

Social & Political Philosophy (PHIL 182-003)

Instructor: Alec Stubbs

Meeting times: MWF 1:30PM – 2:20 PM

Office Hours: email me at astubbs@luc.edu and we will set up a time to meet!

What is this course?

The goal of this course is to investigate some of the most basic and fundamental questions of political philosophy:

- How should we, as human beings, live together?
- How do social and political institutions shape us and how are they shaped *by* us?
- What values guide our social and political world?
- What values *ought* guide our social and political world?
- What kinds institutions should we adopt so that we might best fulfill our natures as individual and social beings?

To answer some of these questions, we will take a walk through some key topics in political philosophy. This course will be organized around five topic areas: *liberty*, *equality*, *democracy*, *capitalism*, and *socialism*.

The first half of the course will explore some of the basic ideas of how and why we form societies where we can live together and realize our potentials. The section on liberty will contend with what it means to be free, what states are for and how far they should be able to reach into your lives, etc. The section on equality will ask us to think about how we, as citizens living as a collective, should treat each other, what we are each deserving of, and what are the purposes/limits of equality. Finally, our section on democracy will help us think about what role we should get to play in the decisions that effect our daily lives and to what extent we should be given the reigns of control.

For second half of the course we will be looking at two of the main economic systems that are most popular and vying for contention today: capitalism and socialism. You may ask yourself, “Why are we talking about economic systems in a philosophy class?”. Good question! The answer is that political and economic systems *overlap* and *inform* one another, so we cannot talk about one without talking about the other. We will consider how each of the previous philosophical concepts apply under capitalism and under socialism. How are they different? Which is preferable and why? Do different economic systems prioritize different values? Why might that be?

I want you to be able to walk out of this class with a basic understanding of how to critically analysis the systems and structures around you (be they economic, political, social, etc.) You should leave the class being able to see how certain systems begin with certain assumptions—assumptions that tend to prioritize certain values over others. I want you to develop a consciousness about who and what you are in relation to the political world that you live in and figure out a way to chart your own course that excites you!

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, all students will have developed the following knowledge and capacities:

- Students will be able to identify and articulate some of the various conceptions of liberty, equality, and democracy.
- Students will know the difference between capitalism and socialism as well as the philosophical assumptions that undergird each.
- Students will be able to effectively engage in civil argumentation with others about contentious contemporary political and economic issues, while remaining well-reasoned, thoughtful, and respectful.
- Students will be able to define and clearly articulate their core values in writing and in person.
- Students will be able to critically assess our contemporary political and economic systems in light of the values discussed in class (liberty, equality, and democracy), especially through well-reasoned, written argumentation.
- Students will understand and articulate, in writing and in person, the relationship between oneself and their community, i.e., understanding oneself as *a political animal*.
- Students will begin to develop an understanding of how political change can occur and how they can engage in civic participation through the world around them.

Course Grading:

This course has five main, graded components: reading quizzes (10%), a participation grade (20%), argument outlines (30%), paper expansions (20%), and a political action toolkit (20%).

(5) Reading quizzes	= 5 x 5 pts.	=25 pts.	(10%)
Participation		=50 pts.	(20%)
(3) Argument Outlines (on liberty, equality, and democracy)	= 3 x 25pts.	=75 pts.	(30%)
Paper Expansion		=50 pts.	(20%)
Final Political Action Toolkit		=50 pts.	(20%)
Total:		=250 pts.	(100%)

Grade Scale:

A	= 93 – 100%	C	= 73 – 76%
A-	= 90 – 92%	C-	= 70 – 72%
B+	= 87 – 89%	D+	= 67 – 69%
B	= 83 – 86%	D	= 63 – 66%
B-	= 80 – 82%	D-	= 60 – 62%
C+	= 77 – 79%	F	= 00 – 59%

Course Materials:

All materials for the course will be available on our Sakai page—you will not be required to purchase any.

Course Assignments:

- *Reading Quizzes (10%)*
Some of our learning objectives focus on the ability to identify and articulate basic philosophical concepts. One way to practice this is to engage in low-stakes assignments that help to gauge your ability to identify these concepts. To this end, you will be asked to submit 5 reading quizzes throughout the semester. The goal of these quizzes is to test basic knowledge about different philosophical concepts and positions that we will be analyzing. If you have done the readings, should be relatively simple to score a 5 on each of these.
- *Participation (20%)*
Philosophy, and political philosophy in particular, requires us to develop our skills at engaging in civil discussion about political ideas, personal values, and other difficult subjects. In this class, we will be engaging in lots of Socratic discussion, individual writing, sharing, thinking together, and a whole host of in-class activities. Our classroom will be one where we engage in what is known as *active learning*, that is, we will be using our class time to engage in problem-based activities that help you to wrestle with and think through philosophical and political problems in real time. While attendance is not tracked, your capacity to show up to class to engage in our active learning sessions is important for your ability to learn. To that end, you will have a participation grade that tracks your participation in class. I also recognize that participation is different for different folks, and I will also count as participation those conversations that you have with others about our course material *outside of class*, including friends/family, Twitter/online discussions, etc. *Part of your final participation grade will be based on your own self-assessment.* While I have final say on what grade will be applied to your participation grade, *I believe it is important for you to both reflect on and honestly assess your own participating in our course.*
- *Argument outlines (30%)*
Another one of our course goals is to be able to critically assess contemporary systems and structures using well-reasoned, written argumentation. One of the main *skills* that you can expect to develop when studying philosophy is to provide clear, concise, and well-reasoned written arguments. We will be writing short, argument outlines *before* embarking on writing longer papers. This allows us to *scaffold* our writing skills, and build a strong philosophical foundation before writing longer papers. They will be on a topic of your choice, but they must engage with the value associated with each outline (e.g., liberty, equality, and democracy). A full outline of the argument outlines assignment is detailed on our Sakai page under “Paper Guides”.

- *Paper Expansion (20%)*

Having learned from our argument outlines, this paper will now ask you to address the comments left for you and build your previous argument into a full paper. This will also build towards our final assignment, which is the development of our “political action toolkit”. A full outline of the paper expansion is detailed on our Sakai page under “Paper Guides”.

- *Final Political Action Toolkit (20%)*

A full outline of the final political action toolkit is detailed on our Sakai page under “Paper Guides”. This final assignment will ask you to tack on an additional 2-3 pages onto a *revised* version of your paper expansion, this time adding information on a political organization that you can tap into that would allow you to engage in political change concerning the issue that you are writing about.

Course Policies:

Sakai

Our class Sakai site will be used for this course. This is where you will find short lecture videos, digital essays, readings, questions to consider, paper guides, etc. This is also where you will turn in your assignments. Please see our Sakai site

“Life Happens” Clause:

Life can be stressful and strange stuff can happen. To that end, I have a “life happens” policy where any student can contact me via email 24 hours in advance of a deadline and receive a 3 day extension—no questions asked. This can be invoked once per semester. If there is a bigger issue that requires massive accommodations, we can discuss that as well. However, this specific clause exists to prevent you from feeling the need to lie or divulge any personal information with respect to why an assignment didn’t get done on time. I get it—life happens.

Laptops in the Classroom

There is a lot of (heated) debate about the pros and cons of having laptops in the classroom. A [popularly cited study](#) shows a *slight* difference in course performance in favor of those *not* using laptops in the classroom. [Another popular study shows](#) that laptop use hinder learning among those *nearby* laptop users, and [an additional study](#) suggests that there are learning advantages to taking handwritten notes over typed notes. So what does this mean? It isn’t conclusive, but it seems like the best practice to *not* use laptops in the classroom. However, I also understand and respect that, for accessibility purposes or various other learning reasons, it may be important for you to have a laptop in class. To that end, if you have an accommodation for a laptop in the classroom, please let me know and we will make sure that you are able to use it. Additionally, *if you can make a compelling case as to why using a laptop in the classroom*, we can work out a solution. So—I will ask you to please not use laptops in the classroom unless you meet any of the previous two conditions.

Email Response Policy:

During weekdays from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. I will try my best to hastily respond to your emails. Outside of those hours and during weekends, although I will be checking my email, response times cannot be guaranteed to be as quick. Therefore, if you are in need of a quick response please try to contact me during the week from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.—outside of these hours, I should be able to respond to you within the next day.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism is a serious issue that you will be responsible for avoiding. Any works that you draw from, previous work you have written, texts, videos, and podcasts that you draw from, all of these must be cited in your written work in order to avoid plagiarism. The College of Arts and Sciences makes the following statement regarding plagiarism and dishonest examination behavior: “Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor’s assigning the grade of “F” for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction,

including a grade of “F” in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the chairperson of the department involved, and to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.”

Please take the opportunity to familiarize yourself with the university’s policy concerning plagiarism and dishonest examination behavior at:

https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

Student Accessibility Services:

Loyola’s Student Accessibility Center (SAC) is an excellent resource for differently-abled students needing academic accommodations. Students seeking academic accommodations must meet with SAC to verify your condition and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Students may visit SAC in Sullivan Center Suite 117, call 773.508.3700, email sac@luc.edu, or visit <http://www.luc.edu/sac/> to begin the process. Students should schedule an appointment with the professor to discuss any academic concerns and/or accommodations. Students are encouraged to contact SAC as early in the semester as possible.

Mental Health Services Available via Loyola:

College can be a stressful time, and I encourage you all to take advantage of the many resources we have at Loyola to help in any circumstance. For all mental health related needs, please access <https://www.luc.edu/wellness/mentalhealth/>. This website includes access to emergency and crises care, counseling session information, and many other services that can be useful for anyone needing access to a spectrum of mental health services.

Reading Schedule:

All of our readings are available on Sakai. There is also a breakdown of what you will need to watch, read, and think about for each day. Our Sakai site follows a clear trajectory, and Sakai allows you to “check off” the required videos, readings, and assignments for the day.

Week 1 - Introduction to Political Philosophy

January 18th – No Class, Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 20th – What is this course?

- No readings

January 22nd – What is political philosophy?

- Selections from Plato, *Republic*

Week 2 – The State of Nature and the Social Contract

January 25th – What is human nature and how do we govern ourselves?

- Selections from Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

January 27th – What is human reason and how do we obtain rights?

- Selections from John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*

January 29th – Where does inequality come from and why does it matter?

- Selections from Jean-Jacque Rousseau’s *Discourse on Inequality*
- **Reading quiz due at 11:55 pm (CST)**

Week 3 – Liberty and Free Speech

February 1st – What does it mean to be free?

- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 1

February 3rd – What is free speech and what are its limits?

- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 2

February 5th – No additional readings

Week 4 – Liberty and Individuality

February 8th – What is the importance of individuality?

- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 3

February 10th – What do we owe each other?

- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 4
- **Reading quiz due at 11:55 pm (CST)**

February 12th – How to Formulate an Argument

- Read “How to Formulate an Argument”

Week 5 – Liberty and Oppression

February 15th – What are positive and negative liberties?

- Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Freedom”

February 17th – What is oppression?

- Iris Marion Young, “Five Faces of Oppression”

February 19th – Would you walk away?

- Ursula Le Guin, “The One’s Who Walk Away from Omelas”

Week 6 – Equality and Distribution of Resources

February 22nd – What is the relationship between equality, justice, and fairness?

- Selections from John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*
- **Liberty argument outline due at 11:55 pm (CST)**

February 24th – How do we think about race, equality, and justice?

- Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Chapter 1, “Overview”

February 26th – Is the “veil of ignorance” ignorant?

- “‘The Racial Contract’: Interview with Philosopher Charles W. Mills”
- “Up From Rawls: Charles Mills’s effort to save liberal political philosophy from itself”
- **Reading quiz due at 11:55 pm (CST)**

Week 7 – Why Does Equality Matter?

March 1st – What is the purpose of equality?

- Elizabeth Anderson, “What is the Point of Equality?”

March 3rd – What kind of equality ought we aim towards?

- Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Part 1

March 5th – What things are worth being equal?

- Martha Nussbaum, “Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements”

Week 8 – What is Democracy?

March 8th – No Class (Spring Break)

March 10th – What is democracy and what is consensus?

- Haudenosaunee, “The Great Law of Peace”

March 12th – Is representative or direct democracy preferable?

- James Madison, “Federalist No. 10”
- Carole Pateman, “Participatory Democracy Revisited”
- **Equality argument outline due at 11:55 pm (CST)**

Week 9 – What is the Point of Democracy?

March 15th – Why should we want democracy?

- Elizabeth Anderson, “Democracy: Instrumental vs. Non-Instrumental Value”

March 17th – Why should we *not* want democracy?

- Jason Brennan, *Against Democracy*, Introduction

March 19th – Is this what democracy looks like?

- Gordon Arlen and Enzo Rossi, “Is this what democracy looks like? (Never mind epistocracy)”
- **Reading quiz due at 11:55 pm (CST)**

Week 10 -- Capitalism

March 22nd – What are the moral foundations of capitalism?

- Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Introduction and Chapter 1

March 24th – What is the role of government under capitalism?

- Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chapter 2

March 26th – How we educate under capitalism?

- Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chapter 6
- **Democracy argument outline due at 11:55 (CST)**

Week 11 – Capitalism, continued

- March 29th – What do businesses owe society and what do we do about monopolies?
 - Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chapters 8, 9
- March 31st – How is wealth distributed under capitalism and what do we do about poverty?
 - Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13
- April 2nd – Is capitalism the best economic system?
 - Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, Conclusion

Week 12 – Socialism

- April 5th – What is socialism?
 - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Preface, Preamble, Parts 1, 2
- April 7th – What is socialism?
 - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Parts 3, 4
- April 9th – What could socialism look like?
 - Selections from David Schweickart, *After Capitalism*
 - **Reading quiz due at 11:55 pm (CST)**

Week 13 – Socialism, continued

- April 12th – What could socialism look like?
 - Selections from David Schweickart, *After Capitalism*
- April 14th – What do class and race have to do with one another?
 - Selections from Angela Davis, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle*
 - The Black Panther Party’s “Ten-Point Program”
- April 16th – What is preferable: capitalism or socialism?
 - Video: “Capitalism vs. Socialism Soho Forum Debate”
 - **Paper Expansion due at 11:55 pm (CST)**

Week 14 – Civil Disobedience

- April 19th – What is civil disobedience?
 - Henry David Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience,” abridged
- April 21st – Why ought we engage in civil disobedience?
 - Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
 - Howard Zinn, “Seven Guidelines for Civil Disobedience”
- April 23rd – Is vandalism civil disobedience?
 - Ten-Herng Lai, “Political Vandalism as Counter-Speech: A Defense of Defacing and Destroying Tainted Monuments”

Week 15 – From Theory to Praxis

- April 26th – How is political change possible?
 - Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House”
- April 28th – How have you changed?
 - Final discussion about values, political goals, etc.
 - **Final Political Action Toolkit due Friday, May 7th 11:55 pm CST**