Bergen Community College
Division of Arts, Humanities, & Wellness
Department of Philosophy and Religion

Course Syllabus

PHR-111 Social and Political Philosophy

Semester and Year:
Course and Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Departmental Secretary: [optional]
Office Hours:
Email Address:

Course Description

PHR-111 Social and Political Philosophy is a general introduction to the broad themes of political philosophy and social theory: How human life is and should be organized into societies; the nature of political systems and different forms of government; the relationship between the individual and the state; the nature of justice; the influence of economy on society; how human nature influences social nature; and the meaning of freedom and democracy.

3 lectures, 3 credits. General Education Course (pending approval); humanities elective.
Student Learning Objectives:

As a result of meeting the requirements in this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the major issues of social and political philosophy.
2. Identify the major philosophers who have contributed to a discussion of the problems of social and political philosophy and their proposed solutions to these problems.
3. Interpret, summarize, and paraphrase, both orally and in writing, the views of these philosophers as expressed in the philosophical texts they have written.
4. Use the logical and critical thinking methods of philosophy to analyze and evaluate the ways in which these philosophers have attempted to solve the problems of social and political philosophy.
5. State and support their own views on issues of social and political philosophy with logical rigor, clarity of thought, and critical analysis, both orally and in writing.

In pursuit of the above objectives, the course is based upon the reading of original sources (not secondary material, which, however, may be used in a supporting role) in the field of social and political philosophy; principles of logical analysis and critical reasoning are reviewed; techniques of philosophical research and writing are introduced; students are given the opportunity to participate actively in class discussions; students are required to do a substantive amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

Course Content

A variety of approaches may be used to satisfy the above course description. One may adopt an 'issues-oriented' approach, in which topics are arranged (for example, social contract theory, the nature of justice, the relationship between the state and the individual, etc.) for discussion and relevant readings are selected towards that end. The course may also be done from an 'historical' perspective, studying relevant philosophical texts chronologically. Towards this end, original source material by political and social philosophers, both classical and contemporary, can be read, including figures such as (but not limited to): Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hume, Smith, Hamilton and Madison, Wollstonecraft, Paine, Burke, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Mill, Rawls, Nozick, and Habermas. Additionally, contemporary material about the twentieth-century breakup of colonial empires and its theorization, the impact of globalization, and current relevance to political theory of major current worldwide political issues may be covered at the instructor's discretion.

Whichever approach is taken, however, the course must cover (using original source material): 1) at least either Plato's Republic or Aristotle's Politics; 2) Augustine's City of God or selections from Aquinas's Summa; and 3) at least three of the
following: Hobbes *Leviathan*; Locke's *Second Treatise*; Rousseau's *Social Contract*; *The Federalist Papers*; selections from the works of Marx/Engels; Mill's *On Liberty*; Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*; and Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.

Special features of the course may be designated by individual instructors; these may include the incorporation of power-point presentations, film, works of politically themed literature, etc.

**Approved Course Text:** Steven M. Cahn, *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts* (Oxford, 2005). Additionally, individual paperback editions of works studied (Penguin editions, for example) may be substituted for the course text, as the instructor desires.

[Note: The overwhelming majority of the primary source writings in the above texts and individual paperbacks are available for free in various editions on the Internet. Even with respect to modern texts still under copyright, one can access, for example, the first four chapters of Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* on-line for free through Google Books, and Rawls's essay, "Justice as Fairness," a paper-length forerunner of *A Theory of Justice*, is available on-line for free. Instructors therefore may make use of the extensively available Internet sources for this material in lieu of ordering texts to reduce the cost of student instructional material. However, the approved course text above sells for approximately $45.00 and is not at this writing prohibitively expensive.]

**Writing and Critical Thinking Requirements:**

Because PHR-107 is a General Education course (status pending), it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.) Students should be especially encouraged (even required, at the discretion of the instructor) to read some book not officially part of the course syllabus but relevant to a course topic chosen by the student as an individual project (to encourage book reading among students). Tests and examinations containing essay components may also be used, and instructors will respond to and comment on students’ writing in detail.

**Grading Policy**

A student’s final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student’s class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course; but a class participation grade will count for no more than fifteen percent (15%) of the final grade.
Attendance Policy

**BCC Attendance Policy**: All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

**Philosophy and Religion Attendance Policy**: Students are expected to attend class regularly and punctually. Attendance will be taken at each class session. It is expected that class will be conducted such that students will benefit in their written work by the lectures and class discussion. If students occasionally arrive late, they should be encouraged to enter quietly, not disturbing the class. If students miss class, they should be encouraged to use the course calendar to stay abreast of material. It is probably a good idea for students to find study partners and to exchange telephone numbers. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor’s judgment, the student has presented a good reason for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work that is late; however, the instructor’s policies for make-ups and late work must be specified clearly on the student guide.

**BCC Statement on Plagiarism**:

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty and may be a violation of U.S. Copyright laws. Plagiarism is defined as taking someone else’s words, opinions, or ideas and claiming them as one’s own.

Examples of plagiarism include instances in which a student:

- Knowingly represents the work of others as his/her own.
- Represents previously completed academic work as current.
- Submits a paper or other academic work for credit that includes words, ideas, data or creative work of others without acknowledging the source.
- Uses another author’s exact words without enclosing them in quotation marks and citing them appropriately.
- Paraphrases or summarizes another author’s words without citing the source appropriately.

**Note**: See sections on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism in the BCC Catalog.

**Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements** [optional but recommended] as well as a listing of Student and Faculty Support Services [again, optional but recommended] including ADA statement; sexual harassment statement; statement on acceptable use of BCC technology; statement on purpose and value of faculty office hours; student/faculty support services list including Writing Center, Office of Specialized Services, information on BCC Library, Distance Learning Office (if course is being given on-line) Tutorial Services, etc.
Include the following statement on LOGOS—The BCC Philosophy & Religion Club:

"LOGOS usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:30 PM in room L-342. I encourage you to join the club. Since you are interested in the study of philosophy, you should find the meetings and other activities of the Philosophy and Religion club very interesting. For further information, check the Philosophy and Religion bulletin board adjacent to Room L-325A or contact LOGOS Advisor Dr. Vanda Bozicevic (L-331, 201-493-7528, vbozicevic@bergen.edu.) (LOGOS does not hold regular meetings during the summer.)"

Sample Course Outline

**Week One:** Introduction to the course: What is social and political philosophy all about, anyway? Basic themes such as the nature and origin of the state/society, the role of human nature, the relation between the individual and government, democracy, freedom, and the rule of law, should be introduced (Readings at the discretion of the instructor).

**Weeks Two - Four:** The origins of Western social and political philosophy: The Ancient Greek tradition. Athens as an ancient model of democracy. Readings from Plato and/or Aristotle.

**Week Five:** Mediaeval social and political theory. Readings from Augustine/Aquinas

**Week Six:** The Renaissance and Machiavelli (first paper due)

**Week Seven:** Review and Mid-Term Examination


**Week Ten:** Foundations of U.S. political philosophy and system: Readings from *The Federalist Papers*, Paine, etc.

**Weeks Eleven and Twelve:** European traditions: Burke, Kant, Hegel, Marx/Engels, etc. (second paper due)

**Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen:** Twentieth-Century American political thought: Rawls/Nozick (or, for example, on a different theme, Habermas, Foucault, writings dealing with the break up of colonization and its theorizing, impact of globalization and current crises, etc.).

**Week Fifteen:** Review and Final Exam

**Note:** Course outlines should also contain information about specific student learning objectives to be covered by specific course requirements; and a note that the course calendar is subject to change depending upon the progress of the class.