

**Course Syllabus**  
**Political Philosophy**  
**PHIL 462, Spring, 2015**

**Instructor:** Dr. Matt Zwolinski

**Office Hours:** 10:45 – 1:15, Tuesdays and Thursdays

**Office:** F167A

**Course Website:** <http://ole.sandiego.edu/>

**Phone:** 619-260-4094

**Email:** [mzwolinski@sandiego.edu](mailto:mzwolinski@sandiego.edu)

**Required Readings:**

Matt Zwolinski, *Arguing About Political Philosophy*, **2nd edition** (blue cover) [AAPP]

Selected Readings on Electronic Reserve [ER]

**Recommended Reading:**

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*

**Content:**

Government is unlike anything else in society. It can take your money without your consent. It can order you to leave your home and fight its wars. And if you disobey it, it can imprison or even kill you. Why is it OK for governments to do these things? Or *is* it OK? How can we tell?

These are some of the basic questions of political philosophy. This course will explore these questions through the careful study of classic and contemporary texts in the field. Our reading list will include some of the founders of modern political philosophy such as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), as well as some contemporary figures such as John Rawls (1921-2002), Robert Nozick (1938-2002), Michael Sandel (1953- ), and Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997).

In this course, you will learn both philosophic content and philosophic methodology. In terms of content, we will be primarily concerned with questions of *distributive justice* and *political authority*. Questions of distributive justice are questions about who should get what, morally speaking. Is capitalism a fair method of economic organization, if it results in the unequal distribution of wealth? Is it just for property to be held privately by individuals, or is a more collective form of ownership desirable? Should the state be concerned with promoting equality – and if so, what *kind* of equality should it promote? Questions of political authority, on the other hand, are concerned with why and to what extent the state has legitimate power over us. Do governments derive their authority from ‘the consent of the governed’? If so, what does that consent look like (I never signed anything!)? Can the state do anything it wants to us, or are there limits? If there are limits, where do those limits come from?

Apart from the content, you will also learn various skills in philosophic methodology in this course.

- First, you will learn how to read difficult philosophic texts. The readings for this course consist *entirely* of primary sources, and they can be trying. To help you with this, we will spend most of our class periods with the text close at hand, going over it line-by-line in many cases.
- Second, you will learn the skills of conceptual analysis and philosophic argumentation. Much time will be spent in this course getting clear about subtle distinctions between closely related concepts (justice, fairness, desert, etc.), and you will be expected both to be able to analyze the arguments of other philosophers, and to forge new arguments of your own. These are skills that will serve you well in life, from reading the op-ed page of your newspaper, to convincing others to see your point of view.
- Finally, you will learn how to write. Specifically, you will learn how to write analytic, argumentative essays which accurately represent philosophic positions and clearly articulate the reasons behind those positions. Again, this is a skill that will serve you well not only in this course, but in almost any endeavor you take on in life (from writing a cover letter to a resume, to getting yourself out of a parking ticket!).

## Course Requirements:

Philosophical readings are dense and difficult. It will probably take longer than you expect to read them once, and it will probably be necessary to re-read most pieces at least once in order to come to an adequate understanding of the material. You should expect to spend at least **six hours per week** outside of class time reading and re-reading the material. If you do this, you will have a much easier time with the short writing assignments, which should probably take up an additional **five to six hours each** in preparation time. Use the study questions on Blackboard for help.

The requirements set out in this syllabus are subject to revision at the instructor's discretion.

- **Quizzes** – I will give **5-10 unannounced, multiple-choice quizzes** over the course of the semester. The purpose of these quizzes is to test your completion and comprehension of the day's reading assignment, and to encourage attendance at class. Three things to note about them:
  - First, quizzes are given at the very beginning of class. You will not be allowed extra time to take them if you are late, and **you will not be allowed to make them up** if you miss them. So it is to your advantage to show up and be seated on time every day.
  - Second, **you will receive a zero for any quiz that you miss, for any reason.** However, you will have the opportunity to replace your three lowest quiz scores by turning in your answers to the study questions. More on this below.
  - Finally, these quizzes are very difficult, so it is vital that you read the material carefully and in advance of class. Read the material actively, with pen (or computer) in hand to take notes. And feel free – encouraged, even – to come to office hours any time to discuss any difficulties you might be having with the readings or the quizzes.
- **Study Questions** – On the dates indicated on the syllabus, I will collect your answers to the study questions for the readings assigned up to and including that date. For example, on **February 17<sup>th</sup>**, I will collect your answers to the study questions for all readings up to and including John Stuart Mill. Your answers to these questions will be graded on a check/check-plus/check-minus basis, depending on their thoroughness and accuracy. **A passing set of study questions will replace your lowest quiz score** with a “3,” a “4,” or a “5,” respectively. Therefore, if you turn in check-plus responses to all three sets of study questions, your three lowest quiz scores will all be converted to 5s. You do not need to write out answers to the “To Think About” questions – just think about them in preparation for class discussion.
- **Papers** – I will assign three writing assignments over the course of the semester.
  - **Short Papers:** The first two will be relatively short – **no less than two and no more than three pages** (typed, double-spaced, 1 inch margins and normal fonts) in length. I will assign a topic for these papers which will involve two tasks: 1) **reconstructing an argument** or arguments from one or more of the readings we have covered in class, and 2) providing an **original critical evaluation** of that/those argument(s). These papers are short not to make life easy for you but in order to force you to think carefully about what is essential to an argument and what is not. I will grade these papers with an eye to *detail* and *conceptual rigor*. Expect to be challenged.
  - **Term Paper:** The third writing assignment will be longer – between **10 and 12 pages** (typed, double-spaced, 1 inch margins and normal fonts) in length. For this paper, you will be free to choose from among a list of topics that I will provide to you. Your paper must be both *argumentative* and *philosophical*. It will be argumentative in that the primary purpose of your paper is to defend some thesis regarding a controversy in the field (rather than merely to issue a “book report” about what so-and-so said about such-and-such). It will be *philosophical* in that both the question you try to answer and the methodology you use in answering it will fall squarely within the discipline of philosophy (rather than, say, sociology, psychology, or history). This paper will be due on the day of your scheduled final (**May 14<sup>th</sup>**). As it will be submitted electronically via Turnitin.com (see below), you do not need to come in to campus for our final exam period.
    - **Topic Proposal:** You will be expected to clear your topic with me in advance, by submitting an approximately 1/2 page topic proposal no later than **April 9<sup>th</sup>**. The point of the proposal is to describe a **researchable question** about ideas related to the material covered in this course. Your question should be one that is theoretically *interesting*, one that has *not already been conclusively*

*answered*, and one to which you think you can make a *reasonable contribution* toward answering in a 10-12 page paper.

- **Working Bibliography:** By **April 16<sup>th</sup>**, you must submit a working bibliography of at least 7 sources related to your topic. This bibliography should include all relevant citation information, properly formatted. It should also include a 1-2 sentence summary of each article on the list. At least 5 of your sources must be *philosophical*. Philosophical sources are sources written by professional philosophers, and published in philosophical journals or books from academic presses.
- **Summary of Sources:** By **April 23<sup>rd</sup>**, you must submit 1/2—3/4 page summaries of 3 of your philosophical sources (1 ½ – 2 ¼ pages total), setting out their topic, their thesis, and the basic structure of their argument, as well as any potential strengths and weaknesses that might be relevant for your own project.
- **Letter to a Friend:** On **May 5<sup>th</sup>**, you will be required to turn in a 3-4 page letter to a friend in which you engage that friend's interest with your research question, discuss the sources you have read, and partially explain your own answer to your question in reference to those sources. This letter will be given to another student in the class, and you in turn will receive a letter from one of your fellow students. You will have until **May 7<sup>th</sup>** to read the letter and write a **2-page peer evaluation**. Your grade will be determined by your success in submitting a completed letter on time, and on the quality of the feedback you provide to your fellow student.
- **Late papers:** Papers are due on Turnitin.com (see below) at the beginning of the class period on the day indicated on the schedule below. **Late papers will be penalized 5 percentage points per day**, without exception.
- **Participation** – Philosophy is best learned through active conversation with others. It is therefore important that you be a regular participant in classroom discussions. Ideally, you will be sufficiently engaged with the material to contribute to these discussions spontaneously and voluntarily. As an additional stimulus, however, I will engage in regular Socratic questioning of students – typically one lucky student per class period. This process will involve me asking you questions about both what the readings said and what you think about them. These questions will become increasingly difficult as the process continues, but the point is not for you to get the answers “right,” so don't be afraid to stumble. The point is for you to demonstrate preparation and thoughtfulness, and to help your fellow students think through some very difficult issues. To the extent that you do this, you will receive full credit for this portion of your grade. Well thought-out contributions to the website will also count toward your participation grade.

## Your Grade

Each activity in this class is worth a certain number of points. Your grade will be determined based on a straight (un-curved) analysis of percentage of points earned vs. total points possible.

Quizzes 5-10 @ 5 points each	25-50
2 Short Papers @ 20 points each	40
Term Paper Topic Proposal:	5
Term Paper:	40
Participation	10
Peer Review:	10
Total Points:	130-155

A+	97 - 100%
A	93 - 96.9
A-	90 - 92.9
B+	87 - 89.9
B	83 - 86.9
B-	80 - 82.9
C+	77 - 79.9
C	73 - 76.9
C-	70 - 72.9
D+	67 - 67.9
D	63 - 66.9
D-	60 - 62.9
F	59.9 or below

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course...

- Students should be able to describe, in essay form, the major types of political theory: e.g., libertarian, liberal egalitarian, socialist.
- Students should be able to identify and discuss the different moral foundations of various political theories: e.g., utilitarian, contractarian, natural rights.
- Students should be able to critically evaluate some of the particular positions taken by political philosophers in essay form.

## Respect

This is a course in ethics, broadly construed, and one of the fundamental ethical values we will study is *respect*. I will treat you with respect in this course, and expect you to do the same for me and your fellow students. What this means in practice is (at a minimum):

*For me:*

- I will arrive on time and prepared for each class meeting scheduled on the syllabus.
- I will take student questions seriously and attempt to address them as helpfully as I can within the constraints of class time.
- I will keep my scheduled office hours, or provide advance notice if this is not possible.
- I will return written assignments within a reasonable time and provide you with ample constructive criticism and an adequate explanation of your grade.
- I will treat you as an adult. Part of what this means is taking your philosophical opinions seriously. But taking your views seriously does not mean treating you with kid gloves. It means that I will assume that you have put some thought into your position and that I will hold you accountable for it, and challenge you when appropriate. I expect the same from you.
- I will respect your time and not give you “busy work.”

*For you:*

- You will respect the opinions of your classmates, and respond to them with seriousness, courtesy, and charity.
- You will show up to class on time.
- You will read the material assigned for class prior to the meeting at which we are scheduled to discuss it.
- You will take responsibility for turning in your written assignments on time.
- You will respect my time and the time of your fellow students by helping to make our time together as productive and conducive to learning as possible.

## Integrity

Doing your own work is part of what it means to have respect for me, for your fellow students, and for yourself.

As above, my treating you with respect involves treating you like an adult. As an adult, you are responsible for knowing the University’s regulations concerning Academic Integrity. **“I didn’t know it was plagiarism” is not an excuse.** Any violation of the Code of Academic Integrity is grounds for failure from the class in addition to any further penalties deemed appropriate by the Academic Integrity Committee.

USD subscribes to a service called Turnitin.com. Turnitin.com is a web-based application that compares the content of submitted papers to the Turnitin.com database and checks for textual similarities. All required papers for this course may be subject to submission to Turnitin.com for textual similarity review and to verify originality. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting textual similarities and verifying originality. Each student is responsible for submitting his or her papers in such a way that no identifying information about the student is included. A student may not have anyone else submit papers on the student’s behalf to Turnitin.com. A student may request in writing that his or her papers not be submitted to Turnitin.com. However, if a student chooses this option, the student may be required to provide documentation in a form required by the faculty member to substantiate that the papers are the student’s original work.

## KEY DATES AT A GLANCE

Feb 17	-	Study Questions #1 Due
Feb 24	-	First Writing Assignment Due
Feb 26	-	No class: instructor away
Mar 5	-	No class: instructor away
Mar 26	-	Second Writing Assignment Due
Mar 30 – Apr 3	-	No class: Spring Break
Apr 9	-	Term Paper Topic Proposal Due
Apr 14	-	Study Questions #2 Due
Apr 16	-	Term Paper Working Bibliography Due
Apr 23	-	Term Paper Summary of Sources Due
May 5	-	Term Paper Draft due for Peer Review
May 7	-	Study Questions #3 Due; Peer Review Evaluations Due
May 14	-	Term Paper Due at 11:00 AM

### Schedule of Readings for PHIL 462: Political Philosophy Spring, 2015 Professor Matt Zwolinski

#### Introduction

1 Jan 27 Course Overview / What's Your Political Philosophy?

#### Life Without a State and the Social Contract

- 2 Jan 29 Hobbesian Anarchy  
**Required Reading:** - Thomas Hobbes, "Excerpts from *Leviathan*" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Hobbes' Moral and Political Philosophy":  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes-moral/>
- 3 Feb 3 Cooperation in a Hobbesian World?  
**Required Reading:** - Robert Axelrod, "The Evolution of Cooperation" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia entry on "Game Theory":  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/game-theory/>  
- Stanford Encyclopedia entry on "Game Theory and Ethics":  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/game-ethics/>  
- Gregory Kavka, *Hobbesian Moral and Political Theory*, chapter 4
- 4 Feb 5 The Lockean State of Nature  
**Required Reading:** - John Locke, "Excerpts from *Second Treatise of Civil Government*" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Locke's Political Philosophy"  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-political/>

#### Challenges to the Social Contract

- 5 Feb 10 The Humean Critique  
**Required Reading:** - David Hume, "Of the Original Contract" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Contractarianism":  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/contractarianism/>

- 6 Feb 12 The Anarchist Challenge  
**Required Reading:** - Murray Rothbard, "Society Without a State" [AAPP]  
- David Friedman, "The Machinery of Freedom" [ER]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Political Obligation," section 3:  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/political-obligation/>

### Justice and Rights

- 7 Feb 17 Utilitarianism and Justice  
**Study Questions #1 Due**  
**Required Reading:** - John Stuart Mill, "Justice and Utility" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Consequentialism":  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/>  
- Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Rule Consequentialism":  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism-rule/>  
- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, chapter 2

- 8 Feb 19 Rawls' Theory of Justice  
**Required Reading:** - John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, chapter 3  
- Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Original Position":  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/original-position/>  
- Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "John Rawls"  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rawls/>

- 9 Feb 24 Rawls' Theory of Justice continued  
**First Writing Assignment Due**  
**Required Reading:** - John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice" [AAPP]

- 10 Mar 3 The Communitarian Challenge  
**Required Reading:** - Michael Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Communitarianism"  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/communitarianism/>  
- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, chapter 6

### A Brief Introduction to Political Economy

- 11 Mar 10 Classical Political Economy  
**Required Reading:** - Adam Smith, excerpts from *The Wealth of Nations* [ER]
- 12 Mar 12 Marxism  
**Required Reading:** - Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Communist Manifesto and Critique of the Gotha Program" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Karl Marx"  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marx/>  
- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, chapter 5

### Property Rights

- 13 Mar 17 Locke on Original Appropriation  
**Required Reading:** - John Locke, "Property" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Property"  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/property/>

14 Mar 19 Against Lockean Property Rights  
**Required Reading:** - Henry George, "The Injustice of Private Property in Land" [AAPP]  
- Herbert Spencer, "The Right to the Use of the Earth" [ER]

15 Mar 24 Property Rights and the Tragedy of the Commons  
**Required Reading:** - David Schmidtz, "The Institution of Property" [AAPP]

16 Mar 26 A Libertarian Theory of Property Rights

**Second Writing Assignment Due**

**Required Reading:** - Robert Nozick, "The Entitlement Theory of Justice" [AAPP]

**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Libertarianism":

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/libertarianism/>

- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy on "Libertarianism"

<http://www.iep.utm.edu/l/libertar.htm>

- Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, chapter 4

**Mar 30 – Apr 3 – No class, Spring Break**

**Socialism and Social Justice**

17 Apr 7 Why Not Socialism?  
**Required Reading:** - G.A. Cohen, excerpts from *Why Not Socialism?* [AAPP]

18 Apr 9 A Basic Income for All

**Term paper Topic Proposal Due**

**Required Reading:** - Philippe Van Parijs, "A Basic Income for All" [AAPP]

19 Apr 14 Against Social Justice

**Study Questions #2 Due**

**Required Reading:** - Friedrich Hayek, "The Atavism of Social Justice" [AAPP]

**Equality**

20 Apr 16 Against Strict Egalitarianism

**Term Paper Working Bibliography Due**

**Required Reading:** - Kurt Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron" [AAPP]

- Harry Frankfurt, "Equality as a Moral Ideal" [AAPP]

**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Equality"

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/equality/>

- Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Egalitarianism"

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/egalitarianism/>

21 Apr 21 Equal Respect and Equal Shares

**Required Reading:** - David Schmidtz, "Equal Respect and Equal Shares" [AAPP]

**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Respect"

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/respect/>

**Freedom**

22 Apr 23 The Classical Liberal Defense of Freedom

**Term Paper Summary of Sources Due**

**Required Reading:** - John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty" [AAPP]

**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy"

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill-moral-political/>, especially section 3



- 23 Apr 28 Berlin on Negative and Positive Liberty  
**Required Reading:** - Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Positive and Negative Liberty"  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/liberty-positive-negative/>
- 24 Apr 30 Republicanism  
**Required Reading:** - Philip Pettit, "Republican Political Theory" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Republicanism"  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/republicanism/>

### Global Justice

#### *Term Paper Letter to a Friend Due for Peer Review*

- 25 May 5 Poverty and the Duty to Aid  
**Required Reading:** - Peter Singer, excerpts from *The Life You Can Save: Acting Now to End World Poverty* [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "International Distributive Justice"  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/international-justice/>
- 26 May 7 Immigration  
*Study Questions #3 Due; Peer Review Evaluations Due*  
**Required Reading:** - Michael Huemer, "Is There a Right to Immigrate?" [AAPP]  
**Recommended Reading:** - Stanford Encyclopedia Entry on "Immigration"  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/immigration/>

Final Term Paper due Thursday May 14<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM via Turnitin.com