Course description

The aim of this course is to expose students to influential ideas in modern and contemporary Western political theory. These ideas continue to shape economics, law, and politics today. Topics range from the nature of welfare to the nature of rights, systems of political economy, freedom, and power. Questions we'll consider include: how do we measure what's best for society? What is the nature of rights, and how are rights related to individual freedom? When is power over others justified? What kinds of inequality, if any, are troubling, and how should institutions be designed to minimize inequality?

There are no easy answers to these controversial questions. To get a handle on these topics, students are expected to carefully read the texts and positively engage with others in class.

Course objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Better understand historical debates in political theory.
2. Be able to clearly reconstruct theoretical arguments in a logical fashion, both verbally and in writing, and be able to articulate a critical viewpoint on these arguments.
3. Positively engage with others on these topics, both in class discussion and in writing. Students should be able to respectfully criticize others’ ideas and articulate reasons for disagreement.

Assignments and grading

Participation (10 percent). Graded pass/fail (pass = 10 percent, fail = 0 percent). Each student volunteers to prepare 2 discussion questions for 2 class sessions. Questions must be uploaded to Canvas at least 24 hours before the assigned class session. Attendance in class is not required. However, students should expect active in-class participation to make a difference to a borderline grade.

Quizzes (25 percent). Quizzes are designed to test reading comprehension and to give students a low-stakes chance to practice writing. They will be given at random about once a week. The writing component on these quizzes will be graded pass/fail. Students pass as long as they put in a good faith effort to answer the question. The reading comprehension portion will be graded on a point scale.

Assignment 1 (20 percent). Argument reconstruction.
Assignment 2 (25 percent, including 5 percent for completing peer review). Midterm paper.

Final exam (20 percent). Thursday, June 13, 8:00-10:59am. Location TBD.

Grading scale for cumulative class average

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A+</td>
<td>&gt;99.5</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79.9-77.0</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;50.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>99.5-93.0</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>76.9-73.0</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>92.9-90.0</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>72.9-70.0</td>
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Academic integrity
Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please familiarize yourself with the UCSD Academic Integrity policy. I will provide more information about what counts as a violation of academic integrity in the context of each assignment.

Other policies
Email: From Monday to Friday, I will generally respond to emails within 24 hours. Responses may take longer on weekends. If I have not responded to your email within that time frame, please feel free to send me a follow-up. You can just forward your previous email.

Late assignments: Each student has 3 free pass days that can be applied to Assignment 1 and 2. Students can use these passes for extensions without justification or penalty. Free passes will be automatically applied to late assignments. Assignments that are turned in late after free passes have been used up will incur a late penalty of 1/3 letter grade percent per day, including weekends. Requests for a waiver of the late penalties will be considered if they are made in a timely fashion and supported by a valid, documented reason (typically of a medical nature). I am much more likely to grant waivers if you have communicated with me beforehand about your issue.

Incompletes, withdrawal, changing grading basis: Please see the Registrar’s deadlines. I am happy to discuss these options with you if you’re considering them.

Athletics and other extracurricular obligations: If you must miss class because of tournament travel or any extracurricular-related reason, please let me know in advance. Without notice, these absences will not count as legitimate.

Disability: Please see the Office for Students with Disabilities website to request accommodations.

Writing resources: The Writing Hub in Geisel Library provides writing tutoring appointments. Writing is difficult, and writing a successful paper typically takes multiple revisions. I encourage you to go over your drafts with writing tutors.
Reading and lecture schedule (subject to change)
There are no required books for this course. All materials can be found in PDF or hyperlink form under “Modules” on Canvas. Students are expected to attend the lectures having read the assigned materials beforehand. It is recommended that students complete each week’s readings in the order on which they appear on the syllabus.

Students will find reading questions in the relevant module on Canvas. These are meant to guide reading comprehension. After reading the article and going through the questions, students should have a better understanding of the main arguments and possible criticisms.

Part 1. Utilitarianism
Optional readings are marked with a *.

- *Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”

Prof. Soon away – instead of class, please watch the lecture video posted under Modules on Canvas

- John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Ch.2-4

- Bentham, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, Ch.4. “Measuring Pleasure and Pain”
- *Daniel Hausman and Michael McPherson, Economic Analysis, Moral Philosophy, and Public Policy, Ch.2, “Ethics in Welfare Economics: Two Examples”

- Bentham, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, Ch.17, “The Boundary around Penal Jurisprudence”
- Mill, Utilitarianism, Ch.5, “The connection between justice and utility”
- *Robert Goodin, Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy, Ch.1
- First assignment overview

Part II. Rights, autonomy, and liberty

• Finish up utilitarianism

  ● Kant, *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals*, Ch.2
  ● First assignment due

  ● Robert Nozick, “The Rationality of Side-Constraints”
  ● Onora O'Neill, “Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems”

  ● Kant, “Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View” (1784)
  ● *Lucy Allais, “Kant’s Racism”*

[10] Th May 2. Liberty and social pressure
  ● J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch.1 and Ch.2

  ● J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 4
  ● Review + second assignment overview.

  Part III. Inequality and power

[12] Th May 9. Gender inequality
  ● Harriet Taylor Mill, “The Enfranchisement of Women” (1851)
  ● Emma Goldman, “The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation” (1910)


  ● Marx, *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, First Manuscript

  ● You must have a complete draft of your paper ready for peer review by class time.

[16] Th May 23. Land ownership

- Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (1892)
- **Second assignment due.**

[18] Th May 30. Nihilism and power
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, Parts I, III

- Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*
- Emma Goldman, “Prisons”