

PHM 3202 Political Philosophy , Fall 2020

T 1:55-2:45, Th 1:55-3:50 (taught synchronously)

Prof. Kyle Driggers – kyledriggers@ufl.edu

Office Hours: via virtual appointment, office at 330 Griffin-Floyd Hall will not be in use

Quick Response Hours via email : 10 AM – 4PM Weekdays

Phone: 919-907-0020 (text before calling)

Course Description

This November, the United States will participate in what it calls a “democratic” election—our government leaders are selected by a direct vote by all citizens. It is common for Americans to prefer democracy to other forms of government—monarchy, totalitarianism, aristocracy, etc. But what is democracy, exactly? And why should we prefer it to other forms of government? If we are clear about what democracy is, should we really apply that term to the American form of government? What is the scope of democracy—should citizens have control not only over the operation of the government, but say the operation of the economy? Do healthy democracies require open debate about all political issues, or should there be restrictions on permissible debate? Given that democracies are typically governed by majority rule, what should we say about the protection of minority populations?

The course attempts to examine this issue by reflecting on major works across the history of philosophy from Plato to Martin Luther King Jr. Some of our major topics will be: the connection between one’s understanding of human nature and their ideal form of government; whether or not there should be restrictions on debate, speech, or thought; the nature of justice; the role of ideology and language in sculpting the shape of political debate; and the role of public participation in the economy.

The course grade will be determined mostly by a 3000+ word research paper, which will be developed over the last third of the semester. The rest of the grade will be determined by weekly writing assignments and participation in discussion.

There are no prerequisites for this course, though background in philosophy is highly recommended.

Textbook

Title: Princeton Readings in Political Thought: Essential
Texts since Plato - Revised and Expanded Edition ISBN: 9780691159973
Author: M. Cohen 2nd Ed. 2018

You can find the book in both paperback and e-book forms, though you might find a used copy for cheaper. This is the only book you will need to purchase. All other readings can be found in the "Files" section.

No other materials or supplies are required for this course.

The goals of this course are:

- To introduce you to major topics in political philosophy, as they are discussed in both canonical works of philosophy and among contemporary philosophers.
- To encourage you to see the intrinsic value of learning about and doing philosophy, regardless of its benefits to your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills.
- To introduce you to the methods and goals of interpreting primary texts from the history of philosophy, with the aim of developing your ability to charitably interpret unfamiliar texts and to assess the merits of the ideas therein.
- To help you develop the skill of engaging with complex, abstract and unfamiliar ideas with clarity and rigor.
- To encourage you to reflect carefully on the foundations of your own knowledge by reflecting on its humble origins and on impressive arguments for beliefs you may not hold.

Achieving these goals

We will achieve these goals with the following methods:

- Students are expected to read assigned texts carefully before class and take notes of questions and comments you have about the text.
- I will give brief lectures to help explain the more complex material. However, most of class time will consist in my asking pointed questions about the text to help you guide your own thoughts.
- Sometimes I will ask small groups to work together to discuss an unfamiliar text to help develop the skills of constructing one's own interpretation of a text and of critically engaging with that text.
- When an objection to a philosopher's views is raised, I will do my best to respond "as" that philosopher. I will illustrate that though we may reject certain beliefs, they often have more merit than we might expect.
- When we find points of disagreement with a philosopher I will ask you to reflect on why your views are more plausible.

Assignments and Grading

Weekly Reading Responses (30 pts.) (300 words each x at least 10)

Each week, I will post a question about the readings and class material. You will write a short response (<300 words) due before the next class period, typically a Tuesday. Each response will be given a grade out of 10 depending on how well it (1) reflects your understanding of the course material and (2) reflects the seriousness and skill of your engagement with that material. Your final grade will be double your average grade of all responses. The bottom score (including 0's for missed

responses) will be dropped. In effect, this means that your responses will be at minimum 3000 words total. If a response is less than 300 words, I will divide the actual word count by 300 and multiply the resulting quotient by the score I would have given you otherwise. For example, if you write 200 words, the *most* you can get on a response is a 6.7/10.

Guided Discussion Participation Over Zoom (10 pts.)

Sometimes, students will enter break-out rooms with four or fewer of their peers to engage in live philosophical discussion. These discussions will be guided by reflection on a short piece of writing, a short video, etc. and will involve completing a digital handout to be turned in at the end of the session. I will visit each room to check in with the groups. Credit will be awarded based on consistent, effortful participation. Missing more than 2 guided discussions will result in a 0 for this part of the grade.

Research Paper (40 pts.) (3000+ words)

By the end of the semester you will produce a research paper concerning some topic in political philosophy. The grade for this paper will be determined as follows:

- (1) Having your thesis statement and a brief outlined approved by me before drafting. (5 pts).
- (2) Producing a complete draft, including a bibliography with at least 5 high-quality sources, to be reviewed by two of your peers. (10 pts).
- (3) Reviewing the drafts of two of your peers, with a minimum number of comments required and a strict rubric to be followed (5 pts.)
- (4) Producing a final draft of the paper to be graded by me, along with a "Response to Peers" document where you explain the changes you made between the draft and the final. (20 pts).

If the paper is less than 3000 words, I will divide the actual word count by 3000 and multiply the resulting quotient by the score I would have given you otherwise. For example, if you write 2500 words, the *most* you can get on your final paper is a 16.7. The same will hold true for the first draft.

Grading Scheme

Grade:	Range:
A	100 % to 94.0%
A-	< 94.0 % to 90.0%
B+	< 90.0 % to 87.0%
B	< 87.0 % to 84.0%
B-	< 84.0 % to 80.0%
C+	< 80.0 % to 77.0%
C	< 77.0 % to 74.0%
C-	< 74.0 % to 70.0%

Grade:	Range:
D+	< 70.0 % to 67.0%
D	< 67.0 % to 64.0%
D-	< 64.0 % to 61.0%
F	< 61.0 % to 0.0%

Grading Policies

- All scores are rounded to the nearest half point.
- No extra credit will be assigned.
- I am happy to give extra feedback on work, but under no circumstances will I discuss grades after they have been assigned.
 - The one exception to this policy is cases of clerical error (bad math, wrongly recorded grades, etc.)

You may see how to convert your grade in this course to GPA points by seeing this site:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/#gradestext-otp1>

Course Policies

- During our Zoom sessions, you must have your video on unless you have pre-approval from me to leave it off. Cell phone use or use of the computer for anything other than participating in class is not permitted. Please make an effort to hold your meeting in a private area, free from distractions.
- Please note that my lectures will contain visual elements, as will the guided discussions. This means that calling in instead of using the Zoom software is not advised. All visual elements will be saved and uploaded to Canvas
- Because I cannot feasibly read drafts of papers for everyone, I will not read drafts of papers for anyone.
- Class attendance is expected. Though there will be no grade penalty for missed classes, I will not go over the material twice for students with an unexcused absence. Class will be recorded, but I will only share the recordings with those who have excused absences. Excused absences are consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) and require appropriate documentation. Students who can demonstrate that they were unable to submit an assignment by the deadline due to an excused absence and who can provide appropriate documentation for the absence will be given a reasonable period of time to make up the late work.
- Discussions must be respectful. No one wants to feel uncomfortable or unsafe in a classroom. Any comment or action that discriminates or harasses on the grounds of sex, gender, race, sexual identity, nationality, ability, or any physical characteristics will not be tolerated. If you feel disrespected in any way during the class, please contact me immediately.
- Plagiarism and collaboration of any kind on papers or responses is strictly prohibited. You may not collaborate on any written assignment except as part of the peer review process. If your papers refer to or include work that is not your own, whether directly quoted,

paraphrased, or even described in general terms, it must be clearly cited. I do not care which citation style you use, as long as I can check the source. If I discover any instance of plagiarism, you will receive a zero for that assignment.

- UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel.
- Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.
- Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/> ([Links to an external site.](#))
- Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.
- The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 302 Tigert Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.
- Our class sessions will be audio-visually recorded. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who unmute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live. The chat will not be recorded or shared. As in all courses, unauthorized recording and unauthorized sharing of recorded materials is prohibited.
- Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner.](#) Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluer.com/ufl/. [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here.](#)

- If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms ([Click here for guidance from the CDC on symptoms of coronavirus](#)), please use the UF Health screening system and follow the instructions on whether you are able to attend class. [Click here for UF Health guidance on what to do if you have been exposed to or are experiencing Covid-19 symptoms](#).
- Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work. [Find more information in the university attendance policies](#).
- For technical issues, please contact the helpdesk at 352-392-4357 or visit their website.

Writing Requirement

This course confers 6000 words towards the Writing Requirement (WR), which ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. While helping students meet the broad learning outcomes of content, communication, and critical thinking, the instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on students' written assignments with respect to clarity, coherence, and organization. Course grades have two components. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course (the weekly responses and papers).

Course Schedule and Readings – Subject to updates on a weekly basis

Please note: Reading for this course will often be demanding, even when the assignment is short. As well, some of the topics we will discuss are highly abstract. For that reason, I recommend reading each assignment before and after each class meeting.

You are encouraged to read all of each reading before Tuesday's meeting and then review it before Thursday's. However, not all of the material you read for the week will be covered until the end of class Thursday, so you can budget your time accordingly if necessary.

Tuesday classes meet 1:55 PM – 2:45 PM

Thursday classes meet 1:55 PM -3:50 PM

All page numbers refer to the second edition (2018) of Cohen's *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*. Note that you should not confuse Cohen's section titles (e.g., Mill – "Liberty and the Individual") with the titles of the works that these selections come from (e.g., *On Liberty* and *On the Subjection of Women*)

Week 1 (Tues. 9/1; Thurs. 9/3)

Plato – Selections from the Republic (p. 59-76; 85-95)

Week 2 (9/8; 9/10)

Hobbes - Leviathan (p. 176-207)

Week 3 (9/15; 9/17)

Locke – Second Treatise of Government (p. 213-43)

Week 4 (9/22; 9/24)

Rousseau – The People’s Will, Sovereignty, and Equality (p. 270-97)

Week 5 (9/29; 10/1)

Selections from Rousseau’s *Emile* Book V on Sophie (uploaded as PDF to Canvas)

Wollstonecraft – A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (p. 347-354)

De Pizan – The Book of the City of Ladies (p. 131-138)

Week 6 (10/6;10/8)

Mill – from *On Liberty* p. 369-...

Stanley – selections from *How Fascism Works* (p. 66-77 hardcover)

Week 7 (10/13; 10/15)

Nietzsche – *On the Genealogy of Morality* p. 455-76

Week 8 (10/20; 10/22)

Marx – *Revolution Against Capitalism* p. 428-454

Week 9 (10/12;1 10/29)

Mussolini – *Fascism* (p.540-3)

Arendt – *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (p.544-57)

Week 10 (11/3; 11/5) – Thesis Statement and Short Outline for Paper Submitted by 11/5

Fukuyama – *The End of History?* (p.645-655)

Hayek – *The Road to Serfdom* (p. 558-62)

Week 11 (11/10; 11/12)

Rawls – A Theory of Justice (p. 685-708)

Week 12 (11/17; 11/19) – First Draft of Paper Due by 11/19

King – Letter from Birmingham Jail (p.621-32)

King – selections from *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*

Week 13 (11/24) – Peer Reviews Due before Thanksgiving

Orwell – Politics and the English Language (p. 583-92)

11/26- No Class, Thanksgiving

Week 14 (12/1; 12/3)

Zizek – Selections from *Violence* uploaded via Canvas

Final Week (12/8) – Final Paper Due on Last Day of Class

Freud and Einstein – Why War? (p. 530-9)