

School of Arts & Sciences Prospectus FALL 2024

PHIL 1433-301

The Social Contract

Almost everyone on earth is a citizen of some state. How do we get there? States exert an awful lot of power over citizens. They tax us, they jail us, they regulate us, they send us to war. In exchange, we receive certain benefits: safety, rights protection, welfare and aid, etc. Social contract theory offers one explanation that justifies the relationship between state authority and individual obligation. We reach an agreement with our co-proto-citizens to instill the state with certain powers in exchange for certain benefits.

This course is a survey of the social contract tradition. The first half of the course is the historical perspective. We will be covering Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and David Hume. From there, we'll spend the second half of the course on contemporary social contract theorists, critiques of social contract theory, and several applications of the views.

Class Structure for FALL 2024

Use of Class Time:

- This course will meet twice per week for 90 minutes and will consist of a mixture of lecture and discussions.
- Students will be expected to attend regularly, arrive prepared, and participate actively.

Out-of-class Activities:

- Most days will have 1-2 assigned readings which students will be required to do PRIOR to class.
- Other out-of-class activities may include writing, preparing presentations, and providing feedback on peers on their work.

Tentative Outline of Assignments & Assessments

Attendance and Participation	20%
Weekly Summaries	10%
Midterm Paper	30%
Discussion Leader	10%
Final Paper	30%

Essential Course Policies

- All required readings will be posted on Canvas. Textbooks are a scam.
- No other equipment or special items are required to engage in this class.