

PHIL 2200: MAJOR SOCIAL THEORIES

Spring 2014

Instructor: Shane Gronholz

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TTH 9:30-10:45 Hale 240

TTH 11:00-12:15 ECON 205

Office Hours: TTH 12:15-1:45 Hellems 15

Book: *The Problem of Political Authority*, Michael Huemer

"The man who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the co-operation or consent of his deliberate reason." – Bertrand Russell

Course Description

Almost everyone lives in a society. We live together. And yet we often appear to be pretty selfish. These two facts (if they are facts) raise a number of difficult and important questions, some of which we will explore in this class. In particular, we will be asking: What do we want society to be like? Do we need a central authority, or government, to ensure the society functions properly? What is the proper role of the government? Whence does it derive its authority? What is it allowed to do? When should individuals in the society obey the government, and why? In thinking about these questions, you will refine your critical thinking skills by evaluating complex ideas and arguments and forming your own views about them. Be prepared to have your beliefs challenged and, when provided with good reason to do so, to revise them. I'm excited about this course and think you should be too. It will be lively and fun and you will come out of a better thinker, and hopefully a better person, too.

Course Format

The format for this course involves a combination of lecture and class discussion. You should be prepared to engage in discussion every day. That means you'll have to do the readings and come to class.

Course Materials

There is one required book, which is *The Problem of Political Authority: An Examination of the Right to Coerce and the Duty to Obey*, by Michael Huemer, referred to in the schedule below is "PPA." All other assigned readings can be found on Desire2Learn.

Online

We will be using Desire2Learn. This can be found at learn.colorado.edu. On Desire2Learn, you can find the readings that aren't in the book, as well as the gradebook to see how well you are doing.

Assessment

1. Exams: Most of your final grade will be determined by three exams (see dates below). These exams are not cumulative and mostly objective. It is unlikely that you will do well on the exams if you haven't been reading, coming to class, and participating in discussion and asking questions. Each exam counts for 30% of your final grade.
2. Participation: This is based on my subjective sense of how well you contributed to class discussion and how regularly you attended class.

Policies, tips, and other stuff:

Exam days: I expect you to be in class on exam days. If there is some very compelling reason (determined by me) why you are unable to come to class that day, you must arrange with me an alternate time to take the exam *before* the scheduled time of the exam. Failure to do so will result in a 0 for the exam.

Technology in the classroom: Texting during class is prohibited. If you must read or send a text, please step out of the classroom. First-time offenders will be asked to stop. Additional offenses will result in dismissal from class and a loss of participation points. If you use a laptop in class, you may use it only for taking notes. No web-surfing, emailing, IMing, Facebooking, etc. If you use a laptop, disable the wifi.

Extra credit: Extra credit will not be offered. Stay on top of things.

Readings: Keep up with the readings. Anything from the readings is fair game for the exams. The amount of reading I have assigned is manageable and it is all well worth your time.

Email: From time to time, I may send you emails with important information about the class, including changes to the course schedule. You will be responsible for the information I send via email.

Participate a lot: Philosophy is fun. Be willing to come to class and participate in the discussion. You will get much more out of the class if you do.

Office Hours: If you're struggling in the class, office hours are a good chance to get some help. They are also a chance for me to get to know you better.

Other grading notes: Grades are not a personal evaluation of you, and they do not report how hard you tried. They report only how well you performed. Do not worry too much about your grade, since for most of you, minor differences between grades will have little to no effect on your future lives.

Schedule

- 1.13 Intro, syllabus
- 1.15 Layman, "Logic" (Optional: Schick and Vaughn, "Informal Fallacies")

- 1.20 JS Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Shane Gronholz, "Introduction to Consequentialism"
- 1.22 Robin S. Dillon on Kantian Respect (SEP), Andrew Chapman, "Introduction to Deontology: Kantian Ethics"

- 1.27 W.D Ross, "What Makes Right Acts Right?"
- 1.29 Robert Nozick, "Distributive Justice," Jeremy Waldron, "Property Rights" (SEP)

- 2.3 John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice"
- 2.5 "Rawls v. Nozick"

- 2.10 Derek Parfit, "Equality and Priority"
- 2.12 Michael Huemer, "Against Equality and Priority"

- 2.17 **EXAM I**
- 2.19 PPA, "Introduction: The Problem of Political Authority"

- 2.24 John Locke, *Second Treaties of Government*
- 2.26 Class canceled due to snow

- 3.3 PPA, "The Traditional Social Contract Theory"
- 3.5 PPA, "The Hypothetical Social Contract Theory"

- 3.10 PPA, "The Authority of Democracy"
- 3.12 PPA, "Consequentialism and Fairness"

- 3.17 PPA, "The Psychology of Authority"
- 3.19 **EXAM 2**

- Spring Break-

- 3.31 PPA, "What if there is no Authority?"
- 4.2 Class canceled

- 4.7 PPA, "Evaluating Social Theories"
- 4.9 class canceled due to speaking engagement

- 4.14 PPA, "The Logic of Predation"
- 4.16 PPA, "Individual Security in a Stateless Society"

- 4.21 PPA, "Criminal Justice and Dispute Resolution," "War and Societal Defense"
- 4.23 PPA, "From Democracy to Anarchy"

- 4.28 TBA
- 4.30 TBA

Fine Print:

1. honor code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>

2. classroom environment: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

3. disabilities: if you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and see <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>

4. religious holidays: campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you anticipate any such conflicts this semester, please contact me in a timely manner so that we can make arrangements that will be acceptable to you. For further information see: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

5. discrimination, harassment, amorous relationships:: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student in this class who believes he or she has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>