# PHI 318K: Introduction to Political Philosophy (14 weeks) -- [41680]

Spring 2025

University of Texas at Austin

Instructor: Ryan C. Born Lecture: RLP 1.104

Office: WAG 421 Times: T-Th 3:30PM-5:00pm

Email: < [USE CANVAS] ryancborn(a)yahoo> OH: By Appointment in WAG 421, Thursdays

1:30PM-3:30PM

Reader: Kenan Chen Office: WAG 414

Email: chenk(a)utexas.edu OH: T: 1:00pm-3:00pm

### Course Description

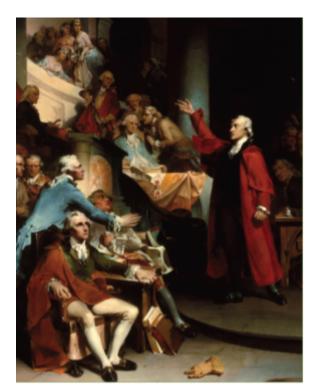
Man is *the* political animal -- our most distinctive characteristic is our development of social institutions and the distribution of power that we call *politics*.

In contemporary America, politics itself can seem omnipresent. Yet much of this discourse is far removed from the principles that we think should underlie good governance and justice.

Beginning with the classic works of ancient political theory, we will trace the development of political philosophy in the context of Western Liberalism, evaluating the development of the Anglo-American political tradition.

Familiarity with these topics is not expected or required, making this an excellent course for all who are interested.

Students can expect to learn how to evaluate theories, how to understand, analyze, and evaluate arguments, and how to present their ideas with clarity and rigor.



Patrick Henry Before the House of Burgesses Peter Frederick Rothermel (1851)

Students will write a few papers and summative assessments, culminating in a roleplay of constitutional design.

This class satisfies the "Ethics" flag in the Philosophy core component requirements and the University Ethics flag. Ethics courses are designed to equip you with skills that are necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments involving ethical issues and the process of applying ethical reasoning to real-life situations.

### **Topics Covered**

- Foundations of political philosophy
- Political Authority, Legitimacy
- Principles of justice
  - Social, political, global
- Constitutional Design, Evaluation
- Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory

### Skills Learned

- Argument Analysis
- Argumentative Writing
- Persuasive Writing
- Evaluation/Critical Thinking
- Philosophical Reading

### **Learning Outcomes**

- Students can evaluate and respond to arguments
- Students can relate key information and arguments about political philosophy
- Students can write tightly constructed, original arguments

### **Prerequisites**

This is an <u>introductory</u> course. There are no formal prerequisites for this course; while, students will find previous experience with philosophy, ethics, and argumentative writing to be especially helpful, these are what we will be practicing.

This is a class for careful and systematic examination of political philosophical issues. Students should be prepared to engage constructively and seriously with these issues by keeping an open mind and respecting the possible challenge to one's beliefs through critical examination. This is a political *philosophy* course, not a politics/government/sociology/anthropology course.

# Required Materials:\*

Readings, instructions, assignments, rubrics, recordings, and other essential information will be on Canvas. Questions about the course should first be directed there. Readings not listed below in "Required Books." will be on Canvas.

### Required Books:

Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts by Steven M. Cahn Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780197609170, 0197609171.

A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition. Belknap. ISBN: 978-0674000780.

### Recommended Books:

### Introduction to Philosophical Writing -- Aloysius "Al" Martinich, 5th Edition

\*These materials for this class are available through the Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA) program, a collaboration between UT Austin, The University Co-op and textbook publishers to significantly reduce the cost of digital course materials for students. You can access your required materials through the "My Textbooks" tab in Canvas. You are automatically opted into the program but can easily opt-out (and back in) via Canvas through the 12th class day. If you remain opted-in at the end of the add/drop period (12th class day fall/spring, 4th class day summer sessions), you will receive a bill through your "What I Owe" page. If you do not pay your bill by the specified deadline, you will lose access to the course materials and your charge will be removed. More information about the LTA program is available at university.coop.com/longhorn-textbook-access.

### Syllabus:

- The Syllabus is the "constitution" of the class and meant to inform you of all expectations
- Any Changes will be Announced on Canvas/Class: make sure your Canvas is set to automatically inform you of announcements.
- All due dates are at midnight on the date listed, unless otherwise noted.
- You are expected to find the readings if they are not provided on Canvas or in the books-- many readings are easily found on Google or with UT

#### **Communications**

- Emails that solicit information found on the syllabus will be ignored by me and your reader
- Always message me via Canvas for best results
- I aim to respond to messages within ~24 business hours
- Your Reader is your primary contact for questions about your assignment grades. To receive comments on your assignments, you must go to office hours with your Reader.
  - o I will not respond to inquiries about grades until you have first met with your Reader.
- You should come to my office hours to discuss anything that is not a grade on an assignment.
- You can come to either of our office hours to <u>discuss</u> drafts of assignments, but I should say that as your Reader grades them, their comments may be more immediately relevant.

## **Readings And Course Schedule**

	Key	
И	Lecture info	Class Topic
е		☐ Readings
e		☐ Specification of Reading
k		☐ Not In Textbook or <i>A Theory of Justice</i>
	Assignments (Due Date)	

## UNIT 1: Political Philosophy: Foundations (Week 1-2)

No other animal does politics; humans alone build complex systems of social relations and power dynamics to achieve personal and collective goals. In our first unit, we look at some of the earliest systematic discussions of the questions that arise from political society, as well as ask how we might justify our own. Along the way, we develop a core philosophical skillset, using references to the U.S Constitution as a framing device.

- ★ Outline the purpose and goal of philosophy and political philosophy.
- ★ Discuss and frame some of the fundamental questions of political philosophy: what is the *thing* under discussion, authority, justice, and the good.

# Assignments

- 1) Attendance
- 2) Syllabus
- 3) Discussion Posts
- 4) Reading Response 1

1	L(1/14/2025)	How Many United States of America Have There Been?  • The Declaration of Independence  • The Articles of Confederation  • United States Constitution  • Constitutional Amendments 1-15  • "What Is to The Slave The Fourth of July?" Douglass
	L (1/16/2025)	On Obsequience to Government  • Common Sense Thomas Paine  • I and II  • "Defense of Socrates" Plato

### Assignments:

Signed Syllabus 1/16 (In Class)

Discussion Post Check In 1/16

2	L (1/21/2025)	The Republic  ● The Republic (selected passages) Plato
	L (1/23/2025)	<ul><li>The Politics</li><li>The Politics Aristotle</li></ul>
l .		

### Assignments:

Discussion Post Check In 1/23

Peer Memo 1 1/27

# UNIT 2: Introduction to the Social Contract Tradition (Week 3-6)

Few philosophical traditions are as venerable as the social contract tradition. Civilizations that produced sophisticated political philosophy inevitably produced works dealing with what we call "the social contract," whether Greco-Roman or Chinese-Legalist. We will be focusing on the more contemporary thinkers.

- ★ How did social contract theory develop from Hobbes to Marx and Mill?
- ★ What are the primary theoretical choice points in the social contract tradition?
- ★ What limitations did each thinker have, and how have they been addressed by later thinkers?

## Assignments

- 1. Discussion Post Check-Ins
- 2. Reading Response 1
- 3. Draft/Review/Submission of Paper 1
- 4. Unit 2 Summative

3	L (1/28/2025)	Leviathan Hobbes
	L (1/30/2025)	The Second Treatise of Government Locke "Agrarian Justice" *Thomas Paine

### Assignments:

Discussion Post Checkin 1/30

4	L (2/4/2025)	A Discourse on the Origins of Inequality Rousseau  Lecture on The African American Political Tradition
	L (2/6/2025)	Of the Social Contract Rousseau

### Assignments:

Discussion Post Check In 2/6

Reading Response 1 2/8

Paper Outline 1 2/10

	5 L (2/11/2025)	Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals Kant
	L (2/13/2025)	"The German Ideology" Marx
ſ	A .	

### Assignments:

Peer Review/Drafts 1 2/15 Argumentative Paper 1 2/17

6	L (2/18/2025)	On Liberty Mill A Letter Concerning Toleration Locke
	L (2/20/2025)	The Subjugation of Women Mill A Vindication of the Rights of Women Wollstonecraft

### Assignments:

Discussion Post Check In 2/20

Unit 2 Summative **2/21-2/23** 

# UNIT 3: A Theory of Justice & Justice In Society (Week 7-10)

The most important work of political philosophy since Plato, Rawls is the culmination of the social contract tradition; at least, for now. This is the hardest unit, so plan now that you'll need to read most of this more than once and it's dense. It's also, I should imagine, the most important and most rewarding.

- ★ Appreciate Rawls's central insights and the careful construction of his theory from what came before.
- ★ Explain the core appeal and explanations for the two principles of justice.
- ★ Discuss how Rawls incorporated the notion of civil disobedience into his theory.

### Assignments

- 1. Discussion Posts
- 2. Reading Response 2, 3, 4
- 3. Summative 2

### (NOTE: YOU SHOULD ALWAYS READ RAWLS IN THE EXACT ORDER I SUGGEST)

7 L (2/25/2025)	Rawls: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6  Principles Concerning Legislation Benthem Optional: Utilitarianism Mill
L(2/27/2025)	Rawls: 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

# Assignments:

Reading Response 2 3/1

8	L (3/4/2025)	Rawls: 19, 20-26, 29
	L (3/6/2025)	Rawls: 48, 51, 52, 69, 76, 77 <i>Anarchy, State, Utopia</i> Nozick (230-321 in the original)

# Assignments:

Discussion Post Check In 3/6

Reading Response 3 3/7

9	L (3/11/2025)	Rawls: 78, 82, 85, 86, 87
	L (3/13/2025)	Rawls: 63, 64, 65, 66, 67  Of the Ruling of Men DuBois

# Assignments:

Reading Response 4 3/14

Peer Memo 2 **3/16** 

# **SPRING BREAK 3/17-3/22**

1 0	L (3/25/2025)	Civil Disobedience (I) "A Letter from a Birmingham Jail" MLK Rawls: 54
	L (3/27/2025)	Civil Disobedience (II) Rawls: 55, 59, 53, 57

# Assignments:

Unit 3 Summative 3/28-3/30

Discussion Post Check In 3/27

# UNIT 4: Social and Global Justice (Week 11-12)

*Political justice* is not the only form of justice that is political. If political justice is defined as dealing with the relationship between the state (or basic structure of society and its institutions) and the individuals within, social justice deals with the relationships *between* those individuals and the groups they may (or may not) comprise. Global justice is therefore the set of questions involving what is just *between* societies.

- ★ Be able to distinguish between political, social, and global justice. Be able to consider how these distinctions are or are not proper.
- ★ Consider how social contract thinkers were or were not able to anticipate the problems that might arise in these other domains.

### Assignments

4. Outline/Review/Submission of Paper 2

1	L (4/1/2025)	Oppression The Politics of Difference Iris Young
	L (4/3/2025)	Egalitarianism "What is the point of equality?" Anderson Optional: Nussbaum

### Assignments:

Discussion Post Check In: 4/3
Argumentative Paper 2 Outline 4/7

1 2	L (4/8/2025)	Joseph Carens "Aliens and Citizens" 1987  The Ethics of Identity Appiah
	L (4/10/2025)	"Kindness to Strangers," Appiah, pages 158-174.  Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Account Brock  Optional: Song

### Assignments:

Discussion Post Check In 4/10

Argumentative Paper 2 Peer Review/Drafts: 4/11

Argumentative Paper 2: 4/13

# UNIT 5: Thoughts on Constitutional Design (Week 13-14)

Throughout the course, we have primarily been dealing with theories without conception of their application. Yet there are significant theoretical questions that arrange themselves in the actual cut-and-thrust of political and social life, questions that are best answered by looking at actual examples of the craft and attempting to do so ourselves.

$\star$	What principles underlie good and just
	constitutional design?

★ What might be, from the point of view of principles, a better or worse constitution?

★ What tradeoffs might be necessary in the construction of a just constitutional order?

Assignments

Reading Response 5

Constitutional Convention Project, Reflection, and Essay

1 3	L (4/15/2025)	Constitutions U.S Constitution (reprise) The Declaration of The Rights of Man And of The Citizen German Basic Law (Grundsatz)
	L (4/17/2025)	Factions "Of Parties in General" David Hume "Of the Original Contract." David Hume 'OF the Origin of Government" David Hume Federalist Papers Hamilton, Jay, Madison,

Assignments:

Discussion Post Check In: 4/17 Reading Response 5: 4/19

1	L (4/22/2025)	Constitutional Convention
4		

	L (4/24/2025)	Constitutional Convention	
Assignments:			
C	Constitutional Convention Project: 4/22, 4/24		
C	Constitutional Convention Reflection: 4/25		
C	Constitutional Essay Due: 4/30		

9

### **Final Grade Policy**

Grade Band 1	Grade Band 2	Grade Band 3	Grade Band 4
100% - 93% = A 92% - 90% = A- 89% - 87% = B+	87% - 83% = B 82% - 80% = B- 79% - 77% = C+	77% - 73% = C 73% - 70% = C- 69% -67% = D+	67% - 64% = D 63% - 60% = D- 59% - 0% = F

### **Mandatory Attendance**

- 1) You have four unexcused absences per semester.
- 2) Being 5+ minutes late to class will count as 1/3rd of an unexcused absence, rounded down.
- 3) Exceeding four unexcused absences is a 3% grade markdown, with an additional 1% per every additional absence up to ten unexcused absences. On the 11th unexcused absence, one fails the class.
- 4) You have however many excused absences:\* -- these absences need to be proven with hard evidence (Doctor's notes, pictures, etc). Evidence provided must be done ahead of time and in a manner that allows it to be verified.
- 5) Students that exceed four absences for any reason will be required to submit substantial makeup work and come to office hours to discuss.
- 6) If at any point in the semester your attendance becomes concerning, please keep in mind I will inform the dean's office to ensure your safety and academic diligence.
- 7) Attendance is marked by completing an end-class reflection and turning it in.

### How You are Graded:

You are graded either by completion or by competence.

- Assignments graded by completion must be done completely in accordance with instructions, turned in on time, and done in good faith. If so, the assignment is guaranteed full points. An assignment turned in 'incomplete' will be considered late until it is 'completed.'
- You must have all assignments completed to receive a final grade.
- Assignments graded by competence are scored in accordance with the instructions on time, turned in on time, and done in good faith while conforming to standard practices and philosophical standards. These standards are elucidated well on Jim Pryor's website. You are expected to be familiar with these standards and take the necessary steps to meet them.
  - o Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper
  - Guidelines on Grades
  - o <u>Jim Pryor: Grading Rubric</u>
- My classes are designed with an emphasis on smaller assignments to allow for more feedback and improvement, as well as to incentivize quality of work over quantity. Each individual assignment is worth relatively little, and so you have the opportunity to be flexible and improve overtime without the stress of "three big assignment" syndrome.

# Assignment Descriptions, Grading Type, and Grade Breakdown

Assignment	Description	Туре	%grade
Attendance	As described in Attendance Policies	Required	0
Syllabus	Students are expected to "turn in" the syllabus after reading it, signing it at the bottom. A student who does not sign the syllabus is not considered a member of the class for the purposes of grading.	Required	0
Discussion Posts (10x)	Each unit will have a guiding overall question(s). Students are expected to contribute to discussion posts on this question. Students are expected to contribute at <i>least</i> twice per unit with thoughtful posts responding to their peers/lectures/etc with no fewer than 200 words. Students should produce at least one post per half of each unit: however, this is merely sufficient for a B. More contributions are welcome and preferred once per week is required for full marks.	Completion	15
Reading Responses (5x)	Substantial reflections on a key reading from the unit. Students receive a completion grade on the assignment and must peer review one peer. I will then release an "answer key," so to speak. These are <i>self-checks</i> for your actual competence grades.	Completion	5
Paper Outlines (2x)	Before papers are produced, students are expected to turn in an outline. An outline template will be provided for this purpose. This is, again, completion, but you should consider it an essential step: structure is 90% of the battle in philosophy.	Completion	5
Peer Memos (2x)	Peer graded practice papers of 300 words. These are extremely simple argumentative pieces where one states a position, defends it, and discusses a possible response.	Completion	5
Peer Review/Drafts (2x)	After every paper outline, students will write a complete draft that is reviewed by peers for completeness and quality. Students are expected to submit a new draft based on this feedback for their final paper. Students are required to <i>both</i> have a complete draft <i>and</i> submit their peer evaluation for their completion grade it's both or nothing.	Completion	5
Argumentative Papers (2x)	Argumentative papers based on sound and balanced reasoning where you take a position and use the materials provided in the class to defend your position. Generally, papers will ask you to evaluate an argument through a counter argument.	Competence	20
Unit Summative (2x)	A series of questions on each reading for the respective unit (2, 3). Summatives focus on big picture ideas and applications of those ideas. These are open-note/open-book and untimed, but demanding and need to be taken very seriously.	Competence	15
Constitutional Convention	Each student will work with a group of their peers to write a constitution. Each group will prepare a poster presentation for their constitution. Ultimately, the constitutional convention your own individual performance, your group's performance, and your essay will be weighted together. This is the final exam/paper of the class.	Competence	~15
Constitutional Essay	Each student will then produce an analysis/justification of their group's constitution.	Competence	~15

### PowerPoints & Taking Notes

- If I produce PowerPoints, I will provide them. That said, please note that my PowerPoints are always designed first as presentation and teaching tools, and thus will generally serve as (really) poor replacements for notes. For an example, see <a href="here">here</a>.
- The best notes you can take are active notes: that is, summarizing (not attempting to copy) what I say, adding your own commentary, and including visual representations of relationships. For more advice, see <a href="here">here</a>.

## Extensions, Lateness, Making Up Work

- Unless otherwise noted, *all* assignments must be **uploaded to Canvas** by midnight on the day assigned. For a formal definition, midnight on the day assigned is the instant where it goes from 11:59pm on the day assigned to 12:00am on the day after.
- Late assignments will not be accepted.
- There are no case-by-case extensions in the class, unless as follows:
  - For students with accommodations, I am happy to work out an equitable solution in-line with your accommodations
  - For students who require additional time for reasons outside of their control and thus must "make up work" (for example, a serious illness or family emergency), do not worry. We will work on this on a case by case basis. In general, any such makeup would be due one-week after your return.
  - It is *never* permissible to give an excuse for lateness *after* the assignment is late. Do not put things off to the last minute!

## **Technology Policies**

- Phones and laptops are prohibited during lectures. Phones should be off and away.
  - Using electronics during class without permission will result in:
    - A written warning after class;
    - A mark of "absent."
- Writing tablets and other "paper likes" are allowed.
- Lectures are <u>not to be recorded</u> except with prior accommodations. Recordings made for purposes of accommodations are not to be kept beyond the semester nor shared.
  - Please let me know if you have accommodations that require technology.

### **Blind Grading Policy**

All efforts must be made to submit things blind: names should not be either on the paper OR
the filename.

• Nothing can be graded until it is submitted consistent with blind grading practices.

### **Formatting Policy**

- All assignments should be submitted in 12pt Times New Roman, single-spaced, with standard 1" margins.
- The penalty for improper formatting is 20% of the grade.

## Word Count Policy (For Assignments with Word Counts)

- Competence Assignments submitted with a word count in excess of the assignment's stated limit will be read to the word count and assessed a penalty of 5%.
  - Yes, one word over is too many words over.
- Completion Assignments are considered incomplete if they are substantially below the word count or above the word count.
  - Your TA has discretion

### Office Hours/Communication

- My Office Hours are by appointment. Office Hours take place in my office, WAG 421. You are free to come at any time even without an appointment, though be aware I may not be immediately available.
- For all questions, Canvas messages are preferred. You can generally expect a response within around a full business day.
- You are expected to maintain an awareness of all announcements on Canvas.
- Philosophy is a challenging discipline, so please feel comfortable coming to my office hours for anything more substantial than a quick message. I am always happy to help, and these are often the most productive learning experiences for both of us. This is meant to be a genuine introduction.
- Please keep in mind that I will not respond to questions already addressed in the syllabus or any
  Canvas announcements, and that students are expected to avail themselves of the resources I
  and the University provide.

### Disability and Accessibility

- Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure
  you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a
  disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact
  Disability and Access (D&A).
- You may refer to D&A's website for contact and more information:
   http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations.

## **Academic Honesty**

- For assignments for which outside help is permissible, all outside help must be acknowledged.
  - Unless explicitly noted, outside help is *not* permissible.
- In particular, if ChatGPT or similar algorithms are used with permission from me, please include a separate page explaining what you did: what questions you asked it, which of its sentences you included in your essay, where and how you corrected its mistakes, and overall, how much of the work you consider to be original to you. Unacknowledged work by GPT or other sources, or impermissible uses, will be treated as violations and receive a 0.
- Use of Generative AI or other cheating will give a 0 for the assignment and limit your maximum grade in the course to a C-, unless circumstances dictate a stronger punishment is required.
  - Unless explicitly noted, using generative AI is not allowed for any reason.
- For more information on the university's official policy on academic honesty use the following link:
  - <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint\_student.php>
- Suspicion of using Chat GPT or other generative tools, or outside help or services, without permission, will void an assignment and require a resubmission. Suspicion of using Chat GPT is by instructor discretion and use of such tools that are developed for this purpose.
- All assignments will be scanned with Turnitin.

### **Regular Honesty**

As absurd as this section is to write, *lying to me or your TA* about class-related activities, such as projects, academic integrity, or excuses is also impermissible and grounds for failing the class.

# **Title IX Reporting**

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

- 1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
- 2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.

3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university's relevant policies (https://titleix.utexas.edu/relevant-polices/).

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be reported. We are Responsible Employees and must report any Title IX related incidents that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419.

	e fully read and understood the syllabus above.
Student Signature	ent Signature
Date:	: