Philosophy 226
Political Philosophy: Justice, Freedom, and the State

Fall 2019
Amherst College

Professor: Rafeeq Hasan
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Meetings: Tu/Th 2:30-3:50pm

Office: 209 Cooper House
Office Hours: W 10:00-11:20am; F 3:00-4:20pm
Class Room: Science Center E210

Course Description

States are made up of collections of individuals. And yet states have powers that no individuals have. They collect taxes, put us in jail, draft us into the army, tell us what we can and cannot own, etc. In general, states compel us to do things in the name of a 'common good,' even when that good conflicts with what we would individually prefer to do. In this course, an introduction to key concepts in Western political philosophy, we seek to understand what, if anything, could justify states in having this power over us. To this end, we examine two philosophical issues raised by the state. (1) The problem of political obligation. Is there any reason why we ought to obey the law? What are the grounds for legitimate civil disobedience? (2) The question of distributive justice. What reasons are there to tax the rich in order to give to the poor? What is the role of the state in securing economic equality?

Readings include: Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Nozick, Rawls, and Pateman. We will also think about systematic racism and racial exclusion. We will ask how the fact of racism ought to shape our orientation to the state and to the project of political philosophy more generally. Readings here include: Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Tommie Shelby, and Shatema Threadcraft.

Required Texts

No books have been ordered for this course. Please pick up the course reader from Dee Brace, the Philosophy Department Coordinator, at 208 Cooper House. Please make sure you bring the reader to every class.

Occasionally, I will send other readings via Moodle or email. You will need to print those readings ahead of time. **Philosophy is not best read from a computer screen, or while checking email, reading the news, etc**. Please make sure that you bring those hard copies of the readings to the relevant class.

Assignments/Grading:

First Essay 1500 Words (~5 pages)	25%
Second Essay 1500 Words (~5 pages)	25%
Third Essay (6 of your best reading responses) (6 pages)	25%
Attendance/Class participation (including reading quizzes and 10 1-page reading response papers)	25%

Policies/Requirements:[1]

1. Academic Honesty

Upon entering Amherst College, you each signed a pledge to uphold the honor code. According to the Honor Code's Statement of Intellectual Responsibility, "the College considers it a violation of the requirements of intellectual responsibility to submit work that is not one's own or otherwise to subvert the conditions under which academic work is performed by oneself or by others."[2] I expect you will all honor the pledge you signed. Therefore, everything you turn in should be *your own work* and *in your own words*. If your discussions of class topics with your friends, parents, etc., are helpful, cite them. Credit all sources appropriately, even (especially) Wikipedia and anything from your Googling bounty.

Please also consult the information contained in 'Intellectual Responsibility and Plagiarism' on the Dean of Students website: https://www.amherst.edu/offices/student-affairs/community-standards/intellectual-responsibility-and-plagiarism. Particularly helpful is: https://www.amherst.edu/offices/student-affairs/community-standards/intellectual-responsibility-and-plagiarism/using-sources

If questions remain about what constitutes academic honesty or dishonesty, come speak to me about them.

The penalty for plagiarism in my course is failure, absolutely no exceptions.

2. Deadlines

Late policy. Three principles guide my late policy:

1. Work should be assessed on its quality and on whether it demonstrates learning.
2. Each assignment has a purpose; that purpose can only be fulfilled within a certain timeframe.
3. Deadlines allow us to organize our time and learning and to meet our goals.

Reading Response Policy: In light of these, late *reading responses* will not be accepted for credit. The goals of these assignments are for you to practice working through and understanding the readings on your own and prepare for class discussion. These goals are defeated if you do not complete the assignment on time. **If the reading response is not printed out and handed in at the end of the class session on which it is due, it will not be accepted. If you have an excused absence, the reading assignment must be brought to the following class, or it will not be accepted.**

[1] Some of what follows is borrowed from syllabi from two friends and colleagues, Katia Vavova (Mt. Holyoke) and James Wilson (University of Chicago).
[2] https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/fph/policies/sir

Essay Draft Policy: Drafts must be turned in on time, no exceptions.

Essay Final Version Policy: If you find that you are unable to complete the essay by the deadline because of a crisis or emergency, you must contact me no less than 3 days before the due date. I MAY be able to grant a slight extension. **Papers that are submitted late and without an extension will be marked down .3 down (see #9 for grading scale) for every day of lateness. This means that even one day of lateness turns a B+ into a B.**

Essays received late may not receive full comments. This is not about punishing you for getting in late work. It's about enabling me to schedule my time.

We all have so many demands on our time, and we need to be able to plan ahead. If people complete assignments late, they fall behind and cannot contribute to class discussions. Worse yet, they hurt their own learning. Meeting deadlines is thus an opportunity to show respect: respect for yourself, your time, an your learning; respect for your classmates' time and learning; and respect for my time and my teaching.

Finally, keep in mind first, that I am here to help. Get in touch if you're worried about anything.

Second, when it comes to assignments, late > never > plagiarized.

3. Communication

Important announcements and assignments will be communicated to you via email or in class. It is your responsibility to make sure you are up to date with the latest news. So check your email daily and don't miss class. If you do miss class, check with your classmates.

Of course, you are always welcome to email me with any questions. But please keep in mind that there are a lot more of you than there are of me and modern email demands are crazy-making. To stay sane:

- I do not answer emails in the evening or on weekends.
- I respond as promptly as I can, but not always on the same day.
- I can't guarantee a response to emails about assignments that are due within 24 hours of the email.
- I do not answer questions that are clearly answered by the syllabus or assignment instructions. If you're not hearing back from me, that may be a hint to double-check the relevant materials. That said, after you've carefully examined the assignment and checked with your classmates, you shouldn't hesitate to ask me to clarify anything.

These rules are here so that I can manage to respond promptly to questions that do need to be answered via email.

4. Attendance

You should attend class regularly, on time, and well-rested. If you should miss a class because of illness or family emergency, or some other pressing matter, please let me know ahead of time by email.

I couldn't make it to class the other day. Did I miss anything important? Of course you did. To learn what you missed, contact your classmates, check Moodle for handouts, and make sure you get caught up. *After* you've done all that, come see me in office hours with questions and comments on the readings.

Of course, things happen. But *you are expected to attend every class*. You are permitted one unexcused absence.

For each additional absence your final grade in the course is reduced one percentage point (so a 90% would become an 89%).

In addition to class meetings, there will be one mandatory film screening: *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), Tuesday, October 8th @ 7pm (pizza provided). The experience of watching a movie in a dark room with others, without distraction, is sadly becoming a lost form of cultural experience. Barring illness, you are expected to attend the screening on time, rather than watch the movie on your own.

5. Participation

In order to get full credit for attendance/participation, you must also regularly *participate* in class. Be ready to explore ideas critically, boldly, and creatively with others.

Your participation grade turns on the quality, not the quantity of your contributions, and the extent to which you exhibit the respect and care necessary to promote good discussion. Contributions do not have to be in the form of "answers" or completed "theories" about a text or position—thoughtful questions are highly encouraged, and you will certainly not be penalized for a spirit of humility. While good contributions obviously vary immensely, I especially value comments and questions that pay close attention to the relevant text and those that build on, and reflect attention to, others' contributions.

There will occasionally be reading quizzes at the start of class. If you have done the reading, you should have no problem. If you show up late, you will not have adequate time to complete the quiz.

Why do I have to participate in class? Philosophy is a communal activity, and you've chosen to join our community this semester. Don't talk just for the sake of talking, but also don't wait for brilliance or insight to hit you before raising your hand. Shy? Nervous? Me too. Participation is more difficult for some of us than others, but writing papers, understanding the readings—these too are more difficult for some of us than others. And all of these are skills we must work on. If you have trouble speaking in class, please see me and we will work on it together—just as we would on any other aspect of the class that you find difficult.

Attendance/participation will count for 25% of your grade. There will be a .2 reduction in your overall participation grade for each day missed without a medical excuse.

Office hours: I will hold regular office hours from 10-1120am on Wednesdays and 3-420pm on Fridays. The sign-up sheet for the following week will always be placed on my door on Thursday mornings @ 9am. It is a good idea to come sign up if you want to meet with me. I cannot guarantee that there will be room if you just drop by (though there might be).

I do hope you come by my office hours as often as you like! Just a few minutes of one-on-one discussion can often help clarify a lot of issues. Please don't feel as if you have to have something brilliant to say (or, alternatively, some burning problem or question) to come and talk to me; feel free to come without any real agenda at all. You are not intruding by coming by.

Can we meet outside office hours? I would rather not. It's already hard to negotiate our busy schedules. But if you really can't make it because of a class or work conflict, then by all means send me an email with a list of regular times when you are free to meet during the week, and we will find an alternative. If the sign-up sheet is full and you would like to meet that week, email me and we will (try to) find an alternative time.

6. Reading

This is a course about making, analyzing, and evaluating arguments, many of which are carefully laid out in our readings. Many of these readings are dense, and several are written in outdated language. Leave yourself ample time to complete the readings.

Take the reading process seriously: read actively, doing your best to think about, and respond to, the works you are reading. Active annotation (e.g., underlining, tabbing, note-taking) will help you track down important passages when you come back to them later, such as in class or when writing a paper.

Some reading advice: 1. When I give you a short response prompt or provide reading questions, use these to help focus your attention on what is most important. 2. If you encounter a passage that you don't understand, re-read it a few times. If you still don't understand it, pass over it! Try to get a sense of the whole instead of getting lost in the part. 3. Jot down any questions or confusions you have about any particular passage or argument and raise them in class. (Note: if you're nervous about speaking up in class, having a prewritten question on hand can help.) 4. Skim over the reading again after class discussion. It should be much easier to understand at this point. 5. If you're still unclear about something, get help: ask other classmates, come by my office hours, etc.

7. Reading Responses

10 times over the entire semster you will be given a short response assignment on the next session's readings. The question will either be given in class or emailed to you. Your 200-250 word response (~1 page, double-spaced, 12 pt. font) should be organized like a mini-essay. In other words, there should be a central claim, distinct paragraphs with topic sentences, etc. You must bring the completed assignment in hard copy to the following class.

At the beginning of the semester, I will provide written comments on your responses and let you know what grade I **would** give it. However, this is only a provisional grade. At the end of the semester you will pick your 6 best responses, revise them with respect both to content and writing, and turn them in as your third essay assignment. Since you will not receive written comments past the first few assignments, if you want to know how you are doing you should schedule an office hours meeting with me. There, we will work through your writing together. However, I will be collecting all the assignments, and looking over them briefly. If you are not putting forth your best effort, this will adversely affect your class participation grade. Putting forth your best effort does not mean providing the "right" answer. Rather, it involves your: 1. having put serious effort into engaging with the text; 2. explaining rather than merely summarizing, and 3. organizing your response in a clear manner (e.g., paragraphs, topic sentences, etc.)!

8. Essays

When will my paper be graded? I aim to return *papers* within at most two weeks of the date they were submitted. I realize it's hard to wait, but it's also hard to grade. I want to give your work the care and attention it deserves.

Can I send you a draft to read? I'm happy to help you on your paper, but I don't read drafts. Feel free to come by my office hours with questions, an outline, an argument you're considering, etc. We can talk through your ideas and questions. Don't forget also that you can go to the Writing Center with drafts. This is a great resource. To schedule an appointment, visit
https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/support/writingcenter/makeappointment

What sources should I use for writing my paper? You ***do not*** need to read any additional material

beyond the assigned reading—and I don't encourage it. However, if you do consult outside sources, you must remember to *always* cite your sources.

As for my expectations on writing, David Foster Wallace put it well in his own syllabus:

> "If you want to improve your academic writing and are willing to put extra time and effort into it, I am a good teacher to have. But if you're used to whipping off papers the night before they're due, running them quickly through the computer's Spellchecker, handing them in full of high-school errors and sentences that make no sense, and having the professor accept them "because the ideas are good" or something, please be informed that **I draw no distinction between the quality of one's ideas and the quality of those ideas' verbal expression**, and that I will not accept sloppy, rough-draftish, or semiliterate college writing. Again, I am absolutely not kidding. If you won't or can't devote significant time and attention to your written work, I urge you to drop... and save us both a lot of grief."[3]

9. Grading

You will be given both a number grade and a letter grade for each assignment. Only the numerical grade is taken into account in determining your final grade. Numerical grades correspond to letter grades as follows: A 10-9.5; A- 9.4-9.0; B+ 8.9-8.7; B 8.6-8.3; B- 8.2-8.0; C 7.9 or below

10. Electronic Devices in the Class

All devices with an ON/OFF switch—laptops, phones, etc.—must be switched off during class, unless they are serving a medical purpose. The empirical evidence is pretty clear that people don't learn as well with laptops, phones, and other gadgets in the classroom. Plus, you won't need it. You'll be expected to join in the discussion, not keep a written record of everything that is said. I'll often provide handouts that summarize the main points, and you will have brought your print outs of the readings. If for some reason you really do need to bring some technology to class, come see me.

11. Accommodations

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should make an appointment to speak with an Accessibility Services Staff Member. In order to receive reasonable accommodations for a disability, you must register with the *Office of Accessibility Services* at Amherst College (even if you are a 5-College student). (https://www.amherst.edu/offices/student-affairs/accessibility-services). This office will provide a letter describing the appropriate accommodations. Once you have this letter, set up an appointment with me and we will discuss how to accommodate you.

12. Summary of Requirements

1. Don't plagiarize.
2. Do all required readings. Bring readings to class in hard copy.
3. Do 10 reading responses. Bring responses to class in hard copy.
4. Don't miss class without a legitimate excuse.
5. Participate in class discussion (be alert and responsive).
6. Write 2 1500 word essays. Participate in all peer-review procedures.

[3] http://alasophia.blogspot.com/2008/09/david-foster-wallaces-syllabus.html

7. Turn in revised versions of your six best reading responses at the end of the semester.

Reading Schedule

Note: This schedule is not a contract. It is entirely provisional. We may speed up, slow down, skip readings, or add readings, depending on where our discussion leads and the interests of members of the class.

Political Obligation: Why should I obey the law?

Week 1:

Tu 9/3 Introduction to the course

The Historical Background

Th 9/5 READ THE ENTIRE SYLLABUS (I'M SERIOUS); Plato, *Crito*

Week 2:

The Social Contract Tradition

Tu 9/10 Hobbes, *Leviathan*. I: State of Nature

Th 9/12 Hobbes, *Leviathan.* II: Laws of Nature

Optional Lecture, Theunissen, "The New Mooreans: On Personal and Impersonal Good," 5-6:30pm Pruyne Lecture Hall

Week 3:

Tu 9/17 Hobbes, *Leviathan*. III: Sovereignty

Th 9/19 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*. I: State of Nature

Week 4:

Tu 9/24 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government.* II: Property; Quiggin, "John Locke Against Freedom" (web); Brewer, "Slavery-Entangled Philosophy" (web)

Th 9/26 Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*. III: Government

Week 5:

Tu 10/1 Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*. I: State of Nature and Freedom

Th 10/3 Rousseau, *Social Contract*. II: Sovereignty and The General Will
Paper 1 Assigned

Week 6:

Tu 10/8 Rousseau, *Social Contract*. III: Government

Mandatory screening: John Ford, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) @ 7-915pm (Keefe cinema) (pizza provided)

Th 10/10 Discussion of film; discussion of sample paper; social contract wrap-up

Week 7:

Tu 10/15 No class: midsemester break

Contemporary Applications: Civil Disobedience, Gender and Racial Injustice

Th 10/17 **Paper 1 Draft Due;** Alabama Clergyman, "An Appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense" (web); "A Call for Unity"; M.L.K., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"; Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"

Optional Lecture: Daniel Dennett (Tufts University), "Autonomy, Consciousness, and Freedom," 5:00-6:30pm, Pruyne Lecture Hall

Week 8:

Tu 10/22 In-class revision assignment; Storing, "The Case Against Civil Disobedience";

Th 10/24 Rawls, "The Justification of Civil Disobedience"

F 10/24 **Paper 1 Final Due @5pm via email**

Week 9:

Tu 10/29 Shelby, "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto"

Th 10/31 Class guest-taught by Manon Garcia (Yale University) on Carol Pateman's *The Sexual Contract*

Week 10:

Tu 11/5 Shatema Threadcraft, "Intimate Injustice, Political Obligation, and the Dark Ghetto"

Economic Justice: Should the state tax the rich and give to the Poor?

Egalitarianism

Th 11/7 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. I: Justice as Fairness

Week 11:

Tu 11/12 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. II: Two Principles of Justice

Th 11/14 No class: instructor is away at a book manuscript workshop @ Bates College

Week 12:

Tu 11/19 Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. III: The Veil of Ignorance; **Paper 2 Assigned**

Libertarianism

Th 11/21 Rawls wrap-up

11/23-12/1 Thanksgiving break

Week 13:

Tu 12/3 Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. I: The Entitlement Theory

Th 12/5 Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. II: Property Rights; Selections from *New York Times*, 1619 Project (web)

Week 14:

Tu 12/10 Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. III: Critique of Rawls

Finals Week:

M 12/16 Paper 2 Final Due; Reading Response Final Due (no exceptions)