POLI 300: Social and Political Philosophy (Fall 2022)

Location: Calcott Social Science Center 011
Hours: MWF @ 9:40–10:30am

Instructor: Prof. Samuel Bagg (samuel.bagg@sc.edu)
Office Hours (Gambrell 312): W 11:00am-1:00pm

Course Attributes: GLD: PCE Leadership
Prerequisites: None

TA: Anthony Hobert (HOBERTJR@email.sc.edu)
Office Hours (Gambrell 353): MWF 10:30-11:30am

Objectives

This course introduces students to major themes of social and political philosophy through an in-depth examination of two core political concepts: freedom and power. For one, nearly all modern ideologies—including liberalism, conservativism, republicanism, socialism, and anarchism—claim to advance some form of freedom. The differences among them, meanwhile, can often be traced to their varying conceptions of power: i.e., what forms it takes, how it relates to freedom, and how it ought to be distributed.

In the first part of the course, we will spend several weeks discussing a range of competing conceptions of freedom and power. In the second part of the course, we will turn to examine the implications of these diverse views for the empirical study of politics, as well as theories of justice and obligation.

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- critically assess arguments in social and political philosophy, as well as their implications for policy
- compare and evaluate different accounts of power, freedom, and the relationship between them
- illustrate the consequences of these accounts for the study of politics and public policy
- draw out the implications of these accounts for normative questions of justice and obligation

Requirements

Your grade in the course will be determined by the following combination of factors.

- 15%: Attendance and Participation (baseline .5-pt per class session +/- exceptional contributions)
- 20%: Critical Responses (baseline 1-pt per complete response + five responses graded on 3-pt scale)
- 30%: Midterm Exams
- 15%: Article Report
- 20%: Final Project (Book Report OR Policy Brief)

Grading: I understand graded assignments as tools for helping you achieve your own learning goals. My assumption is that most of you want to develop the skills and learn the material we will cover in this course. If you fail to complete the reading, come to class, or finish an assignment on time, this does not indicate to me that you have no interest in doing so; only that you have other demands on your time. Grades thus give you an extra external incentive to do things that you ideally want to be doing anyway—such as completing the reading, attending class, developing analytical writing skills, and solidifying your understanding of the course material.

Materials: all readings will be made available through Blackboard, so you do not need to purchase any separate texts. However, you must have reliable computer and internet access, and must check your email regularly to keep up with deadlines and other details that may change as the semester moves along. Make sure you have access to the course on Blackboard and let me know as soon as possible if you do not. For help with technology or software, please contact the Division of Information Technology (DoIT) here.

Attendance (15%)

Attending lecture and taking part in class discussions are important parts of the learning process, and both will therefore count toward your grade. The TA will take attendance, and each time you are marked present will count as ½ point towards your final grade, up to a maximum of 15 points for the attendance part of your grade.

So: if you are present (and on time) for at least 30 of the 38 class sessions when attendance will be taken, you will receive a perfect baseline attendance score of 15 out of 15. If you are marked present for 25 sessions, your baseline score will be 12.5 out of 15 (equivalent to an 83% or B/B- for the attendance portion of your grade), and if you are marked present for 20 sessions, your baseline score will be 10 out of 15 (equivalent to a 66% or F). This means you can miss up to 8 class sessions with no penalty. Since this policy is already generous, exceptions to it will be made only where required by the University and supported by official documentation. In particular, COVID-19 related absences must be documented through the Student Ombuds.

Beyond this baseline, you can also gain or lose additional points based on your participation in class discussions. In most cases, this is an opportunity to gain points through exceptional contributions, as determined by Prof. Bagg and the TA. (Note that quality, not quantity, is the crucial thing here!). In rare cases (hopefully never), students may lose points if they fail to participate in good faith, or participate in actively unhelpful ways.

Critical Responses (20%)

We will spend at least two days on each reading we cover in the course. On the first day, Prof. Bagg will give a lecture on the text, including background on its author as well as a brief explanation of its core arguments. On the second day, we will turn to a critical discussion of the text, considering a range of possible objections and limitations, as well as responses the author might give. This discussion will be shaped, in part, by questions and concerns you develop in short responses posted to the course Blackboard by 6am on the morning of class. Thus, in preparation for the lecture days, your assignment is just to read the text. For the lecture / discussion days, your assignment is to write and post a response.

These responses will be evaluated for both quantity and quality. To assess the former, Prof. Bagg and the TA will briefly scan each response to ensure it was posted on time and meets basic standards (>250 words, addresses the text in question, not plagiarized, etc…), and you will receive 1 point towards your final grade for each response you post that meets these standards. Thus, if you post a minimally satisfactory response for every text we read, the "quantity" component of your grade for Critical Responses will be 15 (the maximum). If you skip three responses, this quantity component will be 12; if you skip eight, your quantity score will be 7.

In addition, we will randomly select one response per student, per unit, to read more thoroughly and evaluate for quality on a 3-point scale. (We will also try to offer brief comments, though we cannot promise this given the number of students in the course). Responses that meet but do not exceed the minimum requirements—demonstrating familiarity with the text without demonstrating significant creativity and/or independent critical thought—will receive 1 point. Meanwhile, responses that demonstrate at least one of these virtues will receive 2 points, and exceptional responses demonstrating a high degree of both virtues will receive 3 points.

Note that there are several ways to earn full credit (i.e., 20 out of a maximum 20 possible points) for the Critical Responses component of your final grade. If you turn in 15 responses, all of which meet the minimum standard, you will receive full credit even if none of the responses we grade earns more than 1 point on the 3-point scale (i.e., baseline of 15 + 5*1= 20). If you only turn in 10 responses, meanwhile, you can still receive full credit if each of the responses we randomly choose to grade receives 2 points on the 3-point scale, demonstrating significant creativity or independent critical thought (i.e., baseline of 10 + 5*2 = 20). Finally, you can even receive full credit if you if you only turn in 5 responses (one in each unit), but each of them receives 3 points, demonstrating exceptional creativity and independent critical thought (i.e., baseline of 5 + 5*3 = 20).

As a result, this 3-point scale does not indicate a broader value judgment. 1 is a perfectly adequate score for those who plan to post responses for every text, and we expect it to be the most common score. A score of 2, meanwhile, indicates an impressive response that raises interesting and original concerns, and receiving a 2 should be considered a success. We expect that very few responses will receive the maximum grade of 3, indicating truly exceptional work that greatly exceeds our expectations for a short reading response.

Midterm Exams (30%)

You will take two short in-class midterm exams. The first, on **September 23,** will consist of two short essays covering Units 1 and 2. The second, on **November 30**, will consist of two short essays covering Units 3, 4, & 5.

In both cases, you will have 50 minutes to answer two questions (choosing two from several possibilities), which will ask you to demonstrate your proficiency in the first two course objectives listed above. An example, for instance, might be: "How does Pettit's theory of freedom differ from Berlin's? Illustrate your answer by explaining how the two theories might yield different conclusions on at least one practical question of policy."

Together, the two midterms count for 30% of your final course grade. By default, they will have equal weight, counting for 15% each. If you show significant improvement on the second midterm as compared to the first, however, I will grant the second more weight, counting the first as 10% and the second as 20% of your grade.

Article Report (15%)

Your first longer written assignment will be an article report, summarizing and evaluating a secondary source that discusses one of the primary course texts. At some point in the first few weeks, I will distribute a list of several scholarly articles that engage critically with each of the primary texts we consider in the first two units of the course. You will then choose one of these articles to read, explain to peers, and write about.

In class on Friday, September 16, there will be no lecture. Instead, you will meet with a (randomly assigned) partner, and each of you will use the class time to explain the argument of the article you have chosen to read to your partner. Each of you will then write a 200-300-word summary of your partner's article, as well as an 800-1200-word report on your own article. In the latter, you will summarize the argument of the article you have chosen, and briefly evaluate its persuasiveness, vis-à-vis the primary course text it discusses. The article report (including both components) will be **due at 5pm the following Monday, September 19**. A rubric for grading the article reports will be made available on Blackboard along with the list of articles.

Final Project (20%)

For your Final Project in the course, you have two options: a Book Report or a Policy Evaluation.

If you opt to write a Book Report, you will choose one book from a list of options I will provide on Blackboard, and write a 1500-2000-word report discussing the main arguments of the book, as well as how these arguments reflect various assumptions (implicit or explicit) about the nature of power and freedom.

If you opt to write a Policy Evaluation, you will do independent research on a policy of your choosing, using library resources, and write a 1500-2000-word report on the benefits and costs of that policy. This evaluation will refer to empirical research on the policy (or relevant comparison cases), as well as texts and concepts from the course. It is **due at 5pm on December 7,** the day scheduled for the Final Exam (there is none in this course).

As with other assignments, late submissions will be accepted with a 1/3-letter-grade penalty for each 24 hours.

Course Policies

1. Academic Integrity: You are responsible for knowing what constitutes academic dishonesty and for avoiding all forms of it. Violations of the university's academic integrity policy will result in a failing grade for the relevant assignment and referral to the Office of Academic Integrity.

2. Disabilities: Students with disabilities should contact me during the first week of class to ensure that appropriate accommodations are provided. See also the Office of Student Disability Services.

3. Electronics: Use of cell phones and laptops is prohibited during class, unless you have discussed it with me and received special permission. Tablets without keyboards may be used to display the readings but should not be used for note-taking. This is for your benefit! Empirical studies demonstrate that taking notes by hand improves retention.[1] Moreover, a wealth of human experience reveals that we are weak beings forever subject to temptation, and must be restrained in order to achieve our own best interests.[2] However, there are exceptions, and if you feel that you are among them, please contact me.

Course Schedule

Aug 19 (F):   Introduction

Unit 1—Concepts of Freedom

Aug 22 (M):   Liberal Freedom I (lecture) – read Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Freedom"
Aug 24 (W):   Liberal Freedom II (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Berlin
Aug 26 (F):   Republican Freedom I (lecture) – read Philip Pettit, *Republicanism* (ch 1-2)
Aug 29 (M):   Republican Freedom II (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Pettit
Aug 31 (W):   Feminist Freedom I (lecture) – read Nancy Hirschman, *Subject of Liberty* (ch 1)
Sep 2 (F):   Feminist Freedom II (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Hirschman

Unit 2—Concepts of Power

Sep 5 (M):   *NO CLASS – Labor Day Holiday observed*

Sep 7 (W):   Three Faces of Power I (lecture) – read Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (ch 1)
Sep 9 (F):   Three Faces of Power II (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Lukes
Sep 12 (M):   Poststructuralist Power I (lecture) – read Michel Foucault (selections, see Blackboard)
Sep 14 (W):   Poststructuralist Power II (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Foucault
Sep 16 (F):   Article report peer exchange: use class time to discuss articles
Sep 19 (M):   Units 1-2 review (lecture / discussion)—finish Article Report—*DUE @ 5pm*
Sep 21 (W):   Units 1-2 review (lecture / discussion)—write critical response on freedom / power

Sep 23 (F):   *MIDTERM 1* on *Concepts of Freedom and Concepts of Power (Units 1 and 2)*

Unit 3—Studying Freedom and Power

Sep 26 (M):   Class I (lecture) – read John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness* (preface + ch 2-3)
Sep 28 (W):   Class II (lecture) – read John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness* (ch 7 + 10)

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[1] Mueller, Pam A. and Daniel M. Oppenheimer (2014), "The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking," Psychological Science. 25 (6): 1159-1168.
[2] See, e.g., Homer, (~750 BCE), *The Odyssey*.

Sep 30 (F):	*CLASS CANCELLED due to Hurricane Ian*
Oct 3 (M):	Class III (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Gaventa
Oct 5 (W):	Race I (lecture) – read Clarissa Hayward, *How Americans Make Race* (intro + ch2)
Oct 7 (F):	Race II (lecture) – read Clarissa Hayward, *How Americans Make Race* (ch5)
Oct 10 (M):	Race III (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Hayward
Oct 12 (W):	Intersections I (lecture) – read Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (ch1)
Oct 14 (F):	*NO CLASS – Fall Break*
Oct 17 (M):	Intersections II (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Collins

Unit 4—Freedom, Power, Justice

Oct 19 (W):	Liberal Justice I (lecture) – read John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (sections § 1-6)
Oct 21 (F):	Liberal Justice II (lecture) – read John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (sections § 11, 24)
Oct 24 (M):	Liberal Justice III (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Rawls
Oct 26 (W):	Libertarian Justice I (lecture) – read Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (p. 149-64, 213-31)
Oct 28 (F):	Libertarian Justice II (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Nozick
Oct 31 (M):	Radical Justice I (lecture) – read Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (ch 1)
Nov 2 (W):	Radical Justice II (lecture) – read Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (ch 7)
Nov 4 (F):	Radical Justice III (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Young

Unit 5—Responding to Injustice

Nov 7 (M):	Disobedience I (lecture) – read Plato, *Crito* (including 2-page editor's introduction)
Nov 9 (W):	Disobedience II (lecture) – read Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
Nov 11 (F):	Disobedience III (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Plato / King
Nov 14 (M):	Deviance I – read Tommie Shelby, "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto"
Nov 16 (W):	Deviance II (lecture / discussion) – write critical response on Shelby
Nov 18 (F):	Violence I – read Nelson Mandela, "I am Prepared to Die"
Nov 21 (M):	Violence II – write critical response on Mandela
Nov 23 (W):	*NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday*
Nov 25 (F):	*NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday*
Nov 28 (M):	Units 3, 4, and 5 review – study for Midterm 2
Nov 30 (W):	*MIDTERM 2* on *Units 3, 4, 5*
Dec 2 (F):	Final Project peer exchange / question period LAST DATE to get approval for your final project topic (or extension request) (otherwise it defaults to writing a book report on a book from approved list)
Dec 7 (W):	*FINAL PROJECT DUE* @ 5pm