

Social and Political Philosophy: PHIL 255  
 Spring 2012  
 Professor Carol J. Moeller  
 Moravian College

Professor's Office: 110 Comenius. 610-625-7881. moeller@moravian.edu

Required Text: *Social and Political Philosophy: Classical Western Texts in Feminist and Multiculturalist Perspectives*, Third Edition, James, P. Sterba, editor, Wadsworth, 2002.

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:15-8:45 a.m., 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m., and by appointment.

### Course Description

What is justice? How can considerations of justice negotiate our great differences of culture, identity, and circumstance? How are non-Western and Western approaches to philosophy to engage productively, across such historical legacies as imperialism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism? To what degree are we constituted by our cultures and environments? What is it to be free? How can the needs of self be balanced against the needs of communities?

In the text, *Social and Political Philosophy: Classical Western Texts in Feminist and Multiculturalist Perspectives*, edited by James P. Sterba, influential Western texts are set alongside non-Western and feminist perspectives on the issues. For example, in Section VI on Rousseau, we'll read Ward Churchill's "Perversions of Justice: A Native-American Examination of the Doctrine of U.S. Rights to Occupancy in North America," as well as Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women."

Philosophy requires each of us to read, think, reflect, speak, and reason critically about how we ought to live, how people are and how we ought to be. The course will consist of lectures, discussions, question and answer sessions, and some group exercises. You will need to do all the assigned readings carefully, and often numerous times in order to really grasp the readings in depth, attend class, participate in class discussions, and by so doing learn to read, write, and think in a philosophical manner. One learns philosophy by doing it: reading what philosophers have written, following their lines of thought, asking our own questions of the texts and of each other, and thinking critically about their -- and our -- ways of thinking about the world.

The principal aim of the course is to learn, to learn not only what philosophers have thought but also how they have thought, with what methods and approaches. We seek to find strengths and weaknesses in their approaches, as well as in their views. We seek to discover, evaluate, and reflect critically upon our own views, holding them up to critical scrutiny. It's not enough to have opinions; we must learn to examine our views for their adequacy, to give reasons for and against them. In part, the aim is to help you to acquire certain intellectual skills. Whether or not you acquire these skills depends, mostly, on whether you dedicate enough time and energy to the course. You will need to attend class, read the text (sometimes doing readings over and over again until you really understand it), be able to summarize the main positions and the arguments for them in a given piece of writing, reflect critically upon the text, and develop and argue for your own responses to the text and related questions. Doing all the assigned work on your own and in a timely way is indispensable. You cannot learn how to do philosophy just by listening to anyone talk about it. You learn it mostly by doing it -- much the way you learn to

play a sport or a musical instrument. Philosophy papers and exams are not like "book reports;" they require independent philosophical thinking.

We seek the following learning outcomes, specifically in reference to feminist philosophy:

1. Enhanced knowledge of feminist philosophy and competence in the use of its analytical tools.
2. Increased awareness of the complexity of major gender issues such as those examined in the course;
3. Greater understanding of the moral issues related to gender, justice, and philosophy and ability to analyze the issues with attention to their depth and complexity.
4. Increased knowledge of and analytical ability at how such issues as gender, race, class, and sexuality relate and compound questions.

This course fulfills the Moral Life Learning in Common (LinC) requirement. As such, we seek: (1) an introduction to two or more theoretical frameworks for reflection upon a moral life, and (2) multiple realms of application for these frameworks (i.e., two or more significant contemporary issues that will be explored in light of these theoretical considerations).

In particular terms, course will meet these outcomes as follows:

- (1) This course will use philosophical ethical methods, competing theories of justice, as well as various philosophical accounts of respect, rationality, consent, empowerment and other concepts,
- (2) applying them to such areas as:
  - a) poverty and other inequalities (e.g., how does this relate to justice? What are the strengths and weaknesses of plans purporting to be more egalitarian?),
  - b) visions of justice across persons of all groups.

As a course fulfilling the Moral Life rubric, Social and Political Philosophy is an upper-division course. It requires sustains advanced analytical work. One must have an open mind, grapple with readings, topics and discussions that may be quite difficult intellectually, emotionally, and politically. (It can be quite difficult to struggle to understand a wordy and abstract article with which one disagrees and by which one feels offended.)

Class preparation: Before each class meeting, I expect you to read and reflect upon everything that we are covering in class. Fair warning: there is no way to master the material except by doing lots of reading, discussing, and reflecting upon the material.

Seeing Me: If you have any trouble with any of the material, come see me. Don't wait. Come to my office hours. If you cannot make these, let me know and we can set up another time to meet. Try to identify what your specific difficulties are, e.g., motivation, interest, reading comprehension, note-taking, writing, quiz and test-taking skills, philosophical reasoning. I can best help you get on track by seeing where in particular you have gone wrong. If you need to get something to me, leave it at my office.

### **Course requirements (as percentage of final grade)**

- I.
  - A. One Presentation. In this presentation of 5-10 minutes (on assigned class days), you should provide an overview of the main points of the readings for that day explained in your own words (though you may point to sections of the text for clarification and support), offering your own analyses, questions, and responses to them.
  - B. Five 1-2 page response essays: reflective papers on the readings for the class meeting at which you hand it in. That is, the essay should be about your reaction to the readings, not a review or extension of the class discussion. Of the 24 or so class meetings, you need to

hand in five response essays. I would suggest you try to do a brief essay at least once every week or every other week, so that unexpected life issues or other coursework won't interfere with your completing all five essays. These essays are for your benefit, to practice engaging critically with the readings; they will not be graded except for Pass/Fail, simply marked for credit toward your assigned total of five.

These may be submitted at the beginning of any class meetings, with at least three of them being submitted prior to the Friday, February 24 mark that indicates we are halfway through the term.

C. Occasional quizzes, worksheets, collective work projects and/or other brief in-class assignments, (some graded by letter or number, some simply for credit as satisfactory or unsatisfactory)

D. Participation and attendance (both qualitative and quantitative).

**Note:** in addition to the attendance grade here, unexcused absences beyond two will count against your final grade at a rate of 0.5% each. Please inform me before the date of an excused absence, giving relevant documentation.

	Average grade on the above (I.A-I.D):	→	5%*
II.	Examinations:		
	First Exam		15%
	Second Exam		20%
	Final Exam		20%
III.	Essay: Two 5-6 Page Essays, including stages required		20%
			<u>20%</u>
			100%

### Course Requirements Further Explained

II. Exams: Three Exams (15%, 20%, and 20%, for a total of 55%): For the final exam, most of the material will be drawn from the last series of readings, and the remainder will come from those covered earlier in the term. Each of these three exams will involve a combination of paragraph and essay writing with shorter answer type questions (e.g., true/false, one-sentence answers, etc.)

III. Two Essays (20% each, for a total of 40%): Two 5 - 6 (double-spaced) page essays on topic selected from those I distribute, or your own proposed topic with my written approval. In each essay, you will demonstrate your grasp of the course materials and go beyond them to develop your own positions and arguments. These essays will not be research papers involving outside research and sources beyond the books for the course. Rather, they may simply involve working the texts for class and responding to them critically, showing how and why you agree or disagree with the author's central argument on a topic. These may be due in stages (details to follow).

\*Note: 5% may not seem like much, say on a presentation one would rather not do or would do an unsatisfactory job on, but skipping it would give you a 0 as 5% of your final grade bringing an 80 down to a 76 for the course grade

In addition, borderline grades may swing up or down (say, from a C- to a C, if the numerical grade is just on the line between those), depending upon a student's class participation and attendance levels.

There will be no make-up exams, quizzes, or presentations, (with the possible exception of extreme emergency circumstances)

#### Grading and Academic Integrity:

Grading and academic integrity policies for this course are in accordance with Moravian College standards, as expressed in the Catalog. Please note the following about grading.

Grading scheme: 97-100=A+ 93-96.9=A 90-92.9=A- 87-89.9=B+ 83-86.9=B 80-82.9=B- 77-79.9=C+ 73-76.9=C 70-72.9=C- 67-69.9=D+ 63-66.9=D 60-62.9=D- 0-59.9=F

A (4.00 points) and A- (3.67): "These grades indicate achievement of the highest caliber. They involve expectations of independent work, original thinking, and the ability to acquire and effectively use knowledge."

B+ (3.33), B (3.00), and B- (2.67): "These grades indicate higher than average achievement. Evidence of independent work and original thinking is expected."

C+ (2.33), C (2.00), and C- (1.67): "These grades are given when the student has devoted a reasonable amount of time, effort, and attention to the work of the course, and has satisfied the following criteria: familiarity with the content of the course, familiarity with the methods of study of the course, and active participation in the work of the class."

D+ (1.33), D (1.00), and D- (0.67): "These grades indicate unsatisfactory work, below the standard expected by the College. They indicate work which in one or more important aspects falls below the average expected of students for graduation. The work is, however, sufficient to be credited for graduation, if balanced by superior work in other courses."

F (0.00): "This indicates failure."

Moravian College standards on academic integrity and plagiarism are available in Academic Honesty at Moravian College, available from the Office of the Dean of the College (in Monocacy Hall, first floor). Plagiarism is very serious, resulting in automatic failure on the relevant assignment, even if the action is unintentional, such as the failure to cite the source of paraphrased ideas. We will discuss these issues on particular assignments, such as essays.

For this course, the following pointers may be helpful. Follow instructions on graded assignments, doing your own work unless the assignment is explicitly given as a group project or as allowing for open-book work. In doing essays, be sure to give references and credit for any ideas which are not entirely your own. That is, when quoting or paraphrasing or even referring to the idea(s) of another, cite the source. If you are not sure whether a reference is required, give a reference anyway. If in doubt, err on the side of overly generous reference-giving, and consult with the professor for guidance.

### Course Schedule\*\*

Section of text to read beforehand. For example, all of pages 48 - 86 need to be read and studied by Tuesday, Jan. 24

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Pages</u>
Jan. 17	T	First Class Meeting
Jan. 19	Th	I. pp. i - iii, Plato: pp. 1-47
Jan. 24	T	II. Aristotle and Musonius Rufus: pp. 48-84
Jan. 26	Th	pp. 48-84 (continued)
Jan. 31	T	III. Augustine: pp. 85-103
Feb. 2	Th	IV. Aquinas and Christine de Pizan: pp. 104-138
Feb. 7	T	pp. 104-138 (continued)
Feb. 9	Th	V. Hobbes: pp. 138-183
Feb. 14	T	pp. 138-183 (continued), and further discussion on first three chapters
<b>Feb. 16</b>	<b>Th</b>	<b>Exam 1</b>
Feb. 21	T	VI. Locke: pp. 184-224
Feb. 23	Th	pp. 184-224 (continued) Note: Friday, Feb. 24 is the mid-point of the semester.
Feb. 28	<b>T</b>	VII. Rousseau: pp. 225-286, <b>Essay 1 Due</b>
March 1	Th	pp. 225-286 (continued)
March 6	T	Spring Recess
March 8	Th	Spring Recess
March 13	T	VIII. Kant: pp. 287-317
March 15	Th	pp. 287-317 (continued), IX. John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor: pp. 318-371
March 20	T	pp. 318-371 (continued)
March 22	Th	X. Marx and Engels: pp. 372-408

March 27	T	pp. 372-408 (continued)
March 29	Th	<b>Exam 2</b>
<b>April 3</b>	<b>T</b>	XI. Rawls and Hospers: 409-458
April 5	Th	pp. 409-458 (continued) <b>Essay 2 Due</b>
April 10	Th	XII. Habermas and Foucault: pp. 459-498
April 12	Th	pp. 459-498 (continued)
April 17	T	XIII. Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor: pp. 499-537
April 19	T	XIV. Cornel West and Martha Nussbaum, pp. 538-569.
April 24	Th	pp. 538-569 (continued)
April 26	T	XIV. Sterba: pp. 570-588, further discussion

Classes end April 28

**Final Exam: Tuesday, May 1, 1:30 p.m.**

**\*\*Also, I may supplement this schedule and readings with additional materials from time to time.**