

Philosophy 325: Political Philosophy
Course Outline

Mark van Roojen
Office: 1005 Oldfather Hall
Phone: 472-2428
Office Hours: T/TH 9:45-10:45 am
Email: msv@unlserve.unl.edu

Course Requirements: Two short papers of exactly 2 and then 3 pages, one longer paper (7-8 pages), some shorter assignments at my whim when I think they'll help with the discussions, and class participation. The shorter assignments will very likely include answers to questions regarding the readings, possible quizzes on the readings, and perhaps one presentation on the readings.

Grading: Ordinarily, 45% of the grade will be determined by the longer paper, 20 % by each of the shorter papers, and the remaining 15% will be based on convincing me that you are doing the readings and teaching me your name so that I can give you the appropriate credit for that. Ways to convince me will include participating in class discussion in a knowledgeable way, completing any of the short assignments that have to do with the readings in such a way as to show you did read what was assigned, and doing a good presentation if I decide to assign one. The teaching me your name requirement may seem stupid, but every semester there are some names I don't learn because their bearers don't talk in class. By warning you that I need to know your name to give you credit for doing the readings, I am trying to emphasize the idea that you will have to use your knowledge of the readings in class in such a way that I can match a name on the roster with my views about that person having done the reading. If a person does not participate I will take this as evidence that the reading was not done.

Class Format: The class will be a combined lecture and discussion format. I will generally come to class with some material to present, but I welcome questions and interruptions. And I will try to ask you all questions to stimulate discussion.

Books to Buy or Borrow:

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* and *Considerations on Representative Government* (but see info for getting from the web below),
John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*,
Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*,
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*,
Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice*,
Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*.

The remaining readings will be available from me for copying or through some other method yet to be determined.

SCHEDULE: Topics and readings are listed in the order we will be discuss them. I cannot say exactly which readings will be necessary for which days, and how many days we will spend on each topic. (I have put an *estimate* of the number of class sections for each topic in parentheses after the description of that topic.) Thus, it will be your responsibility to keep up with the class and to know what is coming next. As a general idea, it would be advisable to read as much as possible of the assignment with respect to each author as soon as we get to that author.

Topic I: **Introduction.** (1 session)

Topic II: **Utilitarianism:** Utilitarianism, the view that government should be organized so as to maximize

happiness or utility, has long been somewhat of a default position in political philosophy. The most well known recent work, by Rawls, takes utilitarianism as its main opponent. We'll look at two versions each of which use differing conceptions of happiness or pleasure. (4 - 5 sessions)

Readings: Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, available on the web at <http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ugcm/3ll3/bentham/morals.pdf> as a pdf document or at <http://www.la.utexas.edu/labyrinth/ipml/ipml.toc.html> as an html document. Read chapters I & IV. Mill, *Utilitarianism* chapter II. & chapter V, available on the web as a download or an html page at <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/m/m645u/>. *On Liberty* is also relevant but not required. A version of that is at <http://www.bartleby.com/130/>.

John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, Chapters 3, 5-8, 10 & 15. You can get a pdf version from McMaster University at: <http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ugcm/3ll3/mill/repgovt.pdf>.

It is also available on the web as a download or an html page at:

<http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/m/m645r/>.

The whole Mill section is useful and contains links to other authors of interest. If you want to look it can be found at: http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/aut/mill_john_stuart.html.

Topic III: Milton Friedman (Right-wing Libertarianism with an unmoralized conception of Liberty): Some theorists, Friedman among them, argue for a system of capitalism and against egalitarian systems for distribution on the basis that only such organization is compatible with a system of individual liberty. (2 or 3 sessions)

Readings: Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*. Introduction, Chapters I, II, VII, & X.

Topic IV: Robert Nozick (Right-wing Libertarianism with a moralized conception of Liberty): Nozick derives his theory of justice from the idea that people have certain kinds of property rights which should never be violated. Starting from the rights he postulates, he defends a libertarian market society which allows great inequalities of wealth. He argues that such a society could originate in a manner which violates no one's rights, and that interfering with its functioning would interfere with the rights of persons. In particular he argues that such a society would arise through a process of just appropriation of natural resources, coupled with just exchanges of such resources among persons.

We will look at both his positive argument that this is so, and at his criticisms of more egalitarian views (a bit of that follows the Rawls reading) as well as at a feminist view critical of his. (4 or 5 sessions)

Readings: Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pages 1-35, 48-53, 149-189.

Recommended: G. A. Cohen "Self-Ownership and World Ownership" available from me.

Topic V: John Rawls (Liberal Democratic Egalitarianism): Just about all current political philosophy takes Rawls as a point of reference, either by extending or opposing Rawls' view. The central normative idea is that the basic structure of a just society should extend certain fundamental liberties, and be organized so that inequalities of other economic and social goods be to the greatest benefit of the least well off. It thus has a decidedly egalitarian cast. We will spend some time familiarizing ourselves with the view, and the arguments for it. (5 sessions)

Readings: Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, Sections 1-6, 11-15, 17, 24-29, 33, 36, 37, 39, 43, 49, 69, 76, 82.
Nozick, pp. 213-231.

Topic VI: **Ronald Dworkin (Liberal neutrality):** Dworkin argues for a conception of distributive justice where the distributions are ambition sensitive, but not endowment dependent. Thus, he opts for equality of resources as the correct measure of distributive justice. A key idea for Dworkin is that governmental activities should be neutral between differing conceptions of human good. (1 or 2 sessions)

Readings: Dworkin, "Liberalism," & "Do We Have a Right to Pornography?"
and possibly, Rae Langton, "Whose Right? Ronald Dworkin, Women and Pornographers,"
Philosophy and Public Affairs, (Autumn 1990) pp. 311-359. You can get this one from JSTOR if you are using the campus network at:
<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=00483915%28199023%2919%3A4%3C311%3AWRRDWA%3E20.CO%3B2-X>

Topic VII: **Michael Walzer (A communitarian theory):** Walzer presents a view of justice in which social practices should be limited by the communally shared understandings regarding the importance of the goods provided by those practices. (3 sessions)

Readings: Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, pp. xi - xvi, 3-20, 64-94 & 281-311.

Topic VIII: **Martha Nussbaum (A liberal feminist book about justice and gender):** Nussbaum's book looks at how mutual respect and dignity can be used to suggest answers to difficult questions about the relations between people both within and across different societies. (4 sessions)

Readings: From *Sex and Social Justice*, TBA.

Topic IX: Summing Up: (1 session)