

Bergen Community College
Division of Humanities
Department of Philosophy and Religion
Course Master Syllabus

**PHR 111 Social and Political
Philosophy**

Basic Information About Course and Instructor

Semester and year:

Section Number:

Meeting Times:

Locations:

Instructor Name:

Office Location:

Phone:

Office Hours:

Email Address:

Departmental Secretary: Shailly Mahajan, A-328A, 201-879-3606

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.

Credits: 3 (3 lectures)

Prerequisites: None

Corequisites: None

General Education Humanities Course

Student Learning Outcomes

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

Student Learning Outcome:	Means of Assessment:
1. Identify, summarize, and explain central issues, theories, and philosophers from the history of social and political philosophy, demonstrating an understanding of their contexts.	Examinations or quizzes Critical summary essay Argument analysis essay Argument regimentation/reconstruction Compare and contrast essays
2. Locate, evaluate, and integrate information from a variety of sources to develop a refined understanding of social and political philosophy.	Research project utilizing the Philosopher's Index or other scholarly search engines of peer-reviewed sources.
3. Develop and defend their own philosophical positions on social and political issues through clear, logical, and concise writing.	Reflection essays Philosophy in the Wild project
4. Apply logical standards and good critical thinking to assess the strengths and weaknesses of philosophical arguments and proposed solutions to political and social problems.	In-class debate Argument analysis essay Critical summary essay
5. Through active and respectful discussion, critically engage with a variety of perspectives on social and political philosophy.	Structured debate Guided discussions

Essential Learning Outcomes

	EL1	EL 2	EL 3	EL 4	EL 5	EL 6	EL 7	EL 8	EL 9	EL10	EL 11
SLO 1		X					X	X	X	X	X
SLO 2		X				X			X		X
SLO 3		X							X		X
SLO 4		X					X		X		X
SLO 5	X						X				X

EL1-Effective Speaking
 EL2-Effective Writing
 EL3-Mathematical Reasoning
 EL4-Scientific Reasoning
 EL5-Technological Competency
 EL6-Information Literacy

EL7-Social-Behavioral Analysis
 EL8-Historical Analysis
 EL9-Humanistic Analysis
 EL10-Intercultural Awareness
 EL11-Moral Literacy

*In accordance with the *Standards for General Education Courses at Bergen Community College* (2013), all Gen Ed courses are required to address EL1, EL2, EL6, and EL11 (when appropriate), in addition to the ELO that corresponds to its area of study (EL 3-5 and 7-9).

Signature Assignment:

The following assignment should be taught at least once in all sections.

Critical Summary Essay

The critical summary is a substantial and focused 3-page essay, written in MLA style, about a specific philosophical argument in an assigned reading. The first two parts of this project are *analysis* and the third part is *evaluation*:

1. **Identify and “unpack” some specific supported claim made in the text—this is the**

conclusion of some argument in the reading. Students should briefly explain its meaning through key terms or useful background information, and its importance by how it relates to the rest of the text, or this course, or the philosophical subject matter generally. They must correctly quote and cite the text, but quotations should not be more than 20% of the text.

2. **Explain the support for the conclusion—the premises of the argument.** These could be examples or analogies, common knowledge or special assumptions, definitions, rules of science or logic, even ethical principles or moral theories—anything the author relies on in supporting their claim. (Usually, the author is explicit about this, but sometimes arguments contain important unstated assumptions). Quotes are required in this part of the essay; however, quotes should not be more than 20% of the text, you do have to write on your own here.
3. **Evaluate the argument.** Students should explain why we ought to accept or reject the argument. Students might explain why this is a good philosophical argument, why any reader ought to be convinced by it. They might also defend the argument against a potential objection. If the student thinks we should reject it, they need to explain what's wrong with the argument (which *cannot* be that you just disagree with the conclusion); i.e., they need to explain why *any reader* ought to reject the argument. Quotes are not required here. This is where the student's ideas belong.

Course Content:

As an introduction to social and political philosophy, presupposing no student background, the course can be organized topically or historically. Specific topics may include citizenship, justifying state power, the social contract tradition or feminist political philosophy. Historical courses might study relevant philosophical texts and ideas chronologically.

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, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hume, Smith, Hamilton, Wollstonecraft, Burke, Marx, Mill, Rawls, Nozick, Nussbaum and Habermas. Historical institutions and events, such as democracy in ancient Athens, the divine right of kings, the importance of colonialism or globalization can be covered. Regardless of approach, the course must include:

1. An at least minimal review of political philosophy's major periods and locations, e.g., ancient Chinese, classical Greek, medieval or early modern European, contemporary, etc.
2. Considerable review of the topics, problems and methods of social and political philosophy.

Students are required to work on the following figures or texts:

1. Appropriate excerpts from at least one Ancient Greek or Roman text, preferably Plato's political works (e.g., *Crito* or *Republic*) or Aristotle's *Politics*.
2. Appropriate excerpts from at least three of the following modern through contemporary texts: Hobbes *Leviathan*; Locke's *Second Treatise*; Rousseau's *Social Contract*; *The Federalist Papers*; selections from Marx or Engels; Mill's *On Liberty*; Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*; Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.

This course may examine other philosophical issues as they relate to social and political philosophy, for example personhood and the ethics of immigration or food scarcity, but should contain no more than 20% of these issues, as they may overlap with PHR-101 Introduction to Philosophy and PHR-102 Contemporary Moral Issues.

Course Texts or Other Study Materials:

Students in PHR-111 Social and Political Philosophy must read mostly primary texts, not textbooks that describe philosophical positions (though such can be used in addition to primary texts). Instructors may also require inexpensive copies of primary texts, e.g., Hackett editions of Plato's dialogues. There are excellent textbook anthologies of primary readings. Instructors may also choose Open Educational Resources (OER) for their courses, to keep student costs minimal, or However, instructors should be selective about OER readings, which can sometimes contain dated or inferior translations or excerpts. The following textbooks are recommended by the Department of Philosophy and Religion:

- Steven M. Cahn editor. *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*. Oxford University Press, 4th edition 2022.
- Gideon Rosen, et al., editors. *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*. W.W. Norton, 2018.

Research, Writing, and/or Examination Requirement(s):

As a 'General Education Humanities' course, PHR 111 requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking, writing and speaking assignments. It also may require students to employ techniques of scholarly research in some assignments, which 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.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to, or comment on, student writing in detail.

Grading Policy:

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade 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 twenty percent (20%) of the final grade. A student's research and writing work will count at least fifty percent (50%) of the final grade.

Philosophy and Religion Departmental Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend on time every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance, 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. A reasonable makeup policy is left to the instructor's discretion, but good excuses, serious and documented, should be accepted. Make-ups for examinations should be allowed by the instructor if, in the instructor's judgment, the student has presented a good excuse for missing the work. Instructors may penalize work which is late; however, the instructor's policies for make-ups and late work must be clearly specified on the student guide.

Statement on the BCC Philosophy Club:

The Philosophy Club has functioned continuously since the late 1980's. It usually meets on Tuesdays during the Activities Period, 12:30-1:25 PM, but sometimes also on different days and at different times. Students are encouraged to join the club. For further information,

contact the Office of Student Life, who can provide contacts for the current club executive board and faculty advisor.

Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements:

Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty:

[Academic Matters - Bergen Community College - Acalog ACMS™](#)

Statement on the appropriate use of AI (see the following link for guidance):

[AI-Guidance-Resource-Page.pdf \(bergen.edu\)](#)

ADA statement:

[Disability Services \(Office of Specialized Services\) | Bergen Community College](#)

Sexual Harassment statement:

[HR-003-001.2018-Policy-Prohibiting-Sexual-Harassment.pdf \(bergen.edu\)](#)

Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology:

[Acceptable-Use-Policy.pdf \(bergen.edu\)](#)

Recommended Syllabus Statements from the Office of Specialized Services:

[Syllabus Statements | Bergen Community College](#)

Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.

Accessibility Statement

Bergen Community College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or think you may have a disability) and, as a result, need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, complete course requirements, or benefit from the College's programs or services, contact the Office of Special Services (OSS) as soon as possible at 201-612-5270 or www.bergen.edu/oss. To receive any academic accommodation, you must be appropriately registered with OSS. The OSS works with students confidentially and does not disclose any disability-related information without their permission. The OSS serves as a clearinghouse on disability issues and works in partnership with faculty and all other student service offices.

Student Support Services

Bergen Community College provides exemplary support to its students and offers a broad variety of opportunities and services. A comprehensive array of student support services including advising, tutoring, academic coaching, and more are available online at <https://bergen.edu/currentstudents/>.



Sidney Silverman Library Online Resources:

[Guides BY SUBJECT - LibGuides at Bergen Community College](#)

General Search and Databases: [Library | Bergen Community College](#)

Sample Course Schedule:

This sample version of PHR-111 is historically organized into distinct learning modules. The

structure of modules is an opening discussion with a reflective in-class essay, followed by readings in philosophy, an in-class debate and then an exam, considered summative for the module. The final module is the critical summary project.

Week	Topic/Activity/Assignments
1-2	Module 1: Classical Conceptions of Justice–Human Flourishing <u>Required Reading:</u> Plato <i>Apology</i> and <i>Crito</i> Aristotle <i>Politics</i> <u>Assessments:</u> In-class reflective writing: Human Nature and the State Canvas quiz on each assigned reading Stand Where you Stand (class debate) Exam 1, multiple choice and short essays
3-7	Module 2: The Modern Period–Political Liberalism and The Social Contract Tradition <u>Required Reading:</u> Machiavelli <i>The Prince</i> Hobbes <i>Leviathan</i> Locke <i>Second Treatise on Government</i> Rousseau <i>Of the Social Contract</i> Wollstonecraft <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Women</i> <i>The Federalist Papers</i> and <i>The US Constitution</i> <u>Assessments:</u> In-class reflective writing: How much power should the state have? Canvas quiz on each assigned reading Stand Where you Stand (class debate) Exam 2, multiple choice and short essays
8-14	Module 3: 19th - 21st Centuries–Freedom, Equality and Distribution <u>Required Reading:</u> Marx and Engels <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> or <i>The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i> Mill <i>On Liberty</i> Arendt <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i> Nozick <i>Anarchy State and Utopia</i> Rawls <i>Justice as Fairness</i> Charles Mills <i>The Racial Contract</i> Nussbaum <i>Feminist Critiques of Liberalism</i> <u>Assessments:</u> In-class reflective writing: Should America care about income inequality? Canvas quiz on each assigned reading Stand Where you Stand (class debate) Exam 3, multiple choice and short essays
15	Module 4: Critical Summary <u>Required Reading:</u> None, students should pick a text to work on, providing this to instructors. Peer review in class <u>Assessments:</u> Critical Summary Project (out of class writing)

*All readings are from Cahn, *Political Philosophy*

Note to Students: This course outline and calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.