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PS 4930 – Contemporary Political Philosophy Fall 2008



--"Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robot", Wayne Coyne

COURSE SYLLABUS

Class Meetings: Mondays 6-9, PH 211

Professor:	Dr. John Maynor
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Aims and objectives:

The aim of this course is to introduce you to the central approaches in contemporary political philosophy, and then critically compare the competing answers that they give to certain fundamental questions in political thought. The main approaches we will consider will be liberalism, communitarianism, and republicanism. Within each of these approaches, students will be exposed to various key concepts in contemporary political philosophy such as liberty, justice, identity, rights, equality, and many others. We will show how each of the main approaches differ on questions regarding these concepts and explore just how these differences play themselves out when theorizing about political issues broadly conceived. We will also focus on certain contemporary issues such as education, immigration, feminism, war, citizenship, democracy, globalization, and the welfare state.

On a special note, I received a Curriculum Integration Grant from the President's Commission on the Status of Women to redesign this course in 2006. In fulfilling the Commission's goals I have integrated several special topics within the course's main topics to better reflect the experiences of women. While we will cover feminism as a main topic in week 11, I want to draw your attention to several special topics such as cultural relativity (week 13); difference theorists (weeks 12 and 13); body rights, including prostitution (weeks 4 and 11); reproductive rights (weeks 4 and 11); gender and war (week 15); historically biased images of citizenship (weeks 12 and 13); and the rights of gays and lesbians (week 9). As we cover these topics, we will pay particular attention to the perspectives and experiences of women.

Having completed this course, students should be able to:

- differentiate the main approaches discussed;
- apply these approaches to specific issues in political philosophy;
- have some familiarity with some of the central texts and arguments in contemporary political philosophy; and
- be able to present and assess these arguments critically and engage with them in an analytical manner.

Course Policies:

1) **There will be no make-up exams or extra credit assignments.** An exception will only be made in the case of a medical emergency for which you **must have documentation from a physician.**

2) **Papers are due on the dates specified in this syllabus AT THE START OF CLASS.** Papers turned in late on the same day will drop one-third (1/3) letter grade (a B becomes a B-). Papers that arrive the next day will drop one full letter grade (a B becomes a C). All other late

papers will receive a maximum of 60 (D-), provided they are of a passing standard. No papers will be accepted after the **last day of class.**

3) **Cheating and plagiarism are serious academic offenses.** Students caught in these activities will receive a non-replaceable zero (0) for the assignment and may be reported to the University for disciplinary action. Before you turn in an assignment, you must read through the *General Advice on Writing Essays and*

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Taking Exams on the course web site and sign and turn in the Essay / Assignment Submission Slip when turning in your essays.

4) **Use of the Internet:** The internet is a fantastic tool for research and has changed the way academia functions -- for both students and staff! I use the internet almost daily in my research and I encourage each of you to make full use of this wonderful resource. However, this encouragement comes with a very serious health warning. Be very careful in over using the internet or overly relying on it to do your research for you. As a research tool the internet is only as useful as the research skills of the user. As a general rule, class assignments that overly rely on the internet will be marked down.

5) **Cell Phones:** Please make sure you're your cell phones are turned off in class. I reserve the right to confiscate any ringing phones and make expensive phone calls. Please note that noisy phones during an exam may result in you failing that assignment. You have been warned!

6) **Lottery Scholarship:** To retain Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 and 48 attempted hours and a **cumulative** TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. You may qualify with a 2.75 **cumulative** GPA after 72 attempted hours (and subsequent semesters), if you are enrolled full-time and maintain a **semester** GPA of at least 3.0. A grade of C, D, F, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility. Dropping a class after 14 days may also impact eligibility; if you withdraw from this class and it results in an enrollment status of less than full time, you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship. Lottery recipients are eligible to receive the scholarship for a maximum of five years from the date of initial enrollment, or until a bachelor degree is earned. For additional Lottery rules, please refer to your Lottery Statement of Understanding form, review lottery requirements on the web at <http://scholarships.web.mtsu.edu/telsconteligibility.htm>, or contact the Financial Aid Office at 898-2830.

7) **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** In general, under FERPA I am not permitted to disclose your academic progress to anyone not allowed to receive such information. Thus I cannot discuss your

academic progress, grades, etc., over the phone or via e-mail – it needs to be done in person.

8) **Reasonable Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:** If you have a disability that may require assistance or accommodation, or if you have a question related to any accommodations for testing, note takers, readers, etc., please speak with me as soon as possible. Students may also contact the Office of Disabled Student Services (898-2783) with questions about such services.

9) **The grading scale will be the standard ten point scale:**

A 90-100
B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B-80-82
C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72
D+ 67-69, D 63-66, D- 60-62
F 0—59

The following descriptions of the criteria for the award of the various grades should be used as a general guide.

A grades:

An A grade piece of work should have the following virtues: it should be clearly written, and be well-organized and well-structured; it should display a good understanding of the relevant course material and/or subject matter, and should adopt a critical stance in relation to that material (i.e. giving evidence of having been thought through in a critical way for yourself); it should, moreover, display an ability to argue cogently.

B grades:

A B grade piece of work should have the following virtues: it should be clearly written, and quite well organized and structured; it should display quite a good understanding of the relevant course material, and should display some capacity for critical engagement; it should be cogently argued, at least in part; there should normally be some evidence of independence, either in organization of material or use of examples. Depending on the degree that each of these criteria are met, a B+, B, or B- will be awarded.

C grades:

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A C grade piece of work should be quite clearly written, and should contain some structure and organization; it should display an acceptable level of understanding of relevant course material; there should be some attempt at cogent argumentation (not necessarily successful). Depending on the degree that each of these criteria are met, a C+, C, or C- will be awarded.

D grades:

A D grade piece of work should be written intelligibly, and should exhibit some organization; it should display some understanding and not too many misunderstandings of relevant course material; it should contain at least some attempt at

presenting or setting out an argument.

Depending on the degree that each of these criteria are met, a D+, D, or D- will be awarded. As a general rule, a D- mark (as opposed to a F mark) will be given only to work which is written in reasonably intelligible prose, and which indicates at least some understanding of relevant course material.

F grades:

Pieces of work that do not rise to the aforementioned levels will be given a failing mark the value of which depends on the degree to which the work comes close to the above descriptions.

ASSESSMENT

This course will be assessed by a combination of class participation, one essay, one co-presentation, and two exams (mid-term and final).

Exams: The mid-term exam will have three questions from which students will pick one and the final exam will have six questions from which students will pick two.

Presentations: Student presentations (groups of two) will be held in the second half of class during the seminar session and will cover an assigned reading listed below. Students must bring a one-page summary of their presentation to class to hand out to the other students. Presentations should last 10 minutes and should serve as the basis for class discussion, which will follow. Each participating group member must more or less contribute equally to the overall effort. Please note that students may choose to do a presentation on a specific topic such as capital punishment, education, abortion, pornography, etc. These will be scheduled during weeks in which they fit in with the required reading above and must be approved by me in advance.

Essay: Chose **ONE** of the following topics for your 7 page (12 pt font, double spaced) essay, which is due at the beginning of class on Nov. 24 (week 14). Before picking your topic, please read through the general advice on essay writing and the grade descriptions available online. If you have any questions or would like to discuss your paper topic further please do not hesitate to get in touch. Also if you have a different topic in mind, please see me for approval.

1. Should Rawls's principles of justice be accepted?
2. "The negative conception of freedom is inadequate, and therefore so is liberalism." Do you agree?
3. Is the feminist critique of liberalism successful?
4. Is there a real difference between a *political* conception of justice and a *comprehensive* conception of justice?
5. Should there be group rights?

The weighting given to these elements and due dates will be:

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Mid-term exam:	20% (Oct. 6)
Essay (7 pages, double spaced - 12pt font):	20% (Nov. 24)
Presentation:	20%
Final Exam:	30% (Dec. 8)
Class Participation	10%

Required Texts:

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (2nd ed), hereafter CPP.

Robert Goodin and Philip Pettit, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology* (2nd ed), hereafter CPPA.

Please note that there will be quite a lot of reading on D2L and from photocopies provided by me -- it is your responsibility to make sure that you read this material before coming to class.

OUTLINE OF LECTURES AND SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Introduction – What is Political Philosophy?

August 25

Reading: Syllabus and CPP, ch. 1

Week 2 - Labor Day, no class

September 1

Week 3 – Utilitarianism

September 8

Reading: CPP, chapter 2

J. Bentham *An Introduction to the Principles of Moral and Legislation*, ch. 1 (<http://www.la.utexas.edu/research/poltheory/bentham/ipml/ipml.c01.html>).

Seminar – Utilitarian Games

Reading: Neilsen – “A Defense of Utilitarianism”, pp. 237-252 [D2L]

Williams – “Against Utilitarianism”, pp. 252-264 [D2L]

Week 4 - Liberty

September 15

Reading: CPPA, chs. 24 and 25

Seminar – Sex, Drugs, and Guns – liberty for all?

Reading: Wilson, “Against the Legalization of Drugs”, pp. 295-99 (EP)

Bennett, “Drugs should not be Legalized”, pp. 827-32 (ML)

Hughes and Hunt, “The Liberal Basis of the Right to Bear Arms”, pp. 313-24 (EP)

LaFollette, “Gun Control”, pp. 325-37 (EP)

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MacKinnon, "Prostitution and Civil Rights"
(www.prostitutionresearch.com/mackinnon1.html)

Week 5 – Liberalism 1: Liberal Equality and the social contract method
September 22

Reading: CPP, ch. 3
CPPA, chs. 12 and 30
Mulhall and Swift, Introduction [D2L]

Seminar - Justice as Fairness

Reading: Sen, "Equality of What?", pp. 473-83 (CPPA)
Waltzer, "Complex Equality", pp. 484-500 (CPPA)
Minow, "Justice Engendered", pp. 501-521 (CPPA)

Week 6 – Liberalism 2: Libertarianism
September 29

Reading: CPP, ch. 4
CPPA, ch. 13

Seminar - Libertarianism

Reading: Barry, "Chance, Choice and Justice", pp. 229-38 (CPPA)
Van Parijs, "Capitalism, Socialism, and Freedom", pp. 3-29

Week 7 – Mid-term exam
October 6

Week 8 – Fall Break – No Class
October 13

Week 9 – Communitarianism 1: The community vs. the individual
October 20

Reading: CPP, ch. 6
CPPA, ch. 15
Charles Taylor, "Cross Purposes: The Liberal / Communitarian Debate" [R]
Mulhall and Swift, chs. 1 and 3 [D2L]

Seminar – The Community vs. the Individual

Reading: Taylor, "Atomism", pp. 29-50 (*Communitarianism and Individualism*)
MacIntyre, "Justice as a Virtue", pp. 51-64 (*Communitarianism and Individualism*)
Mohr, "Gay Basics", pp. 336-342

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Week 10 – Communitarianism 2: The response from liberals: Political Liberalism

October 27

Reading: CPP, ch. 6

Rawls, *The Idea of Public Reason Revisited*

Mulhall and Swift, ch. 5 [D2L]

Seminar – Political Liberalism

Reading: Rawls, *The Idea of Public Reason Revisited*

Macedo, "Liberal Civic Education and Religious Fundamentalism: The Case of God v. John Rawls", pp. 468-96 (*Ethics*, vol. 105:3)

Wedgwood, "Same Sex Marriage", pp. 96-116

Jordon, "Is it wrong to discriminate on the Basis of Homosexuality", pp. 117-130

Week 11 - Feminism

November 3

Reading: CPP, ch. 9

CPPA, chs. 38 and 39

Seminar: The Feminist critique of liberalism

Reading: Wasserstrom, "Racism, Sexism, and Preferential Treatment: An Approach to the Topics", pp. 549-74 (CPPA)

Phillips, "Democracy and Difference: Some Problems for Feminist Theory", pp. 288-99 (*The Rights of Minority Cultures*)

Longino, "Pornography, Oppression, and Freedom: A closer look", pp. 66-78 (*Morality and Public Policy*)

Feinberg, "The Feminist Case Against Pornography", pp. 79-93 (*Morality and Public Policy*)

Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion", pp. 63-71 (EP)

Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion", pp. 72-82 (EP)

Marquis, "An Argument that Abortion is Wrong", pp. 83-93 (EP)

Week 12 – Citizenship and Democracy

November 10

Reading: CPP, ch. 7

CPPA, chs. 6, 26

Seminar- Who belongs and what do they get?

Reading: Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy", pp. 159-70 (CPPA)

Gutmann and Thompson, "Deliberative Democracy Beyond Process", pp. 31-53 (*Debating Deliberative Democracy*)

Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship, pp. 248-263 (CPPA)

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Week 13 – Multiculturalism

November 17

Reading: CPP, ch. 8
CPPA, ch. 16

Seminar – Group Rights

Reading: Okin, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?", pp. 7-24 (*Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*)

Parekh, "Contemporary Liberal Responses to Diversity", pp. 239-63 (*Debates in Contemporary Political Philosophy*)

Okin, "Mistresses of Their Own Destiny", pp. 575-590 (CPPA)

Week 14 – Paper Due and Movie

November 24

Week 15 – Global Justice and Exam Review

December 1

Reading: CPPA, chs. 43 and 48
Pogge, "Priorities of Global Justice"

Seminar: Cosmopolitanism

Reading: Rawls, "The Law of Peoples", pp. 649-69 (CPPA)

Barry, "Humanity and Justice in Global Perspective (CPPA)

Pojman, "The Case for Cosmopolitan Justice", pp. 418-42 (*Justice: An Anthology*)

Final Exam – Monday, December 8 – 6.00-8.00pm