

PHIL 3226: Social and Political Philosophy, Fall 2009
TR 11:00-12:15, Denny 216
Dr. Gordon Hull

Course Objectives and Description: The relationship between power and right is central to modern political philosophy. It is a common aspiration that in this relationship, the tendency of power to devolve into violence should be minimized, while its realization in democracy should be maximized. Thus, for example, if justice consists in correctly limiting power by principles of right, then what does justice require, and what is the source of its authority? Or, does the attempt at justice merely legitimate existing, possibly violent, power relations? Does power reside primarily in the state and its legal forms, or is it best understood as residing elsewhere? If elsewhere, then where? How can we speak meaningfully of justice or democracy if the state is not a central element of our analysis? This course will track these questions through some representative texts in modern and contemporary political philosophy.

We will begin by reading from Hobbes's *Leviathan*, which established the terms for much of what has happened since in Western political philosophy. We will then look at the most significant Anglo-American political theory of the twentieth century, John Rawls' attempt to think politics in terms of justice. We will then look at several efforts to rethink some of the basic terms of the Hobbesian and Rawlsian solutions: Martha Nussbaum's focus on human capabilities rather than formal principles of justice; Foucault's reconsideration of the relations between the state and power; Giorgio Agamben's reflections on sovereignty and political life; Judith Butler's effort to integrate Foucault and Agamben into a critique of the violence of state power; and Gloria Anzaldúa's effort to rethink the terms of democratic political action.

This course is designed to increase both your familiarity and facility with political philosophy, and to that end we will remain as discussion-oriented as possible. Your informal participation in class discussion is expected, and you will get a chance to develop your argumentative skills in a more formal debate context, as well as develop your writing skills.

Readings:

Books:

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998. ISBN 0804732183

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004. ISBN 1844675440

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994. ISBN 0872201775

Articles: (on blackboard)

Anzaldúa, Gloria. "La conciencia de la mestiza / Towards a New Consciousness," in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987, 99-113.

Foucault, Michel. "American Neo-Liberalism," in *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell and ed. Michel Senellart. New York: Palgrave and MacMillan, 2008.

Foucault, Michel. "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller. Chicago: U. Chicago Press, 1991, 87-104

Foucault, Michel. "Panopticism," in *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1977, 195-230.

Nussbaum, Martha. from *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: CUP, 2000.

Rawls, John. from *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1974) [this includes parts of several of the important sections from Rawls' book]

Requirements/Assignments:

Reflective Responses: 20% (total)

Short Paper: 25%

Long Paper: 35%

Debate: participation: 15%

Debate: judging: 5%

Reflective Responses: Several times during the semester, you will receive a quote, proposition, or other prompt having to do with the upcoming class's reading. You should turn in a 1-2 page (double-spaced is fine) reflection on that material, using the reading. I'll often try to give you short paragraphs or quotes from other philosophers responding to the assigned readings. For example, the prompt might be something like "Rawls says that you can never trade fundamental liberties for higher utility. Does that seem correct?" And you would respond accordingly. These are not exercises in formal writing, but you shouldn't just turn in a stream of consciousness – try to develop a coherent thought, and marshal appropriate evidence to support it. These assignments are due at the start of class, and must be typed/printed (no handwriting!). I will often start class by asking people to discuss their response.

Short Paper: This is a 4-6 page paper on an assigned topic (TBA). You will be graded on the quality of your argument and your development of it. You should have a clear thesis statement: "In this paper I will argue that..." If you can't finish that sentence with a straight face, you don't have a thesis.

Long Paper: This is a 6-8 page paper due on the last day of class. Topics will be assigned (there will be several to pick from); you will need to specifically reference/cite and discuss at least *two* of the readings from the semester. By "specifically reference/cite," I mean quote in a way that indicates you have assimilated the material. For the sake of your grade, you should have a clear

thesis and an “In this paper I will argue that x” sentence, somewhere in the first paragraph. I’ll have more details for you closer to the due date.

Debate: We will have several in-class, semi-formal debates over the semester; everybody will get to debate once. In each of these, two teams of two students each will debate a proposition of political philosophy (for example: “Human nature requires strong government”). One team’s job will be to affirm the proposition; the other’s is to negate it. There will be constructive arguments, rebuttals, and cross-examination on both sides. Members of the class will then judge which side “won” (in the sense that their presentation was more compelling – don’t vote for which side you personally think is right!); everybody will vote and indicate what they thought tipped the debate in favor of one side or the other. I will have a separate handout doing into much more detail on this. I will assign people more or less randomly to debate topics and partners; you do not need to advocate the side you personally agree with (in fact, it’s sometimes better if you don’t – if it’s good to read your enemies, it’s even better to try to advocate their position). Your grade derives from how well you debate, not whether you win.

Attendance/Participation: You can't learn very much in philosophy by just sitting there. You learn even less if you're not there at all. However, I am not going to be monitoring your attendance. Historically, in my classes there has been a strong correlation between attendance and class grade. This probably means that if you're the sort of student who cares enough to come to class, you're also likely to be the sort of student who will work enough to do well in the course. So I view the question of attendance as self-correcting. If you don't show up to class, you can't ask questions about material that you don't yet understand. I am under no obligation to repeat course materials that you missed.

Contact Information/Getting Assistance: It is important that you not fall behind. I want to help you avoid doing so. To get help from me:

1. Speak to me before or after class; we can set an appointment to meet at a later time if need be.
2. Email me at ghull@uncc.edu. This is probably the best way to get in touch outside of class.
3. Call my office: 7-2182 and leave a voicemail. This is less effective than email because I’m bad about checking my messages.
4. My **office hours** are: TR 1:00-2:00, Winningham 105C, or by appointment.

Disabilities: I share UNCC’s commitment to provide reasonable accommodations to enable students with disabilities to access course material. Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. You’ll also need to contact disability services, 704-687-4355 (230 Fretwell).

Academic Integrity: University academic integrity guidelines can be found at: <http://www.legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-105.html#VI>. You are required to follow them, and I will follow university procedure in dealing with academic integrity violations.

Tentative Schedule (not a contract!)

1	Aug 25	T	First class
		R	Hobbes (1)L 4.1-5 (on speech); L 5.1-5 (on reason);
2	Sept 1	T	Hobbes (2): L 13 (natural condition of mankind), 14 (laws of nature, contract)
		R	Hobbes (3): L 16 (persons), L 17 (Causes, generation, and definition of commonwealth)
3	Sept 8	T	Hobbes (4): L 18 (Rights of sovereign by institution), L 20 (Dominion Paternall and Despoticall), L 21 (Liberty of Subjects)
		R	Debate 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prop 1: Human nature is such that strong government is necessary. • Prop 2: The obligation to keep promises is merely political, not ethical.
4	Sept 15	T	Rawls (1): “The Subject of Justice,” “The Main Idea...,” “The Veil of Ignorance,” “The Rationality of the Parties”
		R	Rawls (2): “Two Principles of Justice,” “Interpretations of the Second Principle,” “Democratic Equality and the Difference Principle”
5	Sept 22	T	Rawls (3): “The Reasoning Leading to the Two Principles”
		R	Rawls (4): “Equal Liberty of Conscience,” “Toleration and the Common Interest,” and “Toleration of the Intolerant”
6	Sept 29	T	Nussbaum (1): Introduction, 1-24 (you may skip section III, pp. 11-15); and “Challenges to Cross-Cultural Norms,” “Three Arguments,” 34-59
		R	Nussbaum (2): “Defects of Standard Economic Approaches,” and “Central Human Capabilities,” “Functioning and Capability,” 59-96
7	Oct 6	T	Debate 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prop 1: Capabilities is a better measure of human development than rights • Prop 2: No amount of utility justifies abandoning the sorts of basic rights Rawls identifies.
		R	Paper 1 due. Catch up; finish discussing debate
8	Oct 13	T	Fall break
		R	Foucault (1), “Panopticism”
9	Oct 20	T	Foucault (2), “Governmentality”
		R	Foucault (3), “American Neo-Liberalism I (14 March 1979)”
10	Oct 27	T	Foucault (4) “American Neo-Liberalism II (21 March 1979)”
		R	Agamben (1): Introduction, I.1, I.2
11	Nov 3	T	Agamben (2): I.4, II.1, II.3, II.6
		R	Agamben (3) III.1, III.3, III.5-6
12	Nov 10	T	Agamben (4): III.7-8 (“camp,” “threshold”)
		R	Debate 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prop. 1: It is appropriate to analyze traditional political phenomena, like crime, in primarily economic terms • Prop 2: Auschwitz was a nearly inevitable result of modern

			political philosophy
13	Nov 17	T	Butler (1) (“Violence, Mourning, Politics”)
		R	Butler (2) (finish “Violence...,” begin “Indefinite Detention”)
14	Nov 24	T	Butler (3) (“Indefinite Detention”)
		R	Thanksgiving
15	Dec 1	T	Anzaldúa (1)
		R	Anzaldúa (2)
16	Dec 8	T	Last class, papers due.
	Dec 15	T	(final exam period) Debate 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prop 1: Government is justified in detaining terrorist suspects indefinitely, without trial • Prop 2: It is better to think of identity and subjectivity as fluid and changing, rather than in terms of human nature