* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known.

Important Dates:

Jan. 9 Classes begin.

Jan. 20 Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.

Jan. 31 Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

Feb. 20-24 Winter Break – no classes.

Mar. 15 Lastday for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.

Mar. 29 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.

Apr. 7 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Apr. 12 Last day of two-term and winter term classes. ***Classes follow a Friday schedule.*** Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor asa due date for two-term and for winter term courses.

Apr. 13-14 No classes or examinations take place.

Apr. 15-27 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Apr. 27 All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

- Department of Philosophy: www.carleton.ca/philosophy 520-2110
- Registrar's Office: www.carleton.ca/registrar 520-3500
- Academic Advising Centre: www.carleton.ca/academicadvising 520-7850
- Writing Services: http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/ 520-3822
- MacOdrum Library: http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735