

# Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy

PHL 108W [#768223]  
The Pennsylvania State University  
Spring Semester, 10 Jan – 26 Apr 2012  
TR 9.45-11a, 116 Electrical Engineering West

## Instructor: Christopher Moore

Departments of Philosophy and Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies  
Office: Sparks 243  
Phone: 814-865-1607 (office)  
Email: crm21@psu.edu  
Office Hours: TW 12.15-1.15p, and by appt.

## Required Texts

### Bookstore

Pakaluk, *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship* (Hackett)  
Shakespeare, *The Poems* (New Cambridge Shakespeare)  
Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Modern Library)  
Plato, *Republic*, tr. R.E. Allen (Yale)  
Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities* (Harvard)

### Handouts

Deresiewicz, "Faux Friendship," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Dec 2009)  
California Supreme Court, *In Re Marriage Cases* (May 2008)

## Course

This course focuses on how we become who we are, understand who we have become, and imagine who we might be, through our relations with friends, family-members, teachers, neighbors, strangers, fellow-citizens, and foreigners. These relations are called social when we draw attention to the fact that we live with other human beings, with their own habits, hopes, and beliefs. They are called political when we draw attention to the fact that we live in communities formed out of contested ideas and aiming for shared norms.

Social and political philosophy draws out the puzzles to understanding how we do and should live socially and politically, and trains us to generate both publicly-acceptable answers and productive criticisms of those answers.

During the semester we hope to understand the following matters:

- (i) the causes by which one's identity depends on one's social experiences

- (ii) the reasons and ways in which various types of friendships are important
- (iii) the rationality and irrationality of romantic love and sexual attraction
- (iv) the impact of money, property, and political authority on personal relations
- (v) the strategies by which one generation educates the next after its own ideals
- (vi) the obligations we incur to others, either directly or indirectly

Understanding these matters will take considerable effort on each student's behalf. We will depend on the following activities in particular:

- (vii) honest reflection on one's own experience
- (viii) sincere expression of one's opinions
- (ix) careful consideration of others' views
- (x) analytically-valid assessment of all positions
- (xi) sensitive reading of all course texts
- (xii) frequent and fluid informal conversation about the course topics
- (xiii) public articulation of distinct puzzles and possible solutions to them
- (xiv) the motivation to pursue understanding and not mere superficial acquaintance with our chosen issues of study.

Because none of us can perform each of these activities with mastery, our twice-weekly meetings and the semester's assignments are structured to help each student practice each of these activities and to receive comments on and evaluations of their efforts.

### **Class time**

Most classes will begin with a 10-minute student presentations on the day's reading. These will generate the questions, examples, and suggested answers animating the seminar. The teacher may introduce additional considerations, distribute visual aids, or prompt participation from reluctant class-members, but the students will be responsible for developing and maintaining a good conversation. To help everyone prepare for the day's discussion, we will have obligatory blog-writing. Presentations, which each student will give at least two, blog-posts, and participation will be graded.

Some days will involve small-group discussion, where groups of three-to-four students will query the day's reading by following a discussion-guide. This may be the most philosophically-intense and important activity of the class. Other days will involve explicit talk about writing papers.

### **Blog**

By 6pm the evening before the days of class (thus, Monday and Wednesday) you are to submit an ANGEL blog-entry commenting on the reading. This entry should help others think about the most significant and interesting aspects of the reading; prepare you to offer views and criticism in class; and demonstrate that you've read the assignments thoroughly and thoughtfully. You may talk about whatever you wish: how experiences you've had or readings you've done help illuminate the current reading; the thesis of the work and the best and worst evidence in support of that thesis; the subtext of some narrative or descriptive passages; a close reading of several signal sections; etc. You should always contribute your own ideas, but you are also expected to respond productively to your classmates' entries. You are encouraged to talk about the blog during class discussion, and are expected to be aware of all blog entries. You will be graded on 20 instances of blog participation (there are two possible instances a week for each of 15 weeks, thus 30 total possible instances), on a 2-1-0 scale: 2 = thoughtful and thorough entry (and comments); 1 = weak but existent effort; 0 = negligible effort. Any further blog participation counts as pure bonus. [40pts]

### **Presentations**

Each student will give two presentations, each with a different partner. You are to give a coherent introduction to the assigned reading. Focus on the following items: the main argument or narrative event; the supporting evidence or motivations; the strongest and weakest parts, and your reasons for those evaluations; the puzzle or question propelling the reading; any remaining puzzles or questions; and what kinds of discussion you'd like to see from your audience. Practice your presentation and ensure that it lasts no more than 10 minutes. You may divide the labor however you like. You may use digital aids or print-outs (which I will copy for you). Each presentation will be graded on a 10-0 scale. A good score depends on excellent coverage of the reading, excellent presentation skills, and excellent provocation of discussion. [10pts each]

### **Participation**

You are expected to arrive in class on time every day, take complete notes, pay attention, and prevent the conversation from flagging—by offering your ideas, responding to others' ideas, and asking well-formulated questions. Any use of electronic devices is grounds for immediate dismissal. Grading scale: 1-0. [25pts]

### **Midterms**

There will be two midterms, both taken as timed tests on ANGEL, examining your familiarity and understanding of the reading. [25pts each]

### **Papers**

There will be four papers, each focused on concentration and quality.

Paper I: Reconstruct an argument by Aristotle. 1p. Get teacher comments. Revise with attention to those comments, classroom discussion, and compositional perfection. Grade depends on original effort, overall improvement, and accuracy, precision, and clarity of both drafts. Include original draft with final draft. [10pts]

Paper II: Reconstruction an argument, and then evaluate it. 2pp. Distribute copies to peer trio; write comments on peer papers in accordance with rubric; meet with peer trio. Revise with attention to those comments. Grade depends on Paper I factors plus peer-commenting efforts. Bind together all drafts with final draft. [15pts]

Paper III: Interpret a reading. 2pp paper. Do peer-review process with a new trio. Revise. Grade based on above factors. [15pts]

Paper IV: Write a final investigative paper. 5pp. Preceded by outline to teacher. [25pts]

## **Logistics**

### Grades

- Blog participation: 40pts (with significant bonus possible)
- Presentations: 40pts
- Classroom participation: 25pts
- Midterm Exams: 50pts
- Papers: 65pts

A 187-200 – Extraordinary

A- 180-186

B+ 174-179

B 167-173 – Good

B- 160-166

C+ 154-159

C 147-153 – Acceptable

C- 140-146

D+ 134-139

D 127-133 – Minimal pass

D- 120-126

F 000-119 – Fail

### Technology

Please check class-related emails each weekday, and respond promptly. I will do the same. I will email you additional handouts if I do not distribute paper copies. Please check with fellow students to ensure you have not missed any handouts.

### Accessibility

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) located in Boucke Building Room 116 at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit their web site at [www.equity.psu.edu/ods/](http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/). I should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable academic adjustments.

## Cheating

Academic dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for this course shall be grounds for failing the entire course and communication of dishonesty to the College. This includes, but is not restricted to, any plagiarism on any paper, or cheating on any portion of the homework or exams. Plagiarism includes, among other things, not citing text, paraphrases, or ideas taken from any assigned or unassigned reading, or other students' comments or papers. Please ask about any case you're concerned about. For details on the PSU policy, see [www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/G-9.html](http://www.psu.edu/oue/aappm/G-9.html).

## Reading and Assignment Schedule

Jan	Tu 10	<i>The puzzles of friendship, society, and the individual.</i>
	Th 12	<i>The puzzles of friendship, continued. Student introductions.</i> Read: Deresiewicz, "Faux Friendships"
	Tu 17	Read: Plato, <i>Lysis</i> ( <i>Other Selves</i> pp. 3-27)
	Th 19	Read: Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics VIII</i> (OS 30-50)
	Tu 24	Read: Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics IX</i> , and <i>Rhetoric</i> (OS 50-76)
	Th 26	Read: Montaigne and Bacon (OS 185-207)
	M 30	<b>Paper I due</b> at 12noon <u>by email</u>
	Tu 31	Read: Kant and Emerson (OS 208-232)
Feb	Th 02	Read: Teler, "Friendship" (OS 248-267)
	M 06	<b>Paper I-Revision due</b> at 12noon <u>by email</u>
	Tu 07	Read: Shakespeare, <i>Rape of Lucrece</i> , lines 1-1036
	Th 09	Read: Shakespeare, <i>Rape of Lucrece</i> , 1037-1855
	Tu 14	<b>Paper II due</b> in class, with copies for peer reviewers Read: Shakespeare, <i>Venus and Adonis</i>
	Th 16	<b>Discussion Questions &amp; Peer Review outside of class: NO CLASS</b> Read: Wollstonecraft, <i>Vindication of the Rights of Women</i> , pp. xi-10
	Tu 21	<b>Paper II-Revision due</b> in class Read: Wollstonecraft, <i>Vindication of the Rights of Women</i> , 11-45
	Th 23	<b>MIDTERM I (VIA ANGEL: NO CLASS)</b>
	Tu 28	Read: <i>In re Marriage Cases</i> , pp. 1-121
Mar	Th 01	Read: <i>In re Marriage Cases</i> , opinions of Baxter and Corrigan
	05-08	<b>NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK</b>
	Tu 13	Read: Plato, <i>Republic</i> Bk I
	Th 15	Read: Plato, <i>Republic</i> Bk II

- Tu 20     **Paper III due** in class, with copies for peer reviewers  
 Read: Plato, *Republic* Bk III
- Th 22     Read: Plato, *Republic* Bk IV
- Tu 27     **Paper III-Revision due** in class  
 Read: Plato, *Republic* Bk V
- Th 29     Read: Plato, *Republic* Bk VI
- Apr** Tu 03     Read: Plato, *Republic* Bk VII
- Th 05     Read: Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities* pp. ix-45
- Tu 10     Read: Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities* 46-100
- Th 12     Read: Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities* 101-142
- Tu 17     **Paper IV outline due** by email by 6pm  
 Read: Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities* 143-187
- Th 19     **MIDTERM II (VIA ANGEL: NO CLASS)**
- Tu 24     Read: To Be Announced
- Th 26     Read: TBA

**Paper IV due at end of scheduled final exam meeting period**