

PHIL 1433 The Social Contract

Spring 2025

MEETINGS Lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:45-2:45 pm
Recitations on Fridays

TEACHING TEAM

Professor: Jennifer M. Morton
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Section Leaders: Shawn Hernandez
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DESCRIPTION: A survey of thinkers in the Social Contract Tradition, such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, Marx, and Rawls, as well as contemporary critiques.

This course is a required course for PPE majors, and also satisfies the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) sector requirement in the General Education Curriculum.

COURSE GOALS & OBJECTIVES: The first goal of this course is to familiarize yourself with core ideas and thinkers in the social contract tradition. By the end of this course, you will have developed a clearer understanding of these ideas and have developed your perspective on them. The second goal of this course is to introduce you to philosophical methods of thinking and writing that will allow you to approach the topic of this course critically and rigorously. By the end of this course, you will be able to express your ideas about core ideas in the social contract tradition clearly and persuasively. Finally, this course will empower you to critically engage in contemporary political debates. By the end of this course, you will have developed a sense of why these ideas still matter.

READING: Jonathan Wolff's [An Introduction to Political Philosophy](#) (Oxford University Press) is required. Note that no edition of this text is required. I **strongly recommend** getting a hard copy of the text and seeking used copies online, which are much, much cheaper. All other readings will be available on Canvas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Section Assignments & Participation	15%
Lecture Attendance & Quizzes	10%
Oral Exam	15%
In-Class Written Exam	30%
Final Group Project	30%

GRADING POLICY: TBA

PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE: How well (or poorly) this course goes will depend on every person in this class taking ownership for the course. This means that we expect all of you to contribute to the discussion somehow. Talking in class is only one way to participate in the discussion. Others include e-mailing us with questions you would like to see

discussed before class, listening to others respectfully, helping a classmate make a point, continuing the discussion with your fellow students outside of class, and coming to office hours when the class discussion sparks an idea that you want to discuss. Some of the ideas we will discuss in this class might be controversial or challenging for some of your peers. Please be respectful and mindful of that fact and listen closely to each other. We will have a great class if we all embrace epistemic humility and intellectual curiosity. ***We expect you to come to every class unless you are ill or you have a personal/family situation that requires it. Of course, you are an adult, and sometimes other things take priority. However, if you miss more than 3 classes, you endanger your grade in this class. If there is a good reason for you to miss more than 3 classes, you must talk to us and receive accommodation.***

ELECTRONICS: No phone or internet-connect devices in class. You can, if you must, use a Remarkable tablet (or the like). Look, I get it. I am also tethered to my devices and feel the wave of anxiety when I can't check Instagram or Twitter, but this is a space for you to form an intellectual community with your peers IRL. Your devices will await you when you finish class, but this opportunity will not be. Furthermore, when you are using devices and phones in class, you distract the students next to you. If there is an emergency situation and your phone must be on/visible, step outside to use your device so as to not disturb the class. If you have an accommodation to use your device, please talk to us to discuss the best way to do this in class without distracting your peers.

ORAL EXAM: Your first assessment will be a 5-minute oral exam conducted by your section instructor. In this exam, you will demonstrate your understanding of the reading and your ability to communicate your understanding of the reading in conversation. We will provide you with possible questions beforehand.

IN-CLASS EXAM: Your second assessment will be a traditional in-class exam consisting of some multiple-choice questions and an essay based on a "new to you" text provided on the exam day. This exam will allow you to demonstrate your critical understanding of the course material and your burgeoning ability to assess an objection to an argument we have discussed in class. We will provide you with an exam guide beforehand.

FINAL PROJECT: Your final major assessment will be a group project in which you will produce a 5-to-8 minute video in which you demonstrate your understanding of the ideas we have discussed in this course by using material from our class to illuminate a contemporary issue in our society. In order to complete this project, you will conduct research, write a script, and use your creativity to put together a final product that synthesizes the skills you have acquired in this course. As part of this assessment, you will be asked to view and comment on each other's work. We will provide you with a detailed guide to completing the final assignment in due course.

HONOR CODE: All students are expected to follow the guidelines of Penn's Code of Academic Integrity. In particular, students are expected to refrain from "lying, cheating, or stealing" in an academic context (but it's also probably good to avoid doing these things in general). If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please consult <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity>. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Always cite any resource that you use (including generative AI).

BASIC NEEDS SUPPORT: It is important to me that you have the resources you need to be able to focus on learning in this course – this includes both the necessary academic materials as well as taking care of your day-to-day needs. Students experiencing difficulty affording the course materials should reach out to the Penn First Plus office (pennfirstplus@upenn.edu). Students who are struggling to afford sufficient food to eat every day and/or lack a safe and suitable space to live should contact Student Intervention Services (vpul-sisteam@pobox.upenn.edu). Students may also wish to contact their Financial Aid Counselor or Academic Advisor about these concerns. You are welcome to notify me if any of these challenges are affecting your success in this course, as long as you are comfortable doing so – I may have resources to support you.

ACADEMIC & DISABILITY SUPPORT: The Weingarten Center offers a variety of resources to support all Penn students in reaching their academic goals. All services are free and confidential. To contact the Weingarten Center, call 215-573-9235. The office is located in Stouffer Commons at 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300.

MODIFICATIONS TO SYLLABUS: I reserve the right to make changes to the Syllabus, including project due dates and test dates, when unforeseen circumstances occur. These changes will be announced as early as possible so that you can adjust your schedules.

Class Date	Reading that must be completed before class		Skill Developed
THE STATE OF NATURE			
Th	1/16	What is this course about? Introduction to the Social Contract	Careful Reading
T	1/21	Ch. 1 of IPP (pp. 6-17), Hobbes, <u>Leviathan</u> Ch. 13 C*	
Th	1/23	Ch. 1 of IPP (pp. 17-23), Locke, <u>Second Treatise</u> Ch. 2-3 C	
T	1/28	Ch. 1 of IPP (pp. 24-33), Rousseau, <u>Discourse</u> Selections C	
Th	1/30	Tommie Shelby, "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto" C	
T	2/4	Oral Exam Week—No Lecture, instead you will sign up for an Oral Exam slot	
Th	2/6		
JUSTIFYING THE STATE			
T	2/11	Ch. 2 of IPP pp. 34-48, Hobbes <u>Leviathan</u> Ch. 17 C	Critical Engagement
Th	2/13	Locke, <u>Second Treatise</u> Ch. 8-9 C	
T	2/18	Ch. 2 of IPP (pp. 48-61), Mill, <u>Utilitarianism</u> Ch. 2 C	
Th	2/20	Saptarishi Bandopadhyay, "After the Storm" C	
WHO SHOULD RULE?			
T	2/25	Ch. 3 of IPP (pp. 62-74), Plato, <u>The Republic</u> Ch. 6 C	Defending An Argument
Th	2/27	Ch. 3 of IPP (pp. 74-87), Rousseau, <u>The Social Contract</u> Selections C	
T	3/4	Ch. 3 of IPP (pp. 87-103), Madison, Federalist Paper #10 C	
Th	3/6	Alex Guerrero at <u>New Books in Philosophy</u> (Podcast) C	
THE PLACE OF LIBERTY			
T	3/18	Ch. 4 of IPP (pp.104-132), Mill, <u>On Liberty</u> Chapter 2 C	Considering Objections
Th	3/20	Marx, <u>The Communist Manifesto</u> Selections C	
T	3/25	Marx continued C	
Th	3/27	Nozick, <u>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</u> Selections C	
T	4/1	Paul Schofield, "An Inconvenient Truth" (Slate) C	
Th	4/3	Exam II	
THE DISTRIBUTION OF PROPERTY & CRITIQUES OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT			
T	4/8	Ch. 5 of IPP (pp. 133-143) Locke, <u>Second Treatise</u> Ch. 5 C	Putting it All Together
Th	4/10	Ch. 5 of IPP (pp. 143-152), Marx <u>Estranged Labor</u> Selections C	
T	4/15	Ch. 5 of IPP (pp. 152-168) Rawls, "Justice as Fairness" Selections C	
Th	4/17	Serene Khader, "Why are Poor Women Poor?" (NY Times) C	
T	4/22	Ch. 6 of IPP	
Th	4/24	Charles Mills, "Ideal Theory as Ideology" C	
T	4/29	Wrap-Up & Final Projects Due	

***IPP** designates Introduction to Political Philosophy by Wolff; **C** designates reading is on Canvas