

Teaching Portfolio

Alec Stubbs

Contents

Teaching Statement	2
Teaching Evaluations	5
Quantitative.....	5
Qualitative	9
Teaching Interests and Competencies	19
Sample Syllabi.....	20
<i>Social and Political Philosophy</i>	21
<i>Moral and Social Problems</i>	30
<i>Philosophy as a Way of Life</i>	35
<i>Technology and Society</i>	38
<i>Social Justice and Political Resistance</i>	41
Sample Teaching Materials	44
Short Lecture Video from Flipped Course.....	44
Course Organization Using Learning Management Software	45
Course Organization Using WordPress Course Website.....	47
Assignment Examples	48
Ignatian Pedagogy Certification.....	54

Teaching Statement

I believe in the critical and creative functions of philosophy.¹ In my classes, students are asked to engage in value-driven critiques of the world around them and undergo a process of self-discovery. This means using philosophy to become the kinds of people that are in search of the good life – both for ourselves and for others. Drawing from the tradition of critical pedagogy, I believe that pedagogy should be learner-centered, it should upend the banking model of education, and it should be personally transformative.

My pedagogical goals are both *skill-based* and *value-based*. As a discipline, philosophy provides us with reasoning and critical analysis skills that help us become creative thinkers and speakers. But learning and doing philosophy also allow us to discover our values and our meaning in the world. In my courses, I help students to realize both of these pedagogical goals. For instance, to facilitate students' skill development, I use a mix of formative and summative assessments. I employ, at various times, low stakes reading quizzes, minute papers, exit tickets, and classroom polls. For summative skill-based assessments in my *Social and Political Philosophy* course, students write scaffolded papers that are synthesized for their final project: political action toolkits. These toolkits ask students to apply the skills of argumentative writing and philosophical analysis to an urgent political problem of their interest. I frame this transition as a development from theory to practice, where students develop the skills to understand and critique social structures around them and develop a plan of action to involve themselves in a political community. This integrated approach to learning means students develop philosophical skills while uncovering their personal values. Students walk away from this course having a clear sense of their own values, and they have a ready-made way of concretely engaging with the world using these newfound philosophical tools.

In keeping with my training in critical pedagogy and the tradition of 'philosophy as a way of life', I also incorporate what I call 'philosophical exercises' into the classes that I teach. For example, when learning virtue ethics in class, students are tasked with examining their own moral exemplars. They create lists of virtues and habits of those with whom they most identify. Then, students are asked to live like a virtue theorist for a week – they must identify personal goals for themselves and describe the virtues required to achieve those goals. They must live according to those virtues, after which they are asked to reflect on their own experiences: Have they changed? What was most difficult? Did they notice differences in their relationships with others? This example is representative of how I scaffold each of our units to attend to both in-class and out-of-class philosophical practices. The intent is to make philosophical exercises relevant to students' lives and teach them to apply philosophical tools to the world at large (see hooks 1994).

To further facilitate students' philosophical development, I also incorporate reflective and problem-based learning, or staging, in the classroom.² This requires our classroom time to be active, wide-ranging, and flipped – that is, students watch short lecture videos prior to class, and in class we *practice* philosophizing. I begin class by outlining our plan for the day, providing necessary conceptual

¹ Ignacio Ellacuría wrote in "The Liberating Function of Philosophy" of philosophy's two capacities: its capacity for critique and its capacity for creativity. For Ellacuría, philosophy both challenges the "ideological aspects of the social structure", and it gives us the creative capacity to imagine alternative worlds and ways of being (Ellacuría 2013, 96).

² I believe significant learning requires deep reflection on key values, opportunities to take meaningful action, and an invitation to reflect on those actions (Pousson and Myers 2018). This learning process is made possible by engaged and problem-based learning, sometimes called "staging", in the classroom (Weston 2018).

clarifications, and then setting students up for certain tasks, including personal reflection writings, ethical dilemmas, small group discussions, classroom debates, concept mapping, and more. I also employ simulations when possible. For example, in our *Moral and Social Problems* course, after discussing Plato's *Euthyphro*, divine command theory, and the search for moral foundations, I have students engage in a "lifeboat" exercise. This exercise entails giving each student a slip of paper with a particular role – an age, an occupation, number of family members, personality traits, etc. Students are joined into groups and asked to reflect on who they will save first as their lifeboat sinks. They are also tasked with presenting moral principles that ground their decisions, providing reasons for their choices. This is repeated numerous times throughout our class period until we have exhausted a lively classroom debate and formulated a variety of moral principles to choose from. This simulation sets the stage for investigation into a number of moral theories, and it gives the students first-hand experience with the difficulties of discovering and clarifying moral principles. Simulations like these help students practice thinking and acting philosophically with others.

Of course, these activities require building rapport with my students. They also rely on developing a classroom culture built on high intellectual standards as well as mutual respect, flexibility, and inclusivity. I develop mutual respect by having students build strategies for productive and meaningful conversations on day one. This includes practicing the use of "discussion moves" for successful philosophical dialogue (Mortensen 2021). I build inclusivity and flexibility into our course by diversifying the philosophical canon, eliciting frequent course feedback, and using *specifications grading* to allow for greater student choice in assignments (Nilson 2015).

Furthermore, following best practices for Universal Design for Learning (Rose and Meyer 2006) I recognize that students learn differently. As such, I give students a variety of ways to engage with the material, from short lecture videos that I record, to argumentative breakdowns of specific texts. I also recognize that students express their knowledge differently, and although it is important for students to develop philosophical skills, I believe that there is also room for students to produce work in unique and imaginative ways. Therefore, in certain contexts, I allow students to present work creatively – from video and audio production, to artwork, dance, and more. Students in my courses have produced wonderfully creative projects. Past creative projects include dystopian propaganda posters related to Huxley's *Brave New World*, mock news stories discussing Marcuse on liberatory technology, audio analyses of the importance of authenticity in rap music, podcast episodes on the failures of abstinence-only sex education, and more. Through creative expression, students develop critical analysis skills while applying these tools to their daily lives.

Even though I have extensive teaching experience, I understand that to be a successful teacher I must continue to be a successful learner – my own learning benefits my students' learning. I have certifications in anti-racist pedagogy, experiential learning, and Ignatian pedagogy. I have completed two year-long teaching effectiveness seminars, two workshops with the American Association of Philosophy Teachers (AAPT), one workshop with Notre Dame's Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWOL) initiative, and I intend to work with the AAPT and the PWOL communities into the future. Finally, I am looking forward to experimenting with various strategies of engaged and experiential learning, such as developing philosophy courses that build relationships with community organizations. As someone deeply committed to pedagogical excellence and creating transformative learning experiences for my students, I believe it is necessary to build my pedagogical skills throughout my career and to commit to being a lifelong learner in both philosophy and pedagogy.

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Teaching Evaluations – Quantitative

University of Massachusetts Boston

University of Massachusetts Boston (UMB) collects both quantitative and qualitative data on instructors each semester. Students are asked to respond to questions on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). I have organized below the average student evaluation scores for all courses for which I have been the sole instructor. This chart also includes what percentage of my students indicated that they either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statements in question. Complete raw data regarding each course can be found in the appendix section of this teaching portfolio. All averages are rounded to the nearest tenth. Evaluations are written, so university comparisons are unavailable for UMB.

PHIL 108 Moral and Social Problems Course Evaluations (26 responses) (Fall '22)

Statement	My Average	% agree
The instructor demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the subject matter	4.9	100%
The instructor was well-organized and presented materials clearly	4.9	100%
Course assignments were well designed and helpful for understanding course concepts	4.8	100%
The instructor encouraged class participation and created a positive learning environment	4.9	100%
The instructor was available to help outside of class (in office hours and via other means)	4.9	100%
The instructor provided timely and useful feedback during the semester (e.g., on assignments)	4.9	100%
This course made me more interested in studying philosophy further	4.3	81%
Statement	My Average	% “very good” or “outstanding”
Overall, how would you evaluate this course? (1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good, 5 = outstanding)	4.8	100%
Overall, how would you evaluate this instructor? (1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good, 5 = outstanding)	5	100%

Loyola University Chicago

Loyola University Chicago (LUC) collects both quantitative and qualitative data on instructors each semester. Students are asked to respond to questions on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). I have organized below the average student evaluation scores for all courses for which I have been the sole instructor, all of which have been PHIL 182 Social and Political Philosophy.³ This chart also includes what percentage of my students indicated that they either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statements in question. It also shows my course averages in comparison to Loyola University Chicago Philosophy courses, courses in the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS), and Loyola University Chicago as a whole. All averages are rounded to the nearest tenth.

I have also included a more detailed chart that shows my evaluations in comparison to average scores across all of Loyola University Chicago (compared to 182,532 student responses).

**PHIL 182 Social and Political Philosophy Course Evaluations
(Fall '19, Fall '20, Spring '21 combined)**

Statement	My Average	% agree	LUC PHIL Average	LUC CAS Average	LUC Average
The amount of material I learned in this course exceeded my expectations.	4.3	80%	3.6	3.7	3.7
The course content was effectively organized.	4.8	98%	4.3	4.3	4.3
The course developed my abilities and skills for the subject.	4.7	96%	4.2	4.3	4.3
The course developed my ability to think critically about the subject.	4.7	94%	4.4	4.3	4.3
The online instructional materials helped me to achieve the course learning objectives.	4.6	98%	4.3	4.2	4.2

³ I also served as a teaching assistant for PHIL 182 in the Fall of 2018 and served as the primary, but not only, instructor for the course. Course evaluations are not available for this course since it asked students to provide feedback for the professor in charge of the course rather than the teaching assistant.

Statement	My Average	% agree	LUC PHIL Average	LUC CAS Average	LUC Average
How would you rate the overall effectiveness of this course? (very ineffective to very effective)	4.7	96%	4.2	4.2	4.2
The technology tools used in the online course helped me to learn what I needed in order to be successful in the course.	4.7	98%	4.2	4.2	4.2
I had sufficient opportunities for interaction with my classmates throughout the semester.	4.9	98%	4.1	4.0	4.1
The instructor effectively presented the course content.	4.9	100%	4.4	4.4	4.4
The instructor clearly articulated the standards of performance for the course.	4.7	96%	4.4	4.4	4.4
The instructor provided guidance when I had difficulties or questions.	4.8	97%	4.4	4.4	4.4
The instructor provided constructive feedback on my performance.	4.8	100%	4.3	4.2	4.3
The instructor facilitated student participation.	4.9	100%	4.4	4.3	4.3
The instructor cultivated an inclusive learning environment for students from diverse backgrounds.	4.8	98%	4.5	4.4	4.4
I had sufficient opportunities for interaction with my instructor throughout the semester.	4.8	100%	4.4	4.4	4.4
How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the instructor? (very ineffective to very effective)	4.9	100%	4.3	4.3	4.3

Below is the percentile ranking of the courses I have taught in comparison to all student evaluations across all courses at Loyola University Chicago (compared to 182,532 student responses).

Loyola University Chicago

Percentile Rank Analysis for Alec Stubbs Teaching Social&Political Philosophy 182 UGRD Lecture



There were: 111 possible respondents.

	Question Text	N	100-90%	89-80%	79-70%	69-60%	59-50%	49-40%	39-30%	29-20%	19-10%	9-1%
2	Material learned	69	----- 4.3-									
3	Course content effectively organized	69	4.8									
4	Course developed abilities/skills	69	----- 4.7-									
5	Course developed critical thinking	69	----- 4.7-									
6	Online materials aided in course objectives	41	----- 4.6	-----								
6	Overall course effectiveness	28	----- 4.7	-----								
7	Technology aided success	41	-4.7	-----								
8	Opportunity to interact with classmates	41	4.9									
8	Instructor effectively presented content	28	4.9									
9	Instructor clearly articulated the standards of performance	28	-----	----- 4.7	-----							
9	Overall course effectiveness	41	----- 4.7	-----								
10	Instructor provided guidance with difficulties/questions	28	-----	----- 4.8	-----							
11	Instructor provided constructive feedback	28	----- 4.8-									
12	Instructor effectively presented content	41	----- 4.8-									
12	Instructor facilitated student participation	28	4.9									
13	Instructor clearly articulated the standards of performance	41	----- 4.8-									
13	Instructor overall effectiveness	28	4.9									
14	Instructor provided guidance with difficulties/questions	41	-----	----- 4.8-								
15	Instructor provided constructive feedback	41	4.9									
16	Instructor facilitated student participation	41	4.9									
17	Instructor inclusivity	41	----- 4.8-									
18	Opportunities for instructor interaction	41	----- 4.8-									
19	Instructor overall effectiveness	41	4.9									

Teaching Evaluations – Qualitative

University of Massachusetts Boston

Here I have included the *unedited* qualitative comments from **four qualitative questions** asked of students in my PHIL 108 (Moral and Social Problems) course taught at University of Massachusetts Boston. University of Massachusetts Boston asks students for qualitative feedback on ten separate questions, so to include all responses would make this portfolio exceedingly long (an additional 50+ pages of handwritten evaluations).

However, I have chosen what I believe to be four questions that give students the most reflective freedom to discuss my abilities as an instructor, the effectiveness of teaching methods, and our classroom climate. There are a considerable number of comments, so I have **bolded** comments from students that I believe are most representative of my teaching strengths and pedagogical commitments. I am more than happy to provide all 50+ pages of student reports with all qualitative questions and responses upon request.

I have included qualitative student feedback from the following prompts:

1. Which aspects of this course did you value or appreciate?
2. Which aspects of this course did you find particularly difficult?
3. Please comment on the instructor’s strengths as well as areas for possible improvement.
4. Please comment on how you felt about the classroom climate. Did you ever feel uncomfortable or personally mistreated in class because of your race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, or some other reason?

PHIL 108: Moral and Social Problems (Fall 2022)

“Which aspects of this course did you value or appreciate?”

Class structure: very student involved with real life application and thought. Course syllabus is clear and easy to access. Instructor: very passionate, understanding, and made a class environment that was eager to discuss and participate.

I do appreciate a lot of learning about virtue ethics. After writing a paper about it I feel as if I’ve learned a lot about what it is and how to have happiness in life.

All of them if I’m being honest.

Everything. The way the classes are set up and the subjects. Amazing teacher. I value the way he teaches and takes his time with units.

The prof. made an easy to access website that made finding material easy and streamlined. Prof. Stubbs himself was wonderful at his job and constantly encouraged student engagement.

I appreciate the flexibility that this course allowed the students so that they could engage with the course material in class.

The professor always gives us the time to think about the questions asked, then to share it is our little group, and then with class as a whole. Very understanding and makes sure we all get enough time to get all the work done.

I liked the written assignments because I found them to be engaging and thought provoking. I also enjoyed the class discussions.

Manageable workload for 100-level class. Good organization of material through the semester. Logical progression of concepts.

I appreciate every aspect of this course. The structure is magnificent and Professor Stubbs allows for open discussion about philosophical ideas, theories, and opinions. Which has allowed me to learn from my peers as well.

I valued the group discussions. They were very valuable to learn from and understand the course better.

I appreciate the discussion based learning, as well as the contents we learned about.

I really appreciate the discussion in class, this is so far the most debatable class I have.

I very much appreciated everything of this course. Learned so many things that I didn't have any knowledge about.

I valued how open he was to everyone's opinion.

How interactive it is. How well we all engage. How well prepared the professor is.

Free discussion. Acceptance of opinions.

I value the fact that it's more of an open discussion class, rather than a lecture style of class. I appreciate the grading system as well.

The philosophical exercises were helpful to get a deeper understanding of each topic.

All of it was interesting, it makes you reflect.

The professor. Alec was extremely awesome and course material was great.

It makes you think about day to day actions that one might just graze over normally.

The open dialogue and numerous conversations/debates.

I really valued how the course made me think deeply.

The course has a good structure and the content is well organized. The course website is very valuable.

Having class discussions. Learning about moral theories and arguments against it.

“Which aspects of this course do you find particularly difficult?”

Work load used to be a bit difficult to keep up with, but the professor lessened it to be doable after a class discussion.

Some of the moral thoughts/ideas were difficult to understand but with explanations it was fine.

Nothing truthfully, maybe the amount of work but its very reasonable and I enjoy coming to this class and wanting to learn.

None really, the work-load was fair and the prof. was considerate to any students who needed extensions.

I found it a bit difficult to keep up with assignments given my own schedule.

Some terms can be hard to know (but maybe that’s because English is not my first language) but other than that, I do not find this class difficult in any aspect.

Some moral concepts were difficult only because I didn’t agree with past philosophers’ statements.

None.

I didn’t find anything particularly difficult about this course as Professor Stubbs did an amazing job clarifying philosophical theories and explaining in depth how we could apply such theories.

Learning and understanding some of the theories.

I found the readings a bit difficult because it is hard to focus and then have to write about it.

For me, I think the writing essay every week was kind of difficult. However, professor is really nice and helpful, and give us extra time if we needed.

I had some difficult time in understanding some of the topics because they were things I hadn’t heard before.

None.

Some course work (workload).

I would say just the different moral theories and learning how they all work.

It was just a lot of writing, but it helps with the understanding of the course.

None really.

I don't think there was any aspects that were difficult.

Nothing.

None.

The workload at times was quite demanding.

Nothing particularly difficult.

“Please comment on the instructor’s strengths as well as areas for possible improvement.”

Strengths:

Personable. Understanding. Passionate. Flexible. Easy to talk to.

Amazing. Just amazing. Really cares a lot on wanting his students to think about philosophy.

Great communicator. Understanding. Fun. Makes class fun. Makes learning easy.

Blackboard required assignments. In-class discussions.

Knowledgeable on the subject. Kind. Insightful. Personable.

Response to feedback. Flexible. Considerate.

Understanding. Knows what he is doing. **Knows how to make things very clear.** Fun. Respectful.

Approachable. Understanding. Finds different methods of explaining confusing concepts. Pushed us to do better. Made time to meet with students.

Flexible. Friendly. Approachable. Charismatic. Engaging.

Open-minded. In-class discussions. Clarification. Grading Policy. Feedback. Office hours. Teaching structure. Very interactive.

Engagement. Equality. Clarity.

Connecting with students. Good classroom vibe. Making a plan for a struggling student.

Active. Energetic. Helpful. Friendly.

Explaining work. Keeping everybody interested. Very understanding. Fun work and discussion.

Kept class engaged. Allowed group work. Was full of energy. Made me want to show up to class.

Knows material. Open to any perspective/opinion. Willing to meet for office hours. Syllabus followed. Found ways to make us participate. Brought topics relevant to our time.

Engaging participation. Playing to individual strengths of students.

Engaging. Passionate. Caring. Helpful.

Easily reached. Good at answering questions.

Engaging lectures.

Relationships with students. Lecturing/explaining. Making class fun while informative. Extremely understanding. Very knowledgeable. Very awesome professor.

Keeping class engaged and interested. Enthusiasm. Well planned/organized. Flexible.

Response to written work. Asking thought provoking questions. **Keeping class engaged.** Good teaching materials (powerpoints).

Engagement. Getting us to think. **Democratic class.** Feedback.

Communication. Availability for help/support.

Understanding of student's situations. Making the subject fun to learn about.

Areas for Possible Improvement:

N/A. A great professor/instructor!

I honestly don't have anything to say for him to improve.

Maybe slightly less readings.

It wasn't as discussion based as he made it out to be. Consistency maybe.

None.

Not applicable in my opinion.

"Please comment on how you felt about the classroom climate. Did you ever feel uncomfortable or personally mistreated in class because of your race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, or some other reason?"

I felt warm and accepted. Both lecturer and peers were very easy to talk to.

Amazing. Everybody was cool.

No not at all. Everyone was very nice and treated me the same.

I felt extremely comfortable. Very inclusive and supportive.

I felt comfortable in class.

I never felt uncomfortable in this class, it was very respectful.

I always felt very comfortable and the climate was always fun and vibrant! Everyone seemed excited to do any discussion and not a single time there were any misunderstandings or conflict between anyone.

I felt comfortable and welcomed every day.

I was worried that the openness of discussion would invite students to make insensitive or bigoted remarks, but this never became a serious issue.

I never felt uncomfortable as my class was very open-minded.

Very good.

No.

None.

I felt the most comfortable in this class. Everybody understood each other, there was no judgement at all.

Great classroom.

Not at all. I felt safe and free to give my opinion.

No.

No. Classroom environment was very respectful.

No, it was a very welcoming climate.

It was a spectacular environment.

I felt extremely comfortable in this class and it was very inclusive towards everyone.

No it was a very open and accepting environment.

Fine.

I always felt comfortable and included! There was never any unfair treatment.

No.

Felt very comfortable in class.

Loyola University Chicago

Here I have included the complete and *unedited* qualitative comments from all PHIL 182 (Social and Political Philosophy) courses taught at Loyola University Chicago. There are a considerable number of responses, so I have **bolded** comments from students that I believe are most representative of my teaching strengths and pedagogical commitments.

For all courses, students were asked to provide two kinds of qualitative feedback for the following prompts:

1. Please share any additional comments about the course.
2. Please share any additional comments about the instructor.

Online courses included the following question as well:

1. Please share any additional comments about the online course design and/or delivery.

PHIL 182: Social and Political Philosophy (Spring 2021)

“Please share any additional comments about the online course design and/or delivery”

This course was really interesting and really made me think about real world issues and how they apply to every day life. I think everyone should take this class because of how informative it is. These political issues are ones that impact everyone and everyone should understand them and see their impacts and I believe this class did an amazing job at that. It has made me really excited to learn more and get more involved in political action.

This course was so well organized and beautifully executed! I loved the discussion sessions as well as short lectures at the beginning of class. Plus, **the material was so interesting, relevant, and beneficial in real world political and philosophical action.** Awesome course!!

Best class I've taken so far at Loyola! The format of the course made it easy to express one's interests and opinions in politics and ethics as well as get to know your classmates. Having the same discussion groups all semester made for a great way to get to know one another and continue to discuss about our values throughout the semester, learning and growing together.

I really enjoyed this class and the way it was set up. I liked that it was discussion based and I felt like the discussion questions were interesting and thought provoking so it was easy to stay engaged even over Zoom.

“Please share any additional comments about the course”

I really appreciated the opportunity to consistently interact with my classmates and form relationships with my small group. Made the class feel as "normal" as possible!

I really enjoyed how our professor went about doing the class. He would give us an intro and then put us into our groups. I appreciated how the groups were the same every time because it was never awkward or uncomfortable. I learned a lot and it was very interesting.

“Please share any additional comments about the instructor”

Thank you for being so flexible and understanding during this strange time. **Your upbeat attitude and passion for the subject made me enjoy the class twice as much.**

facilitated great discussion and explained topics well

definition of a great professor

Alec is amazing. He's so open minded, engaging, and creative in his teaching style. He makes you really want to engage with the material and connect with him and your classmates. He's going to be such a great professor!!

This instructor did an amazing job at teaching this course, he made sure to develop the ideas thoroughly and gave a lot of resources to better understand the political theories presented. This professor is super knowledgeable and understanding of all opinions and never made anyone seem like they were wrong. I definitely learned a lot from this professor and am inspired to learn more about political action and to do more in my community.

I really like Alec and appreciated his ability to make us think about things from new perspectives. I also appreciated how he was flexible and understanding with due dates which was really helpful.

Alec is a wonderful professor. He is very clear about what he expects, and is flexible when issues arise. He understands the amount of pressure and responsibilities we have to deal with, and is always willing to help us reach our goals. The workload is not incredibly heavy, and I still learned a lot this semester. He is well organized, consistent, and very kind. He holds regular office hours and is passionate about this subject and philosophy in general. It is clear that he cares about us, and that he cares about the subject matter he is teaching. Philosophy by its very nature is challenging and confusing, but Alec always made it seem clear and understandable. Alec is one of my favorite professors I have ever had. I took this class because I love to talk about politics, but Alec has us probe deeper to reflect on what we really believe in, and how we can affect change on a larger scale.

Alec is a great professor! He made a safe space for us to share our view points and he initiated discussion through engaging questions and prompts. He was super effective in an online setting - responding to emails with questions extremely fast (even under 10 minutes at times) and facilitated zoom discussions in a way that made the class feel meaningful yet fun. I always came out of class thinking about what he had to say in our breakout rooms and in lecture.

I really enjoyed this class and the professor. He was very understanding and I appreciated how the groups were the same every time because it was never awkward or uncomfortable. He gave us good feedback on our assignments which helped a lot. I learned a lot from him and he made the class very interesting.

Alec did a very good job of creating a comfortable atmosphere where people can share their opinions and beliefs on the different topics we were talking about. This atmosphere made it able for us to talk about an array of topics we otherwise would not have. The structure of the class with set breakout rooms also helped because you knew exactly what you were getting every class. Alec coming to the breakout rooms helped when we would have specific clarifying questions and he always did a good job of explaining the content in new ways to help us understand better.

PHIL 182: Social and Political Philosophy (Fall 2020)

“Please share any additional comments about the online course design and/or delivery”

The course was modified successfully to an online format, making it easy to navigate, learn, and participate in class. **The pattern of video lecture, reading summary, actual text, and discussion was effective in learning the material.**

I wish we had more large group discussions to see what other classmates thought about our lessons

Hands down my favorite class. I learned so much about politics than I ever imagined I would have. I had never had much interest in politics before but this course made me realize how important and relevant it is and I developed a great interest in it. I loved being able to have group discussions in a Breakout Room and gain perspective on certain topics from my peers. Also, the readings were very manageable. **The videos the instructor created were very informative and helpful in my understanding of the course material.**

“Please share any additional comments about the course”

It was a great 100-level philosophy course. Any person with any major would be able to take and enjoy this course.

Very happy with it

“Please share any additional comments about the instructor”

Alec went above and beyond as an instructor, even during an online only class. He truly cares about his students and always made every effort to be available outside of class time to help. The structure of the class was very organized. He helped facilitate meaningful and intellectual discussions within the class and challenged us to understand situations in a different light.

Alec was very understanding of the worlds current situation (COVID-19) and he made a class that could be boring to some, very exciting to be apart of.

This was a very engaging course. Instructor encouraged asking questions, challenged students to examine their beliefs, and provided thought provoking feedback.

I think some whole group discussion would have been nice or maybe change the groups halfway through. Fresh perspectives would have been nice. I feel some students just settled into a routine and did not put effort because they already knew the students that would do all the work. Great flexibility with the course. I loved the overviews and all the videos it helps clarify what the reading and authors are trying to say.

The instructor was perceptive, understanding, and open to different ideas and opinions. The instructor was effective in teaching the course material and was able to adapt to the students' needs, especially online.

Alec Stubbs is definitely one of my favorite teachers. He is so optimistic and passionate when teaching and does a fantastic job at instructing from an unbiased perspective, which can be difficult to do in politics. His videos, especially with the background music, are so professional and could even potentially help people from everywhere learn about different philosophers. I will certainly be recommending his class to every Loyola student I meet. So inspiring, easygoing, and qualified.

Excellent

PHIL 182: Social and Political Philosophy (Fall 2019)

“Please share any additional comments about the course”

Favorite class I took this semester!

“Please share any additional comments about the instructor”

alec greatly wanted all students to succeed. because of this, he explained and gave material that we were able to interpret and understand correctly. additionally, he was very accommodating and understanding. he was always willing to meet to clarify questions after class or during office hours or even to just further class discussion if we were struggling to understand it. he graded papers so that we were clearly able to see our strengths and weaknesses and work on them for our next assignments

I am not very good at ethics in general. He is one of the best teachers I've ever had in my whole life. He is the most understanding and supportive teacher I've ever had. He is overall the best, whoever has him as a teacher is very lucky.

By far the best instructor I had this semester

Alec is the greatest professor I have met at this institution, his words are very inspiring, and he pushes me to be the best thinker I can be.

All students greatly appreciated the way that **Alec valued student input in the way he structured class assignments.** It helped students learn in the ways that best suited them and many thrived in the supportive environment he made the class to be.

Teaching Interests and Competencies

The following is a list of courses that I would be more than happy to teach, including at the introductory, upper, and graduate levels.

Introductory-level:

- Social and Political Philosophy
- Existentialism
- Philosophy as a Way of Life
- Ethics (normative and applied)
- Philosophy of the Human Person/Philosophy and Persons
- Philosophy of Technology

Upper-level:

- Topics in Social and Political Philosophy including, but not limited to:
 - Philosophy of Work and Play
 - Marxism
 - Critical Theory
 - Social Justice and Political Resistance
- Topics in Philosophy of Technology, including, but not limited to:
 - Technology and Society
 - Critical Theory of Technology
- Existentialism
 - Camus and Absurdism
- Topics in Continental Philosophy

Graduate-level:

- Philosophy of Work and Play
- Marxism
- Topics in Philosophy of Technology

Sample Syllabi

The following section includes sample syllabi for the following courses:

- Social and Political Philosophy (introductory)
- Moral and Social Problems (introductory)
- Philosophy as a Way of Life (introductory)
- Technology and Society (upper)
- Social Justice and Political Resistance (upper)

The first syllabus, *Social and Political Philosophy*, is a course that I have taught multiple times (with multiple iterations) at Loyola University Chicago. This syllabus is the latest iteration of the course. The second syllabus, *Moral and Social Problems*, is a course that I have taught at University of Massachusetts Boston.

I have also included a number of sample syllabi that are of interest to me and also align with my research interests. *Philosophy as a Way of Life* is an introductory-level course that asks students to reflect on various conceptions of “the good life” and ways of living, including philosophies from Western and Eastern traditions. *Technology and Society* is an upper-level course focused on both normative and applied concerns in philosophy of technology, including from Marxist, environmental, feminist, and posthuman perspectives. *Social Justice and Political Resistance* is an upper-level course designed to walk students through the concept of social justice, explore various topics in political resistance, and analyze contemporary resistance movements.

Social & Political Philosophy (PHIL 182)

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**

Moral and Social Problems

Instructor: Alec Stubbs

Meeting times: TuTh 12:30-1:45

Office Hours: email me at alec.stubbs@umb.edu and we will set up a time to meet!

What is this course?

Ethics, or moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with questions of right and wrong. The primary goal of our course is to have you wrestle with various competing (and sometimes overlapping) moral theories. Our course will address three key components of ethics: *normative ethics*, *applied ethics*, and *philosophy as a way of life*.

Normative ethics (what we will discuss in our **theory** section) asks questions about the foundational principles of morality. In other words, it asks questions like: What makes an act morally right or morally wrong? How can we agree on moral principles, if at all? Why ought we prefer one moral theory over another? These kinds of questions are also associated with questions about how one can live a good life.

Applied ethics (what we will discuss in our **practice** section) takes answers to questions about normative ethics and applies them to real world issues. After all, we don't make moral decisions in a vacuum! Applied ethics therefore asks questions like: Ought we obey unjust laws? Should we treat non-human animals as moral equals? Do we have moral obligations to our natural world, to future generations, to the global poor?

Philosophy as a Way of Life (what we will discuss in our **life** section) places our previous two discussions (normative ethics and applied ethics) in the context of our own lives. Questions about what is right and wrong, as well as how we apply those answers to social problems, are useful in helping us understand how we ought to live our lives. You may find that one of the moral theories we discuss is more convincing than another, and you might find yourself enamored with a particular contemporary moral problem. We ought to consider what it means to live a good, just, and moral life in light of those truths.

Questions about moral and social problems requires both deep personal reflection as well as collective discussion and decision-making with a community of others. To that end, our course will focus on both the personal and political aspects of morality and moral decision-making. My goal is that you will walk away from this course having a grasp on various moral theories, their application to the real world, and a deeper sense of your own moral commitments and the effect those commitments have on the world around 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 critique the basic tenets of popular moral theories discussed in class
- Students will develop the capacity to present clear, cogent arguments in favor or against certain moral theories and their relation to contemporary moral issues
- Students will be able to clearly articulate their own values in writing, in person, and in concert with others
- Students will build a capacity to respectfully discuss and debate core moral commitments with their fellow students
- Students will be able to recognize and express the connection between morality and meaning in one's life

Reading Schedule:

Part I: Theory

Week 1 - What is the purpose of Moral Philosophy?

Sept. 6 - Introductions and discussions about moral intuitions/dilemmas

Sept. 8 - Plato, Euthyphro (selections)

Week 2 - Why be Moral?

Sept. 13 - Rachels, "Ethical Egoism"

Sept. 15 - Shafer-Landau, "Ethical Relativism"

Week 3 - Consequentialism

Sept. 20 - Mill, *Utilitarianism* (selections); Singer, "The Logic of Effective Altruism"

Sept. 22 - Shafer-Landau, "Consequentialism: Its Difficulties" and Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"

Week 4 - Deontology

Sept. 27 - Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (selections) with O'Neill - "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics"

Sept. 29 - Nagel, "Moral Luck"

Week 5 - Virtue Ethics

Oct. 4 - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (selections)

Oct. 6 - Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing"

Week 6 - Ethics of Care & Ethics of Love

Oct. 11 - Held, *Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, Global* (chapter 1)

Oct. 13 - hooks, "Living by a Love Ethic," in *All About Love: New Visions*

[Part II: Practice](#)

Week 7 - Oppression, Social Change, and Reparations

- Oct. 18 – Young, “Five Faces of Oppression”
- Oct. 20 - Coates, “The Case for Reparations”; Williamson, “The Case Against Reparations”

Week 8 - Civil Disobedience, Racial Injustice, and (In)Civility

- Oct. 25 - King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail”; Zinn, “Seven Guidelines for Civil Disobedience”
- Oct. 27- Lai, “Political Vandalism as Counter-Speech”; Cherry, “A Philosopher’s Defense of Anger”

Week 9 - Abortion

- Nov. 1 - Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”
- Nov. 3 - Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral”

Week 10 - Animal Rights & Animal Welfare

- Nov. 8 - Norcross, “Pigs, Puppies, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”
- Nov. 10 - Hsiao, “In Defense of Eating Meat”

Week 11 - Leisure, Labor, & Capital

- Nov. 15 - Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (selections)
- Nov. 17 – Stronge & Lewis, *Overtime* (Chapter 2); Smith, “The Benefits and Dignity of Work”

Week 12 - Interlude: What will Future Generations Condemn Us For?

- Nov. 22 - Appiah, “What Will Future Generations Condemn Us For?”
- Nov. 24 - No Class

Week 13 - Climate Change & Environmental Ethics

- Nov. 29 - Leopold, “The Land Ethic”
- Dec. 1 - Gardiner, “A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Moral Corruption”

[Part III: Life](#)

Week 14 - Morality & Meaningful Lives

- Dec. 6 - Thomas, “Morality and a Meaningful Life”
- Dec. 8 - Wolf, “Moral Saints”

Week 15 - You Should Change your Life

- Dec. 13 - Sky, “Groundhog Day #1”, “Groundhog Day #2”, and Rilke, “Archaic Torso of Apollo” (all to be read with me in class)
- Dec. 15 - No Class

Assignments:

- **Daily Meditations:** These are daily assignments that you will turn in on Blackboard *before* coming to class. You will also bring a copy (digital or otherwise) to class. Daily meditations will consist of you finding quotes from the day's primary reading material and commenting on the quotes that you choose. You will also be asking *at least one* good *philosophical* question.
- **Philosophical Exercises:** These are weekly assignments that will ask you to act, think, and write creatively about the topic we are discussing that week. Philosophical Exercises will be made available by the Sunday before the week in question, and they will be due on Blackboard at the end of the week on Fridays at 11:59 pm EST. There will be a total of 11 exercises that will be made available, but only 5 completed at the “Satisfactory” level are required for an A (see specs grading rubric below for more details).
- **Moral Life Paper:** In lieu of a midterm, this assignment will ask you to pick a moral theory we have discussed *that you find most convincing or amenable to your own life* and write a 800-1000 word paper that (a) reconstructs the argument for the moral theory, (b) evaluates that argument, (c) presents an objection, and (d) responds to that objection. **Due Oct. 21st.**
- **Moral Toolkit:** In lieu of a final, this assignment will ask you to take one moral theory discussed in the course *that you find most convincing or amenable to your own life* and apply it to a contemporary moral issue of your choosing. Because I want you to make a toolkit that you will actually find useful and engaging, you have creative control over how you present your moral toolkit. It can take the form of a podcast, a piece of art, a filmed dance performance, a written script, a sculpture, an actual toolkit, etc. I want you to be able to express your creativity in a way that makes what we learn *stick*. Alternatively, there is a paper option if you choose to do so. I will ask you to run your creative (or paper) idea by me by **Nov. 14th** so that we can discuss your project and have you on track to submit it by **Dec. 16th.**
- **In-Class Participation:** Finally, in-class participation will be a key component of your grade. You will be asked to work with group members, work through simulations, and be creative thinkers during class. This, of course, requires you to show up to class. Please note that your in-class participation grade will determine the + or - of your grade, and you will provide a self-assessment that will help me determine what in-class participation grade you deserve for the semester.

Grading:

In an ideal world there would be no grading. As professors, we could provide you with qualitative feedback about how well you have done in the course, and we could pursue knowledge for the sake of its intrinsic value. Nevertheless, I am asked to assign you a grade, even though there seems to be [many flaws in traditional systems of grading](#). However, in order to combat the bad effects of grades, I have done my best to build a grading system that respects your time and effort, while rewarding you for working on mastering the learning objectives of the course and giving you freedom of choice. Enter [specifications grading](#).

Here is how grading will work in this course. You will choose a "bundle" of assignments that you feel mirrors the grade you want to get in this course. Bundles in the higher grade categories require more effort and more work. Bundles in the lower grade categories require less work. **All assignments are graded on a "Satisfactory" or "Not Satisfactory" grading scale - either you meet the rubric requirements or you do not** (I will provide clear rubrics for all assignments).

What this allows me to do is to provide you more *qualitative* feedback on how you did in your assignment. If you did all of the work for an assignment to a "Satisfactory" level but it still could be improved, you will not be punished grade-wise. Instead, I can give you qualitative feedback on what to do to improve even more. If you receive a "Not Satisfactory", then on some assignments, such as our *Philosophical Exercises*, you can do a limited number of retries. Take a look at the grading bundles below, and don't worry, we will go over this more in class!

	"A" Grade Bundle	"B" Grade Bundle	"C" Grade Bundle	"D" Grade Bundle
Daily Meditations (no retries)	22 Satisfactory <i>Daily Meditations</i>	20 Satisfactory <i>Daily Meditations</i>	18 Satisfactory <i>Daily Meditations</i>	15 Satisfactory <i>Daily Meditations</i>
Philosophical Exercises (2 retries)	5 Satisfactory <i>Philosophical Exercises</i>	4 Satisfactory <i>Philosophical Exercises</i>	3 Satisfactory <i>Philosophical Exercises</i>	2 Satisfactory <i>Philosophical Exercises</i>
Moral Life Paper (1 retry)	Satisfactory <i>Moral Life Paper</i>	Satisfactory <i>Moral Life Paper</i>	Satisfactory <i>Moral Life Paper</i>	
Moral Toolkit (no retries)	Satisfactory <i>Moral Toolkit</i>	Satisfactory <i>Moral Toolkit</i>		
In-Class Participation	In-class participation will determine the + or - components of your grade. Your participation grade will be a combination of your own self-assessment and my assessment of your willingness to engage with other classmates during our in class discussions and simulations.			

Philosophy as a Way of Life

Introductory-Level Course Outline

What is this course?

Philosophy is a discipline that tries to ask and answer questions about the fundamentals of our reality—what exists, what can we know, what is right and wrong, how should we treat others, how should we organize society, and so on. Doing philosophy also requires the development of critical thinking skills, including the ability to analyze, understand, respond to, and construct arguments.

While this course certainly will help you develop those skills, its intentions are somewhat distinct and grandiose. This course is designed to help you think through **how you ought to live your life**.

By studying various philosophical traditions, from the ancient world to today, we will be examining how philosophers have argued how one ought to live their life. We will be taking a tour through philosophical history in order to answer the following kinds of questions:

- What is the meaning of life? Does it have meaning?
- What is the best way to live your life? According to what principles should you live?
- What does it mean to live according to *a way of life*?
- What are your values, and what kind of life do they require you to live?

In many ways, this class will likely be quite different from most classes you have taken or will take. You will be asked to *live* in accordance with the philosophies that we study, to reflect upon your experiences, and to examine your own life with respect to these ways of life. These “spiritual exercises” are key to experimenting with different ways of living, different ways of interpreting the world, and different ways of finding meaning in one’s life. The intention of our course is to provide ourselves with philosophical tools for our toolkits of life.

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 express the basic philosophical tenets of numerous ways of living
- Students will develop the capacity to present clear, cogent arguments in favor or against certain philosophical ways of life and their relation to their own lives
- Students will be able to clearly articulate their own values in writing, in person, and in concert with others
- Students will build a capacity to respectfully discuss and debate core philosophical commitments with their fellow students
- Students will live out, reflect upon, and assess the various ways of living discussed throughout this course
- Students will develop a sense of how they want to live their lives and express it in both creative and analytical ways

Reading Schedule:

Week 1 – What can philosophy teach us about *how* to live?

Day 1 – Introduction – what is a “way of life”?

Day 2 – David Foster Wallace, “This is Water” and Pierre Hadot, “Philosophy as a Way of Life” and “Spiritual Exercises”

Week 2 – Socrates (The Examined Life)

Day 1 – Eric Weiner, “How to Wonder like Socrates” and Plato, *The Apology*

Day 2 – No readings – write your own apology

Week 3 – Confucianism/Ruism (The Virtuous Life)

Day 1 – Eric Weiner, “How to be Kind like Confucius” and Confucius, *Analects*, selections

Day 2 – Confucius, *Analects*, selections

Week 4 – Taoism (The “Way” of Life)

Day 1 – Ursula Le Guin, “Introduction” to *Tao Te Ching*, and Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, selections

Day 2 – Zhuang Zhou, *Zhuangzi*, selections

Week 5 – Buddhism (The Awakened Life)

Day 1 – Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, Chapters 1-2

Day 2 – Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy*, Chapters 3-4

Week 6 – Aristotelianism (The Virtuous Life)

Day 1 – Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I and II

Day 2 – Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books III and IV

Week 8 – Epicureanism (The Pleasurable Life)

Day 1 – Eric Weiner, “How to Enjoy like Epicurus” and Epicurus, *Letter to Menoecus*

Day 2 – Cicero *On Moral Ends*, selections, and Diogenes Laertius, “The Principal Doctrines of Epicurus”

Week 9 – Stoicism (The Natural Life)

Day 1 – Eric Weiner, “How to Cope like Epictetus” and Epictetus, *The Enchiridion* selections

Day 2 – Eric Weiner, “How to Get Out of Bed Like Marcus Aurelius” and Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, selections

Week 10 – Existentialism (The Free, Authentic Life)

Day 1 – Jean Paul Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism”

Day 2 – Albert Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus” and Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, “Prologue”

Week 11 – Transcendentalism (The Simple Life)

Day 1 – Eric Weiner, “How to See like Thoreau” and Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, selections

Day 2 – Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, selections

Week 12 – Mysticism (The Compassionate Life)

Day 1 – Eric Weiner, “How to Pay Attention like Weil” and Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, “Attention and Will”

Day 2 – Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots*, selections

Week 13 – A Week of Living

Day 1 – No readings

Day 2 – No readings

Week 14 – Reflections on Ways of Life

Day 1 – Susan Wolf, “The Meaning of Lives”

Day 2 – Last Class

Technology and Society

Upper-Level Course Outline

What is this course?

Philosophy of technology is an area of philosophy that explores the ethical, social, and political considerations regarding humanity's development and use of technology. Our ability to develop and use technology has been key to our evolution as a species, the advancement of science, the creation of a world-spanning civilization, and critically, it has deeply affected who we are and how we relate to one another. This class is primarily built around two key themes: (1) theoretical foundations in philosophy of technology and (2) technology in action. In other words, this course will first try to answer some fundamental questions about what technology is and what it means to us. Then, we will apply those theories more broadly to our contemporary world and the technologies that permeate it. The goal of this course is to provide you with a deep understanding of the effects of technology in your daily lives in order to map out a vision of using, changing, or refusing certain technologies for both meaningful personal change and positive social change.

This course will ask and try to find significant answers to some of the following questions:

- What is technology and what is our relationship to it? Do we drive technology or does technology drive us? Is technology value-neutral or is it always imbued with certain values?
- What is the relationship between our social and political world and the technologies that we, as a society, develop?
- How do different technologies of our digital world, such as the Internet and social media, affect culture, identity, and relationships with others?
- How ought we live in light of the technological society we have built?
- What does the future of work look like? Will robots replace our jobs? What kind of society is possible with the development of AI and automation? Will our future be dystopian or utopian?
- What does it mean to be human in a posthuman age?

Learning Objectives:

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

- Students will be able to explain and evaluate important concerns in the tradition of the philosophy of technology
- Students will be able to critically evaluate both the positive and negative effects of certain technologies in our daily lives
- Students will develop the capacity to present clear, cogent arguments in favor or against the philosophical arguments we will engage in throughout our course
- Students will be able to clearly articulate their own values in writing, in person, and in concert with others
- Students will create evaluative criteria for responsible implementation of technologies
- Students will build a capacity to respectfully discuss and debate core philosophical issues with their fellow students

Reading Schedule:

[Philosophy of Technology: In Theory!](#)

Week 1 – What is philosophy of technology?

- Day 1 – Introduction and discussion of the philosophy of technology
- Day 2 – Andrew Feenberg, “What is Philosophy of Technology?”

Week 2 – What is technology and how ought we think about technological change?

- Day 1 – Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology”
- Day 2 – Neil Postman, “Five Things We Need to Know about Technological Change” and Leo Marx, “Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept”

Week 3 – Technology and Society

- Day 1 – Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Chapters 1-2
- Day 2 – Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Chapters 3-4

Week 4 – Technology, Culture, and Thought

- Day 1 – Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Chapters 5-6
- Day 2 – Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Chapter 7

Week 5 – Technological Alternatives

- Day 1 – Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 8-10
- Day 2 – Robert Heilbroner, “Do Machines Make History?”

[Philosophy of Technology: In Action!](#)

Week 6 – How do we live in relation to contemporary technology?

- Day 1 – Hans Jonas, “Technology and Responsibility: Reflections on the New Tasks of Ethics”
- Day 2 – E.F. Schumacher, “Buddhist Economics”

Week 7 – Does the Internet make society more democratic?

- Day 1 – Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks*, Chapter 6 and 7 selections
- Day 2 – Andrew Feenberg, “A Democratic Internet?”

Week 8 – The Big Other: Are we being shaped by big data and should we give it freely?

- Day 1 – Shoshana Zuboff, “Big other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization” and Michel Foucault, “Panopticism”
- Day 2 – Tiziana Terranova, “Free Labour” and McKenzie Wark, “Considerations on a Hacker Manifesto”

Week 9 – Will the robots replace us?

- Day 1 – Paul Krugman, “Sympathy for the Luddites” and Elizabeth Kolbert, “Our Automated Future”
- Day 2 – Aaron Benanav, *Automation and the Future of Work*, Part 1

Week 10 – Can technology free us from want and work?

Day 1 – Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, “The Fragment on Machines” and Aguilar-Millan et. al., “The Post-Scarcity World of 2050-2075”

Day 2 – Aaron Benanav, *Automation and the Future of Work*, Part 2

Week 11 – Technology, the Environment, and Eco-Feminism

Day 1 – Carolyn Merchant, “Mining the Earth’s Womb” and Rajni Kothari, “Environment, Technology, and Ethics”

Day 2 – Bill Devall, “The Deep Ecology Movement” and Ariel Kay Salleh, “Deeper than Ecology: The Eco-Feminist Connection”

Week 12 – Feminism and Posthumanism

Day 1 – Donna Haraway, *The Cyborg Manifesto*, Part 1

Day 2 – Donna Haraway, *The Cyborg Manifesto*, Part 2

Week 13 – Our Huxlean Present

Day 1 – Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, Chapters 1-6

Day 2 – Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, Chapters 7-12

Week 14 – Our Huxlean Present

Day 1 – Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, Chapters 12-18

Day 2 – Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, Foreword to Second Edition and Leon Kass, “Preventing a Brave New World”

Social Justice and Political Resistance

Upper-Level Course Outline

What is this course?

Our contemporary world is marked by economic inequality, systemic racism, and environmental degradation. In light of these realities, the question becomes, how are we to respond to structures of exploitation, injustice, and oppression? Do we concede to these realities, or do we respond by building a different, more just world? This course will explore the concepts of social justice and resistance in order to answer these kinds of questions. We will investigate what we mean when we talk about social justice, what acts of civil disobedience are morally justifiable, the moral debates about violent v. non-violent resistance, the role of anger, joy, and civility in our political resistance, and more. The purpose of this course is to help students (a) build a philosophical foundation for concepts of social justice and political resistance and (b) to get students to engage in thoughtful reflection regarding their own values, political commitments, and engagement in political action.

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 express the basic elements of social justice and political resistance
- Students will be able to apply, in critical and creative ways, philosophical principles to contemporary social and political issues, especially through philosophical argumentation
- Students will wrestle with the complexities of political resistance, including violence versus nonviolence, and students will be able to wrestle with those ideas in concert with others in the classroom
- Students will be able to clearly articulate their values in writing and in person
- Students will develop an understanding of themselves as political beings in relation to their communities

Reading Schedule:

Week 1 – Introducing concepts of social justice and resistance

Day 1 – Course Introduction

Day 2 – Igancio Ellacuría, “The Liberating Function of Philosophy”

Week 2 – Social Justice

Day 1 – Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Day 2 – Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Chapters 2, 3 and 4

Week 3 – Social Justice

Day 1 – Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Chapters 5 and 6

Day 2 – Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Chapters 7, 8, and epilogue

Week 4 – Civil Disobedience

Day 1 – Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and Howard Zinn, “Seven Guidelines for Civil Disobedience”

Day 2 – Kimberlee Brownlee, “Conscientious Objection and Civil Disobedience”

Week 5 – Civil Disobedience

Day 1 – Kimberlee Brownlee, “Features of a Paradigm Case of Civil Disobedience”

Day 2 – Ten-Hereng Lai, “Political vandalism as counter-speech: A defense of defacing and destroying tainted monuments”

Week 6 – The Strike and Social Unionism

Day 1 – Rosa Luxemburg, “The Mass Strike”

Day 2 – Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly*, selections

Week 7 – Violent v. Non-Violent Resistance

Day 1 – Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, “Concerning Violence”

Day 2 – Kai Nelson, “On Justifying Violence”

Week 8 – Violent v. Non-Violent Resistance

Day 1 – Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, excerpt and Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, selections

Day 2 – Mahatma Gandhi, *Non-Violence (Satyagraha)*, selections

Week 9 – Civility

Day 1 – Cheshire Calhoun, “The Virtue of Civility” and Iris Marion Young, “Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy”

Day 2 – Linda M. G. Zerilli, “Against Civility: A Feminist Perspective” and Bernard Harcourt, “The Politics of Incivility”

Week 10 – Anger and Joy

Day 1 – Amia Srinivasan, “The Aptness of Anger”

Day 2 – Nick Montgomery and carla bergman, *Joyful Militancy*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Week 11 – Anger and Joy

Day 1 – Nick Montgomery and carla bergman, *Joyful Militancy*, Chapters 2 and 3

Day 2 – Nick Montgomery and carla bergman, *Joyful Militancy*, Chapters 4, 5, and Outro

Week 12 – Contemporary Resistance Movements

Day 1 – Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*, Chapters 1 and 2

Day 2 – Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*, Chapters 3 and Next

Week 13 – Contemporary Resistance Movements

Day 1 – Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, Chapters 6 and 7

Listen to “Why Cornel West is hopeful (but not optimistic)” on *Future Perfect*

Day 2 – Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “The Great Sioux Nation and the Resistance to Colonial Land Grabbing”

Emma Norman, “Standing Up for Inherent Rights: The Role of Indigenous-Led Activism in Protecting Sacred Waters and Ways of Life”

Week 14 – Another World is Possible

Day 1 – Ana Margarida Esteves, “Solidarity economy as a social justice paradigm in Latin America”

Day 2 – David Schweickart, “Economic Democracy: Ethical, Economically Viable Socialism”
Kali Akuno and Sacajawea Hall, “Building Economic Democracy to Construct Eco-Socialism from Below”

Sample Teaching Materials

The following pages include an array of sample teaching materials intended to show a breadth of pedagogical practices. All materials come from either my *Moral and Social Problems* course or my *Social and Political Philosophy* course. These sample materials include: (1) a representative short lecture video I produced on the topic of Aristotle’s virtue ethics; (2) two examples of course design – one using learning management software and one using a WordPress course website – that makes the flipped aspect of my courses simple and easy to follow; and (3) assignment examples, including an “argument outline” assignment with an included example of argumentative structure, a “final political action toolkit” assignment with an included rubric, and an example of a “philosophical exercise” from my *Moral and Social Problems* course.

Short Lecture Video from Flipped Course

Below is a representative short lecture video lectures produced for my course *Moral and Social Problems*. I produce videos like this for nearly all weeks of the course. This is one of my more recent videos produced for our unit on virtue ethics. The readings accompanying this video include selections from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*.



[Link to Video](#)

(ctrl+click to follow link)

Course Organization Using Learning Management Software

Below are two representative snapshots of the course organization methods that I use (using learning management software) in order to make my course as accessible and streamlined as possible.

Here, I have every week prepared for students to access, along with paper guides assignments, quizzes, etc.

The screenshot shows a course page for 'WEEK 7: WHY DOES EQUALITY MATTER?' with a sidebar on the left containing a syllabus, assignments, and other resources. The main content area includes an overview, a video titled 'Why Does Equality Matter? Capabilities & Needs', learning objectives, a checklist, and reading/video links.

Here, I give students an overview of what will be discussed during this week, and I also directly embed my YouTube video short lecture that I have created for the week. Students can revisit these videos whenever, but they help by providing a basic introduction to the concepts we will be discussing.

Here, I lay out the learning objectives for each week as well as a checklist of things that students need to accomplish throughout the week. Students can check off their work as they progress. Students have expressed that this is a useful tool for staying on track and organized in our course.

Learning Objectives

- Understand and explain the basics of Nussbaum's **capabilities approach** and what it means for equality.
- Reflect on our contemporary world and consider if/how Nussbaum's **capabilities approach** is not actualized.
- Understand and explain Marx's stance on equality and why strict egalitarianism (equality of outcome) might not be preferable.
- Reflect on what a world based on "from each according to ability, to each according to their needs" would actually look like.

Week 7 Checklist

- Read "Capabilities" and watch related videos by Oct. 5th
- Attend group Zoom session on Oct. 5th
- Read Critique of the Gotha Program Part I and watch related videos by Oct. 7th.
- Attend group Zoom session on Oct. 7th
- Equality 1 page argument due by Wed. Oct. 14th at 11:55 pm (CST)

[Equality 1 Page Argument Outline](#)

Readings and Videos

Please click on the buttons below to take you to the reading and video materials for this week.

Oct. 5th: "Capabilities"

Oct. 7th: Critique of the Gotha Program

Here, students can click on the summary breakdowns of each reading that I provide for them, as well as videos for the day, the readings themselves, and questions to consider while reading.

Overview

Syllabus

Week 1: Introduction T...

Week 2: The State of ...

Week 3: Liberty and F...

Week 4: Liberty and In...

Week 5: Liberty and ...

Week 6: Equality and ...

Week 7: Why Does Eq...

Week 8: What is Dem...

Week 9: What is the P...

Week 10: Capitalism

Week 11: Socialism

Week 12: Socialism C...

Week 13: Civil Disobe...

Week 14: No Classes/...

Week 15: From Theor...

Paper Guides

Assignments

Tests & Quizzes

Resources

Announcements

Gradebook

SmartEvals

Site Info

Help

WEEK 5: LIBERTY AND OPPRESSION

Print view Index of pages Link Help

Back Next

[Week 5: Liberty and Oppression](#) > **Sept. 23rd: Five Faces of Oppression**



Iris Marion Young's "Five Faces of Oppression"

Iris Marion Young (1949-2006) was a political theorist and activist who taught at Northwestern University and whose work focused heavily on structural inequalities, forms of oppression, privilege and its relationship with responsibility, and more.

Five Faces of Oppression

Young's work "Five Faces of Oppression" focuses primarily on the ways in which people are subjected to structural injustices, i.e., Young conceptualizes oppression as a **structural concept**. Oppression, under this concept, has various forms, and it directly affects certain social groups. In our society, Young contends that there are five *distinct* yet *objective* categorizations that we can point to as types of structural injustices that social groups experience. Because Young is quite clear and relatively easy to read, I will only provide a brief breakdown here. Put simply, the **five faces of oppression** are:

- Exploitation**
 - By exploitation, Young means the Marxian conception of exploitation whereby capitalists extract what is known as **surplus-value** (or the value of what your labor produces *beyond* what you are compensated for it). Simply stated, exploitation occurs when workers produce a certain amount of value for a capitalist, but those workers are **not fully compensated the full value of the products that they create**. If a factory worker produces a car while at work, they are not compensated in the form of the full value of the car that they produced. Instead, they are compensated in the form of a wage or salary. As such, **capitalists are able to profit off of the labor of their workers**, since they are able to extract the value of the products created *beyond* the amount that workers are compensated for in the form of wages and/or salaries.

- Marginalization**
 - Marginalization consists of the expulsion from participation in society and can take the form of material deprivation, exclusion from participation in political and economic decision-making, and more. Consider for instance, the ways that Jim Crow laws marginalized Black Americans, the ways through which relegating the Indigenous peoples of the Americas to reservations, the exclusion of undocumented immigrants from social society, voter restriction of those in the prison system, gerrymandering, redlining, etc.
- Powerlessness**
 - Powerlessness consists of a lack of power with respect to economic and political decisions. Little or not autonomy in one's working life, one's working conditions, the profits of one's labor, etc. all constitute forms of powerlessness. One can also experience powerlessness if they are treated with less respect and autonomy because of their social status, and if they do not have control over their living conditions.
- Cultural imperialism**
 - Cultural imperialism consists of a condition in which people are "othered" and/or stereotyped based on the social, racial, religious, or other group that they belong to. The experience of cultural imperialism is to at the same time feel one's culture become invisible and made into "the other" while the dominant group's culture is enforced in society.
- Violence**
 - Violence is perhaps the most clear form of oppression and consists of physical violence done to marginalized groups because of their identification or belonging to said groups. It is also systemic in that it takes on a social aspect that is reproduced and enacted repeatedly in society.

Read: [Iris Marion Young's "Five Faces of Oppression"](#).

Ask yourselves:

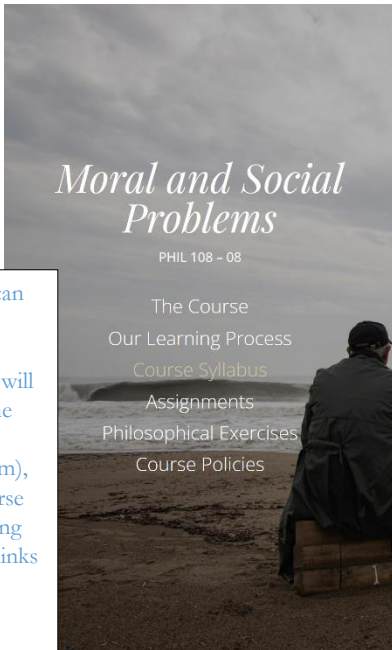
- Do you agree with Young's conceptions of oppression? Did she leave anything out?
- Consider some examples in contemporary society of *each* of these types of oppression.
- What are some systems of structures which hold up these forms of oppression and replicate them on a daily basis?
- What would those same systems have to look like to end these forms of oppression?

Back Next

Here, students can see a breakdown of this day's reading, with a link to a helpful video as well as the reading itself.

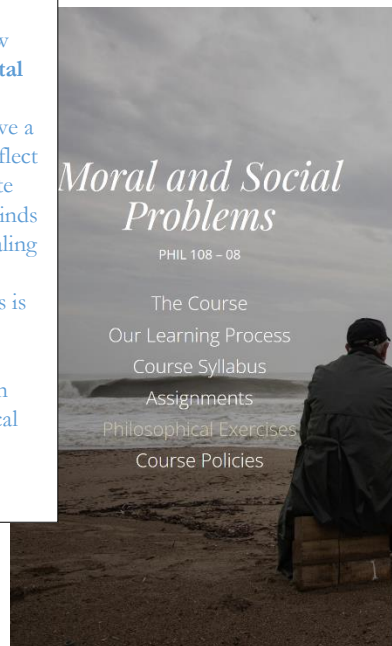
Students also are given questions to consider during and after reading. These questions also prefigure what we will focus on in our in-class activities.

Course Organization Using WordPress Course Website



Here, students can access a general overview of the course, how we will be learning in the course (using a flipped classroom), links to our course syllabus (including daily readings), links to assignments, links to philosophical exercises, and course policies.

Because our students are now likely to be **digital natives**, it is important to have a class that can reflect and also compete with the other kinds of attention-stealing aspects of our digital lives. This is one way to get people excited about and drawn into philosophical thinking.



COURSE SYLLABUS



Here, students can click on each day of the course. Each page will take them to a brief breakdown of the text, the questions we will be discussing in class, links to readings, and embedded lecture videos that I have created.

PHILOSOPHICAL EXERCISES

Philosophical exercises are one classification of assignments that we will be doing in this course. One *philosophical exercise* will be posted per week and will be made available (at the latest) the Sunday prior to the week of the topical discussion. All *philosophical exercises* will be posted both on this page and on our Blackboard page in PDF format.

Philosophical exercises might ask you to live or act in accordance with a certain set of principles for the week, so be sure to check out each exercise at the beginning of the week.

All philosophical exercises are due at the end of the week on Sundays by 11:59 pm EST. They can be turned in on Blackboard. There will be 11 total possible *philosophical exercises*. Remember that only 4 "Satisfactory" *philosophical exercises* are required as part of the "A" grade bundle.



Consequentialism Exercise: Majors, Career Choices, and Maximizing Utility

(due Sept. 23rd at 11:59pm)

Deontology Exercise: Living as a Kantian for a Week

(due Oct. 2nd at 11:59pm)



Here, students can find all of their philosophical exercise assignments. This allows them to keep a running tally of the work that they have done and where we are headed next.

Assignment Examples

The following includes three assignments (1) a one-page argument outline, (2) a final political action toolkit, and (3) a philosophical exercise utilizing virtue ethics. I have also included a rubric that I use and share with students. Rubrics are key for students to have a clear understanding of the work that is expected, and it prevents a certain amount of arbitrariness sometimes associated with paper grading.

One Page Argument Outline Assignments (25 points each):

For all of your one page argument outline assignment (liberty, equality, and democracy) you will be asked to choose **one issue in contemporary society that you are personally interested in** to analyze through the lens of the value at hand for each assignment. I want you to outline an argument about the way that the value at hand relates to a contemporary issue that you are interested in. In each of these, I want you to take a **clear stance** on whether or not the value at hand is present in the contemporary issue you wish to discuss. I will also ask that you use one of the philosophers that we have read in order to ground the concept you will be talking about.

For example, for our paper on liberty, if you are incredibly interested in voter suppression, you might argue that preventing ex-felons from voting is a form of oppression and a violation of a person's liberty. You might consider using Iris Marion Young's "Five Faces of Oppression" to ground your argument here. This is only one of many issues/thinkers you could choose from.

1. Thesis:

- Thesis statement, i.e., what you will be arguing in this paper (e.g., "I will argue that preventing ex-felons from voting after serving their initial sentence is a violation of their liberty and contributes to their marginalization within society."). Thesis statements typically **stake a claim** but it should be something that someone could reasonably disagree with. Here is a link to good thesis statement writing. **This thesis statement should be *specific and precise* rather than a general claim about politics as a whole, i.e., it should deal with a *specific* political or economic issue** (e.g., healthcare, education, social media, news outlets, police brutality, climate change, LGBTQ+ issues, etc.)
- You will also want to include a statement on what thinker you will be using to make your case (e.g., "This paper will use Iris Marion Young's notion of 'marginalization' from her paper "Five Faces of Oppression" to ground my claims.")

2. Arguments:

- This section will include all of the claims that you will be making in favor of your thesis. Typically, you should try to have around **two or three major claims** about your argument. If you are arguing that gerrymandering contributes to the marginalization of people of color, you might show **two or three separate ways** that this is the case. (You can add more if need be).
- **Claim One:**
 - Here you will write out what your first claim is (e.g., "Ex-felons have served their sentence, and therefore, to not restore their voting rights is an arbitrary

- violation of their liberty and contributes to their marginalization within society.")
- You will then provide **evidence** for this claim through either our readings or from external information. (e.g., "X amount of people in the US are left unable to vote due to their past actions," and/or "Young states that marginalization is a form of oppression that excludes citizens from participation in society. The inability to vote is a direct exclusion of citizens from political participation. Ex-felons have served their sentences and ought not be further punished by being further marginalized in society".)
 - **Claim Two:**
 - Here you will write out what your second claim is (e.g., "Voting restrictions for ex-felons contributes to continued racial inequality in this country")
 - You will then provide **evidence** for this claim through either our readings or from **external information** (e.g., "Nearly 8 percent of black adults are prevented from voting due to ex-felon voting restrictions. This is compared to only 2 percent of non-black Americans" (Kiefer, 2019)).
 - And so on...(if you have more, feel free to add them)
3. **Opposing Views:**
- Here you will refute opposing arguments. For this, try to think of **at least one counter argument** to your position.
 - **Counter argument one:** (e.g., "Some argue ex-felons are not deserving of the right to vote due to their past wrongful actions")
 - Refutation of counter argument (e.g., "However, this ignores that restoring voting rights is a way to reintegrate ex-felons back into society while preventing them from being further marginalized by society.")
 - **Counter argument two:**
 - Refutation of counter argument
 - And so on...
4. **Conclusion:**
- Here you should bring your essay to an end and explain what the reader should have taken away from this paper.

You will be graded on whether or not your outline has:

1. A **clear and concise thesis statement** that includes a statement on what thinker you will be using to make your argument. (5 points)
2. **At least two claims**, both of which have **adequate evidence** from the texts we have read and/or outside evidence to contribute to your claims. (10 points)
3. **At least one counter argument** and a **refutation** of that counterargument. (5 points)
4. A **conclusion** which wraps up your overall argument by **briefly summarizing your argument**. (5 points)

Final Political Action Toolkit (50 points):

In lieu of a final, you will be turning in what I am calling your "Political Action Toolkit", **due Dec. 9th at 11:55 pm (CST)**. The objective of this assignment is to take your existing 2-3 page paper expansion and **(1) edit/rewrite/clean it up** with the suggestions and feedback that I give you, and **(2) add another 2-3 pages** which presents **(a) an example of an existing political organization or group** working close to or on the issue that you have written about, and **(b) describe how this organization is trying to rectify the problem** that you have written about (either successfully or not), and **(c) what you can do to get tapped into this organization or group** in order to address this problem.

Therefore, you will be graded on the same rubric as before (and if I suggested changes, I expect those changes to be made). What I am ultimately looking for is a polished 2-3 page argument (or **theory**) section and a 2-3 page presentation of political action (or **praxis**) section. This will require outside research and delving into various political organizations that you think might be addressing the problem you are concerned about. You should **present evidence** as to *how* the organization or group you choose is trying to advocate for change, and then demonstrate *how* you can get involved.

The goal of this final assignment is less about you getting an "A" and more about you developing your own toolkit for how *you* can become a political actor. I want you to be able to actually use this toolkit. In other words, I want this to be an opportunity for you all to actually plug into a political organization or group and demonstrate to me and *yourself* that it is possible for you to try and advocate for political change concerning the issue that you are most interested in.

Your **praxis** section will be graded on:

1. How closely related the political organization you choose is to your topic. In other words, show me that this organization is primarily focused on the issue you want to address.
2. The evidence that you can provide that they are working to advocate for political change (**including citations**). **In other words, show me what they have done/plan to do (contacting representatives, protests, boycotts, etc.) to address the political problem.**
3. A detailed (at least 1 page) description of how you can become involved and what that would look like if you decided to get involved tomorrow. In other words, tell me what you can do, who you can get in touch with, what types of actions you would need to take next to get involved, where in your community you could go to get involved, etc.

Section 1 (Theory) will be graded using the following rubric:

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
<p>Thesis (5 pts) How clear and concise is your thesis statement? Is it easily identifiable by readers? Could someone reasonably argue against your thesis?</p>	Clear and concise, can be easily identified, can be argued against. (5-4)	Relatively clear, it is possible to identify, but still might be vague, can mostly be argued against. (3.5-2.5)	Too vague, is hard to be identified, difficult to argue against. (2-0)
<p>Argument(s) (5 pts) Do you use well-reasoned arguments to support your thesis? Do your claims follow from one another? Does the evidence you point to lead to the conclusions you draw?</p>	Arguments support the thesis in a clear manner, there is evidence for claims, and they are stated clearly and concisely. (5-4)	Arguments somewhat support the thesis in a clear manner, there is some evidence for claims, and they are relatively clear. (3.5-2.5)	Arguments do not clearly support the thesis, there is little to no evidence, and they are unclear to the reader. (2-0)
<p>Counter Argument(s) (5 pts) Do you provide well-reasoned counter arguments to your thesis, that is, are you giving the <i>strongest</i> arguments against your position? Are you able to provide a well-reasoned response to these counter arguments?</p>	Counterargument(s) are clear and concise, they represent the best argument(s) against your position, and you are able to clearly refute them. (5-4)	Counterargument(s) are somewhat clear, they are good, but perhaps not the best arguments against your position, and you are partially able to refute them in a clear way. (3.5-2.5)	Counterargument(s) are not clear or non-existent, they are not good representatives of the best argument against your position, and/or they are not clearly refuted. (2-0)
<p>Application (2.5 pts) How well does your thesis fit into our contemporary world?</p>	Thesis is well supported by a real world, contemporary problem. (2.5-2)	Thesis is somewhat relevant to a contemporary political issue and/or the link between your thesis and a contemporary issue is somewhat clear to the reader. (1.5-1)	Thesis is not relevant to a contemporary political issue and/or the link between thesis and real world is unclear to the reader. (.5-0)
<p>Textual evidence (5 pts) How well do you understand the author that you are citing? Do you use quotations and cite it correctly?</p>	The evidence you use is entirely understood correctly, it is cited properly, and you are giving a charitable read of the author's argument. (5-4)	The evidence you use is mostly understood correctly, it is cited mostly properly, and you are mostly giving a charitable read of the author's argument. (3.5-2.5)	The evidence you use is not understood correctly, it is cited improperly , and/or you are not giving a charitable read of the author's argument. (2-0)
<p>Writing/mechanics (2.5 pts) Do you provide a clear, organized plan for the outline of your argument? Do you stick to this plan? Do your writing mechanics not get in the way of understanding your argument?</p>	The writing is clear, succinct, direct, and purposeful with tightly worded sentences (that is, everything you write has a purpose). (2.5-2)	The writing is somewhat clear, succinct, direct, and purposeful with tightly worded sentences (that is, everything you write has a purpose), but it needs improvement. There may be moments that lack clarity. (1.5-1)	The writing is not clear, succinct, direct, and purposeful. It lacks tightly worded sentences and needs serious improvement. (.5-0)

Section 2 (Praxis) will be graded using the following rubric:

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
<p>How closely related the political organization you choose is to your topic. (5 points)</p>	Very closely related. There is a clear relationship between the issue the student discusses and the goals of the organization (5-4)	Relatively related. There is somewhat of a relationship between the topic of the paper and the organization's goals. (3.5-2.5)	There is no clear link between what the topic of the paper is and the goals of the organization. (2-0)
<p>The evidence that you can provide that they are working to advocate for political change. (10 points)</p>	Direct citations from either the organization's own work or other analyzing the work of the organization. It is evident either in the organization's goals and/or past actions that they are advocating for change in some way. (10-8)	There is vague discussion about how this organization plans to or does engage in political action. (7-5)	No clear evidence that this organization engages in political action. (4-0)
<p>A detailed (at least 1 page) description of how you can become involved and what that would look like if you decided to get involved tomorrow. (10 points)</p>	Demonstrates how the student can get involved, what they can do right now in order to get involved, who to contact, what action to take next. (10-8)	Is somewhat vague about what they can do next, but still has some general idea of next steps to take to be more involved. (7-5)	No clear examples or discussion about where to go from here/how to get involved. (4-0)

Philosophical Exercise #3: Virtue Ethics *Eudaimonia and the Moral Life*

Virtue ethics suggests that moral actions are what result from living a virtuous life – i.e., the virtuous person will be the kinds of person whose actions are morally good. To become virtuous, however, one must practice several virtues until they become stable *character traits*.

This exercise is designed to help you imagine, identify, and practice a few key virtues in order to understand the relationship between becoming a virtuous person and living a moral life.

This exercise will have three parts: (1) **a virtue table**, (2) **practicing your virtues** (3) **a reflection on a week of living virtuously**.

Part 1: Identifying Three Virtues:

- At the start of the week, you will describe **three goals** that you find to be intrinsically valuable to you (that, they are goals that you see *for themselves* rather than some other end).
- Then, **describe the actions** that are required for you to achieve those goals.
- Finally, list the **virtues** that you need to cultivate in order to achieve those goals, i.e., what virtues are important for pursuing the actions you describe. You are welcome to use virtues listed by Aristotle or think of your own one-word virtues.
- See the sample table on the next page for an example. (You are free to use the example virtue if that is indeed a virtue that you want to pursue).

Part 2: Practicing Your Virtues:

- Choose **one or two** of your virtues from the list of you have created.
- Reflect on what you need to do in order to practice those virtues on a daily basis.
- For the week, you must **live in accordance with those one or two virtues** that you choose.

Part 3: Reflect on Your Experiences:

- Write a 500-750 word reflection on your experiences this week. Be sure to **cite our reading from Aristotle at least once** in your reflection. E.g., you could use the text to describe habit-formation, finding the mean between two extremes, happiness or flourishing that you experienced, etc.
- Your reflection should address the following questions:
 - What virtues did you choose and why?
 - What actions did you take to practice those virtues?
 - Did your actions change you in anyway?
 - What differences did you notice in how you treated people differently on a daily basis (including the treatment of yourself)?

Satisfactory		Non-Satisfactory	
Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations	Needs Significant Improvement
<p>Thoroughly answers <i>all</i> of the above questions and</p> <p>Provides multiple quotations from Aristotle and thoroughly explains the quotes' relationships to the answers provided.</p> <p>Demonstrates thorough understanding of virtue ethics principles.</p>	<p>Adequately answers <i>all</i> of the above questions.</p> <p>Provides at least 1 citation from Aristotle. Clear understanding and explanation of the relationship between the citation and the answers provided.</p> <p>Demonstrates adequate understanding of virtue ethics principles.</p>	<p>Adequately answer <i>all</i> but one of the above questions.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Provides at least 1 citation from Aristotle, but does not adequately explain citation in relation to its use in the exercise.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Demonstrates a confused understanding of virtue ethics principles.</p>	<p>Fails to answer more than one of the above questions.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Does not provide a citation from Aristotle.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Does not demonstrate an understanding of virtue ethics principles.</p>

Sample Virtue Table

Goal	Action	Virtue
Example: Becoming a better friend.	Listening to others Spending time with friends Lending a helping hand	Kindness; Compassion; Loyalty; etc.

* This exercise is adapted from Jane Drexler's *Endaimonia* assignment shared through the Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWOL) network.

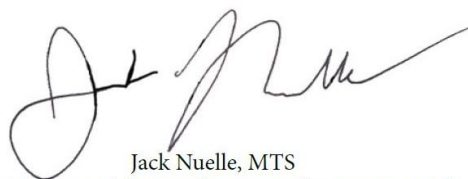
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