

Phil-008 / PPE-008  
**The Social Contract**  
Fall 2010

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Office hours: Wednesday, 4-5pm, Cohen Hall 401, or by appointment.

I'll be happy to meet or email about *any* questions or issues you would like to talk about. Just let me know. (- I generally do not, on the other hand, answer questions about papers or the exam received late the night before it is due or takes place.)

***About this class***

This class is intended to introduce you to one of the main traditions in Western political thought, the tradition of social contract theory, and some of its critics. The family of social contract theories has many and quite diverse members. In its modern form it started with Grotius (a libertarian), moved via Hobbes (a rational egoist), to Locke (a classical liberal), and Rousseau (a liberal democrat). We will study all of these, though with a focus on Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. Critics of the tradition are as numerous as its members. In this class we will focus on only two sorts of criticism, namely, those raised by utilitarians and Marxists.

Why should we care about this tradition, these thinkers, and their critics?

We should care, because what we think today is shaped by the ideas and arguments of these great thinkers. We live in a liberal democracy and are all liberal democrats of one stripe or another: our society is founded on the idea that political force should be exercised on behalf of the people within constitutionally defined limits that protect individual freedom from undue interference. But we disagree about the philosophical foundations of this consensus. And because we disagree about the philosophical foundations, we also disagree about how exactly our society should be governed. The sources of our consensus as well as the sources of our disagreements lie with the ideas and arguments offered by the thinkers we meet in this class.

It is, accordingly, my sincere hope, that this class will reward your efforts with an understanding of the different issues and positions at play when we ask such fundamental questions as: What is justice? What's so great about democracy? Is inequality unjust? Or, more concretely, What are the *philosophical* differences between the ideas of, say, Ron Paul, Dick Cheney, and Obama?

So, we should care, because it helps us understand who we are and what we stand for. And if we understand that, we'll better be able to do our part as citizens.

### ***What I expect from you***

I promise to be well prepared, to respect you and your point of view, and to do my best to make this class worth your time and effort. In exchange, I ask that you do the readings and think about them. Come to class prepared. Always bring your book or other readings to class. Don't bring your laptop, for laptops are not permitted in this class unless you have special needs that require it. Also: this is a philosophy class, which means that we are interested in arguments and that *no claim or opinion is silly or misguided*, if it is sincerely offered and argued for.

### ***Assignments and grading***

*Reflection papers (10 papers, one page each), 20% of grade*

You will be expected to read a lot of old philosophy. Reading old philosophy is not always fun. It is very easy to do something else or to let the mind wander whilst the eyes scatter across the page. So, to help you engage with the reading, you'll be asked to write ten one-page reflection papers (between 250-400 words). Your paper should identify and describe what you think is the main point of the assigned readings and add a thought of your own about it. – Your thought could be just about anything: a criticism, a question, a clarification, whatever tickled you about the reading (and if it left you cold, you could discuss why). The main point of this paper is to help you engage with the readings, so don't worry about originality. The important part of these reflection papers is to show understanding of the text, not that you think original thoughts about it. (Also: you can freely use ideas or text from your reflections in the two paper assignments.)

*Papers: first paper (3-4 pages), 20% of grade; second paper (5 pages), 30% of grade*

I will distribute paper topics in advance. If you'd rather write on another topic, come talk to me about it and I'll let you know if it's a good one. Note: it is crucial that you begin thinking and writing early. Philosophy takes time. If you start writing the night before the paper is due, there's a high risk that your paper will suck. Don't take that risk. Late papers are penalized with a third of a letter-grade per day.

*Final exam, 20% of grade*

The final exam will be comprehensive. Study-questions will be available in advance.

*Participation, 10%*

Your participation grade will be based on your presence and your contribution to making the class a good experience for all of us. I take attendance and unexcused absence will hurt your participation grade. If you're shy or don't like to speak much in class: don't worry. You don't have to speak a lot to get credit for participation. Just say something when you feel like it – and if you don't feel like it, try to take the point from your reflection paper and raise it in class.

## Readings and Schedule

We use three books: Cahn ed., *Classics of Modern Political Philosophy*, Troyer ed. *The Classical Utilitarians, Bentham and Mill*, J. Rawls *A Theory of Justice, Revised Edition* (all will be available at the Penn Bookcenter). Other readings will be available on Blackboard. We meet Tuesday and Thursday, 10.30-noon in Cohen 203. Here's the plan:

Week	Day	Reading	Assignment
36	Thur 9/9	Welcome	Feel welcomed
37	Tue 14/9	Grotius, selections (Blackboard)	
	Thur 16/9	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Part I, chaps 5-7,10,11,13	Reflection paper
38	Tue 21/9	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Part I, 14-16; Part II, 17, 18	
	Thur 23/9	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Part II, 20,21,26	Reflection paper
39	Tue 28/9	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Part II, 29, 30	
	Thur 30/9	Locke, <i>2nd Treatise</i> , chaps 1-5	Reflection paper
40	Tue 5/10	Locke, <i>2nd Treatise</i> , chaps 6 (sects 54-5, 57-8, 61-3), 7 (87-94), 8 (95-106, 119-22), 9-12	
	Thur 7/10	Locke, <i>2nd Treatise</i> , chaps 13 (sects 149-52, 158), 15 (171-4), 16 (192), 18 (199-200, 206-7), 19 (211-2, 220, 227-9, 240-3)	Reflection paper
41	Tue 12/10	Fall break, no class.	Relax
	Thur 14/10	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> , part I	First paper due
42	Tue 19/10	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> , part II	Reflection paper
	Thur 21/10	Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i> , Books I & II	
43	Tue 26/10	Rousseau, <i>The Social Contract</i> , Book III (chaps 1-3, 16-7), Book IV (chaps 1-2)	Reflection paper
	Thur 28/10	Hume, "Of the Social Contract"	
44	Tue 2/11	Bentham, <i>Principles of Legislation</i>	
	Thur 4/11	James Mill, <i>Essay on Government</i> (skip sects V, VIII, IX)	Reflection paper
45	Tue 9/11	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapter 2	
	Thur 11/11	J.S. Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapter 5	Reflection paper
46	Tue 16/11	J.S. Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , chapters 1 & 2	
	Thur 18/11	J.S. Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , chapters 3 & 4	Reflection paper
47	Tue 23/11	Marx, <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i>	Second paper due
	Thur 25/11	Thanksgiving break, no class	Relax
48	Tue 30/11	Marx, <i>The German Ideology</i>	Reflection paper
	Thur 2/12	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> , chapter 1 (sects 1-6)	
49	Tue 7/12	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> , chapter 2 (sects 10-12, 14-15); handout on the difference principle	
	Thur 9/12	Our Last Class: Rawls, <i>A theory of Justice</i> , chapter 3	Reflection paper
49/ 50	Fri 10/12	Last day of classes	
	Tue 14/12	Review session (time and place tbd)	
	<b>Wed 15/12</b>	<b>Final exam 9-11am (room tbd)</b>	

