

PHIL 3200: Politics and the Law
T 4:45-7:20pm, Columbine Hall 214
Spring 2019

Professor: Jennifer Kling, PhD

Office Hours: TTh 10am-1pm; available by appointment (Columbine Hall 4057). During my office hours, I am available both in person and via Skype at jenhkling.

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Course Description:

American political discussion (both historical and contemporary) is usually dominated by two overarching claims: we need *some* form of government—some politics, some law—and this, what we currently have, isn't it (either it's entirely the wrong sort, or, if it is the right general *kind* of political system, it's too conservative, or too liberal, or too big, or too small, or too powerful, or not powerful enough, etc). In this course, we will investigate each of these claims in turn: is it true that we need some political system or other, and, if we do, what form—at both a general level and in terms of specifics—should that political system take? Throughout the course, we will read both historical and contemporary texts. However, while we will make an effort to understand what others have thought and theorized about these issues, the main focus of the course will be on actively engaging with and learning how to contribute to some of the most contentious political debates of the day.

In this class, you will have to struggle with big concepts that you may not have engaged with before, and you will have to work hard to succeed. Along the way you will come to better understand what social and political philosophers do, how they do it, and why. That will entail using and refining your abilities to effectively think, argue, read, and write. In other words, in this course you are going to learn how to *do* social and political philosophy, which is both difficult and rewarding.

Course Requirements:

Participation (10%): You will need to both do the readings and come to class in order to be successful in this course. If you don't do the readings, you'll be lost in class; if you don't come to class, you'll be lost in the readings and the assignments. While **excessive** participation is not required, some willingness to engage with both me and your fellow classmates is necessary— without this willingness on your part, we won't be able to have the sort of productive class discussions that will enable you to successfully engage in the course. So, while a lack of participation won't harm your grade very much, participation can significantly *help* your grade. ****Attendance is not participation! However, I do take attendance into account when determining your participation grade.****

I appreciate that speaking to a classroom full of your peers can be difficult; so, there are a number of other ways to participate in class. You may speak in class, you may engage in small group work, you may visit during my office hours, you may send me emails with questions, comments, and concerns, you may start online discussion threads, you may post relevant outside documents/videos/blogs, etc. to the course Canvas website, you may tweet and/or blog and/or journal about issues raised in class, etc. If you're unsure of whether some action counts as participation, please see me, and we'll discuss it.

Blog Posts (5% each): You are required to submit six blog posts throughout the semester. (5% each x 6 posts=30%)

Blog posts are due by the start of the class period on the due date. **Late posts will not be accepted.** They should be roughly 300-400 words in length, and should first identify, and then relate, one or more of the concepts discussed in the course to your interpersonal, social, cultural, or political world. (For instance, a good blog post might outline Hobbes' view that we're all fundamentally self-interested, and then discuss

whether your life experience supports that thesis.) Blog posts may take the form of a standard text post, a 3-4 minute podcast, or a 3-4 minute video. If you wish to submit a blog post in some other form, please see me, and we'll discuss it. **Collaboration is encouraged but not required. If you do collaborate with a classmate, each classmate must turn in a copy of the blog post.**

Papers (15% each): There are **two** required academic papers for this course. (15% each x 2 papers=30%) Each paper should be 3 pages long, and should present and *critically engage* some issue brought up in the course texts and class discussions. I will provide a list of topics one week in advance of each paper's due date. If you wish to write on a topic not on the list, please come see me to discuss your proposed topic. If you wish to submit a paper in some other form (podcast, video, tumblr, etc), please see me, and we'll discuss it.

Papers are due by the start of the class period on the due date. For every 24-hour period that a paper is late, I will take 5 points off. That said, I am aware that life happens; if you feel you need an extension, **please ask me as soon as possible**. The earlier you ask, the more likely I am to give you an extension. Failure to turn in any one of the papers will result in failing the course.

In-class Presentation (10%): Each student must do an in-class presentation, either by themselves or with a partner. Each presentation should be 5-10 minutes long, and should present and *critically engage* with the main points from the assigned text for the day. We will pick presentation dates a few weeks into the semester, so that students have a feel for the topic/text on which they would like to present. If you wish to present on a topic/issue that is not covered by an assigned text, please see me, and we'll discuss it. Failure to do an in-class presentation will result in failing the course. **Again, collaboration is encouraged but not required. If you do collaborate with a partner/s, each partner must turn in a copy of the presentation.**

Final Paper (20%): There is a required final paper for this course. Final papers should be 5-6 pages long, and should present one of the theories studied in the course, and then critically apply that theory to a contemporary political issue. Students should pick a specific topic in conjunction with the professor. Failure to turn in the final paper will result in failing the course.

Grading Scale:

A: An 'A' denotes exceptional skill and ability. An 'A' student demonstrates an excellent grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the material enough to explain it succinctly and well), and also displays the ability to engage thoughtfully with both the broad issues and finer points under discussion.

A: 100-93 A-: 92-90

B: A 'B' denotes solid-to-impressive skill and ability. A 'B' student demonstrates a good grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the material well enough to explain it with few mistakes), and also displays the ability to engage thoughtfully with most, if not all, of the issues and points under discussion.

B+: 89-87 B: 86-83 B-: 82-80

C: A 'C' denotes adequate skill and ability. A 'C' student demonstrates a fair grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the big picture, but makes some serious errors in presentation), and also displays the ability to engage thoughtfully with at least some of the issues under discussion.

C+: 79-77 C: 76-73 C-: 72-70

D: A 'D' denotes inadequate skill and ability. A 'D' student has serious problems with grasping the material, and fails to engage thoughtfully with any of the issues under discussion.

D+: 69-67 D: 66-63 D-: 62-60

F: An 'F' denotes catastrophic problems in fulfilling the requirements of the course. An 'F' student neither

grasps the material nor engages with it critically at any level. F: 59-0

While hard work is correlated with success, it is not sufficient for success. To get a good grade in this course, you need to not only understand and engage with the material, but also communicate your understanding and engagement to me via your participation, projects, papers, and exam. If you sense that you are heading towards a grade you do not want, please come see me as soon as possible (if you wait until the end of the semester, it will be too late).

Assignments:

All readings, videos, podcasts, etc. can be found on this course's Canvas site.

Week 1: Introduction + Why have a political system—a government, laws, and politics—at all?

Tuesday, January 29th Introduction to the Course *and* Course Contract
Read: Plato, *Crito*

Week 2: Why have a political system, continued

Tuesday, February 5th **Read:** Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, Chapters 1-2
Read: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 13, Chapter 14 (sec 1-5)

Week 3: Why have a political system, continued

Tuesday, February 12th **BLOG POST #1 DUE**
Read: Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Chapters 1-5
Read: Emma Goldman, “Anarchism: What it Really Stands For,” Chapter 1

Week 4: What kind of political system—at a general level—should we have? How about a merit-based system?

Tuesday, February 19th **Read:** Plato, *The Republic*, selections from Books 2-3 describing the organization of the ideal polis
Read: Plato, *The Republic*, selection from Book 4 discussing happiness

Week 5: Merit-based political systems, continued

Tuesday, February 26th **PAPER #1 DUE**
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, Chapters 5-7
Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 3, Chapters 1-11

Week 6: What kind of political system—at a general level—should we have? How about a social contract system?

Tuesday, March 5th **BLOG POST #2 DUE**
Read: Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Chapter 7 (sec 87-94), Chapter 8 (sec 95-106; 113-122), Chapter 9

Week 7: Social contract political systems, continued

Tuesday, March 12th

BLOG POST #3 DUE

Read: Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, Book 1 (chap 1-8), Book 2 (chap 1-6)

Week 8: Social contract political systems, continued

Tuesday, March 19th

BLOG POST #4 DUE

Read: Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Sections 3-6, Section 11, Sections 14-15, Section 17, Section 24

Week 9: Spring Break

Tuesday, March 26th

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS

Week 10: What kind of political system—at a general level—should we have? How about a procedural system?

Tuesday, April 2nd

Read: Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, sections on Distributive Justice, p. 149-164, 169-182

Read: Susan Moller Okin, “Libertarianism: Matriarchy, Slavery, and Dystopia”

Week 11: What kind of political system—at a general level—should we have? How about a marxist system?

Tuesday, April 9th

PAPER #2 DUE

Read: Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, Sections 1-2

Read: G.A. Cohen, “Why Not Socialism?”

Week 12: Marxist political systems, continued

Tuesday, April 16th

BLOG POST #5 DUE

Read: W.E.B. DuBois, TBD

Watch: Rutger Bregman, “Why We Should Be Giving Everyone a Basic Income,” TED Talk

Week 13: What specific forms should our current political system take?

3 topics will be taught; TBD by the students over the course of the class

Tuesday, April 23rd

TBD

Week 14: What specific forms should our current political system take, continued

Tuesday, April 30th

BLOG POST #6 DUE

TBD

Week 15: What specific forms should our current political system take, continued

Tuesday, May 7th

TBD

Final Exam Week

Wednesday, May 15th

Final Paper Due by 5pm MST

The Writing Center

The Writing Center at UCCS is a free resource available to all students. Students are encouraged to visit the writing center for writing feedback at any stage in the writing process. For information regarding their tutors, hours, location, or to utilize their online links and resources, please visit <https://www.uccs.edu/writingcenter/>.

Student Conduct

All students at UCCS are responsible for knowing and adhering to the conduct policies of this institution. For more information, please see the [Student Conduct Policies](#). Please obey the spirit as well as the law of UCCS's Student Code of Conduct. If you think that something is in violation of the Code, it probably is, so check before doing it. Regarding academic integrity, please remember that unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism, and so **you must cite all of your sources** for papers! Failure to cite your sources will cause points to be taken off of your papers.

****Please note: every assignment turned in for this class must be your own original work, produced specifically *for this class*. You may not turn in an assignment written for a previous and/or different class. To do so would constitute (self) plagiarism, and will be treated as such.****

Sex- and Gender-based Violence and Harassment

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, religion, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted for **any** reason, you can find the appropriate resources here: <https://www.uccs.edu/equity/resources>.

Military Deployment and Military Service

In order to assist students who are called to active duty the Campus has compiled a set of guidelines that include information on withdrawing from courses. General information can be accessed at: <https://www.uccs.edu/military/current-students/active-duty-and-reservists/deployment>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to register with Disability Services and provide them with documentation of your disability. They will work with you to determine what accommodations are appropriate for your situation. To avoid any delay, you should contact Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and disability accommodations cannot be provided until a Faculty Accommodation Letter has been given to me. Please contact Disability Services for more information at Main Hall room 105, 719-255-3354 or dservice@uccs.edu.

Students with Dependents

If you are a student with a dependent (such as a child, sibling, or elderly member of your household) and believe you will need accommodation for this class, please let me know, and I will work with you to determine what accommodations are appropriate for your situation. Dependents are welcome to attend class with you, so long as they do not unduly disrupt the normal functioning of the class.

Syllabus Changes

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as appropriate. The odds that I'll do so during the semester are small, but if I do, I will inform you as soon as possible.