

PHIL 170: Social Ethics and Political Thought

Spring 2015 MWF 12:20-1:10pm Caldwell 103

Instructor

Dr. David Faraci

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Office Hours: MW 2:30-3:30pm (and feel free to drop in if the door is open!)

General Remarks

As members of a society, what obligations do we have to each other and to our government? What obligations does our government have to us? How far does the government's power extend? Do we have a moral obligation to obey the law, or merely a legal one? These are just a few of the questions addressed by political philosophers. But many of these questions have also been addressed, in a different way, by fiction writers. In particular, science fiction authors frequently imagine future or alien societies in order to explore what the world might look like if these questions are answered in particular ways. In this class, we will be reading works in both philosophy and fiction in an effort to better understand our place in society, and society's place in the world.

This course is designed so as to promote class discussion. While I will lecture, my intention is for us to discuss—as a group—the arguments presented in the readings, and for you to offer arguments of your own. Some of the best discussion in philosophy is generated by people defending controversial views—even ones that they do not personally hold. So, not only should you feel comfortable defending viewpoints that may not be popular, but I encourage all of you to consider how you might defend viewpoints that are not your own. Along these lines, you should always be mindful of the fact that the positions your classmates take do not necessarily represent what they actually believe.

Course Materials

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (2nd edition)

Further readings provided online.

Assessment

Reading Responses (2 x 10%)

During the semester, you will write **two (2)** short response papers. In these papers, you will discuss how one of the stories we read (or another story, if you get it approved first) supports, undermines, or otherwise connects with relevant philosophical material. Each response should be about **two**

(2) typed, double-spaced pages, or about 500 words. They are to be submitted, **via email**, by the **start of class on the day for which the story is assigned.**

Quizzes (4 x 10%)

There will be short, multiple choice quizzes at the close of every other unit.

Final Paper OR Short Story (40%)

At the end of the semester, you will submit either a final paper or a short story. Details to follow later in the semester. The paper or story will be **six (6) typed, double-spaced pages, or about 1,500 words.**

Schedule of Readings

Week 1: Introduction

LeGuin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"

Week 2-3: Utilitarianism

Kymlicka, Chapters 1-2

Sturgeon, "If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your Sister?"

Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron"

Weeks 4-5: Liberal Equality

Kymlicka, Chapter 3

Butler, "Speech Sounds"

Kirtley, "Veil of Ignorance"

Weeks 5-6: Libertarianism

Kymlicka, Chapter 4

Anderson, "The Last of the Deliverers"

O'Donnell, "LPD: Libertarian Police Department"

Friedersdorf, "NLPD: Non-Libertarian Police Department"

Weeks 7-8: Marxism

Kymlicka, Chapter 5

Kollontai, "Soon (In 48 Years' Time)"

Parker, "The Standard of Living"

Keeler, "John Jones' Dollar"

Weeks 8-10: Communitarianism (incl. Spring Break)

Kymlicka, Chapter 6

The Twilight Zone, "Eye of the Beholder"

Weeks 11-13: Citizenship Theory and Multiculturalism

Kymlicka, Chapter 7-8

Resnick, "Kirinyaga"

Weeks 14-15: Feminism

Kymlicka, Chapter 9

Hosseini, "Sultana's Dream"

Weeks 15-16

LeGuin, *The Dispossessed*

Special Circumstances

If you need adaptations or accommodations because of a disability (learning disability, attention deficit disorder, psychological, physical, etc.), if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

Honor Code

It is my sincere hope that this section of the syllabus is merely a formality. Do not plagiarize or otherwise make use of unauthorized aid. In all but the most extremely exceptional cases, students found presenting others' work as their own will fail this course. For specifics on the UNC Honor Code, please see

http://studentconduct.unc.edu/sites/studentconduct.unc.edu/files/2012_2013_Instrument.pdf.