

**PHILOSOPHY 2S03: HISTORY OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**  
**Winter 2021**

Instructor: Dr. Allauren Samantha Forbes  
E-mail: forbeas@mcmaster.ca  
Office: N/A  
Office hours: Tuesdays 9-11am, or by appointment

## **Course Objectives**

### **Course Description**

Political philosophy is paradigmatically concerned with questions of justice, but the precise content of those questions – and how they have been answered – has varied over its long, rich history. This course provides a thorough (if brief) introduction to the history of political philosophy from ancient times up to some of the developments in the nineteenth century. Along the way, we will examine crucial questions – how should we design our societies and institutions? What is political power and when is it legitimate? What does justice require? – and discuss influential themes, such as the social contract, as they appear in the works of our philosophical predecessors.

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

Over the course of this semester, you will learn how to:

- Critically read, analyze, and assess philosophical arguments;
- Discuss philosophical topics in a respectful, engaging, and constructive way;
- Engage in substantial self-reflection;
- Construct clear and persuasive arguments about topics in the history of political philosophy;
- Develop familiarity with philosophical views from a host of perspectives.

### **Textbooks, Materials, & Fees**

Required texts:

- *Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Philosophy Vol. 1: From Plato to Nietzsche*  
Edited by Andrew Bailey, Samantha Brennan, Will Kymlicka, Jacob Levy, Alex Sager,  
and Clark Wolf. Broadview Press. 2008. ISBN: 978-1-55111-742-3.

### **Method of Assessment**

Your grade in this course will be determined by the following:

Participation: 15% **Due: ongoing**

Short papers: 50%

    Short paper 1: 20% **Due: 5 February 11:59pm**

    Short paper 2: 30% **Due: 26 March 11:59pm**

Final exam: 30% **Due: 23 April 11:59pm**

    Question creation: 10%

    Exam: 20%

Reflection: 5% **Due: 23 April 11:59pm**

### *Participation*

Participation is very important. Philosophy is something that we do; it is an activity. You need to attend class and be an active participant – this means listening carefully to the content of the lecture and to your classmates' questions and comments, as well as contributing your own thoughts or concerns. While it can be intimidating to speak in class, remember that your peers probably feel the same way, and that we will be careful to maintain a friendly and open-minded attitude in order that all contributions will be welcome and treated with the principle of charity – that is, we will all try our best to understand what others say in the spirit of how it is intended.

**Because of covid-19**, this class is going to be entirely online. However, it is going to be on a 'hybrid' model – I will pre-record short lectures and we will 'meet' virtually/live once a week during the second scheduled class meeting. Participation is still really important, but it will look a little different than it would in person. If you have concerns or are facing barriers to participation of any kind, please speak with me so that we can find a solution for you.

In practice, participation = a) attending the 'live' meetings, b) asking questions/participating in the group discussion activities.

### *Short papers*

In these short papers (1000 words), your task is to pick one of the recent readings/topics, give an exegesis of it – demonstrate understanding of some position it holds – and then critically engage with it – provide an argument about it, or an application of it in other domains (e.g., in day-to-day life, in other academic fields, etc.). I will provide lots of feedback on the first paper so that you will have some opportunity to practice your philosophical skills and get good, developmental feedback in preparation for the next one. See Avenue for further guidance.

### *Final exam*

The final exam is comprised of two parts. Since this course will be online, it will be a 'take-home' (i.e., **no lockdown browser needed**).

#### *Question creation*

I will provide more specific instructions via Avenue at the end of the semester, but in short, this part of the exam asks: if you were to create multiple choice (and true/false, and fill-in-the-blank) questions for an exam based on course content, what would be some good examples? Each student will provide 5 sets of questions and answers.

#### *Exam*

The exam will be a series of medium-to-long answer questions asking you to identify, explain, and apply concepts and theories from various philosophers discussed throughout the semester.

### *Course reflection*

When you turn in your final exam, you will also turn in a brief reflection on the course. The content of this assignment is up to you – tell me what topics and readings you enjoyed, which you didn't, what assignments you found most interesting / helpful / fun, etc. Submitting this reflection – **minimum 250 words** – is 5% of your grade and is very helpful for me in subsequent

versions of the class, so please complete it with the thought of future students and what would be useful to them in mind.

## **Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties**

My policy on late work is for every 24 hours after the deadline, you will lose one third of a letter grade. So, if you turn in a B+ assignment, after one day it is a B, after another it is a B-, etc. That said, I know that extenuating circumstances do occur. Should you find yourself in such a situation, please contact me as soon as possible, but keep in mind that this is no guarantee of an extension.

If you **anticipate** needing an extension, you must email me **at least 24 hours prior to the deadline** with your request. If **something comes up at the last minute**, send me an email with subject line **Urgent**. If you need an extension because of a diagnosis or disability, please see the section below on accommodations.

**MSAFs** cover a three-day period. Under standard circumstances, expect the assignment for which you have used an MSAF to be due three days after the original due date. Under extenuating circumstances, the weight will be applied to your final exam.

When uploading assignments to Avenue, make sure to allow a couple of minutes before the deadline in case of internet/Avenue issues. **Everyone receives a five-minute grace period after the deadline**, i.e., if the deadline is 12am, no late penalty will be applied up to 12:05am, though 12:06am and after **will be subject to the late penalty**. If it looks like there's going to be a technical issue, email it to me before the deadline so as to ensure that your submission isn't late.

## **Other Course Information**

### *Behaviour*

It is deeply important that we maintain an attitude of respect for one another and for the subjects we cover in this class. Philosophy is, at its core, a practice of critical thinking. This often consists in making arguments and responding to one's interlocutors in ways that interrogate their positions and claims; we will consider reasons for and against views in a way that incorporates an underlying commitment to trust, empathy, and cooperative inquiry. Throughout our discussions of some sensitive issues and concerns, we will maintain an attitude of respect even – especially – when we disagree with the views at hand.

### *Electronic Devices*

I would usually include a section here on the evidence that suggests that distractions via one's devices undermine academic success through interference with attention, learning, participation, etc. Since we are meeting exclusively online, there are fewer ways for me to notice if you are distracted. Ultimately, it is up to you whether you TikTok or send memes or whatever else in class, but I hope that you focus on the work at hand. These are strange times and we are all still acclimating to a new learning environment. Let's work together.

### *Email*

I will communicate with you via email and Avenue, particularly if something changes in the course – unexpected cancellation, new or additional readings, etc. Please ensure that you are receiving these notifications. My general policy is to respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving them; **however, I will not discuss grades over email, and would prefer that longer questions about assignments are addressed in virtual office hours. Please check the syllabus and the (forthcoming) detailed instructions on assignments, etc. before emailing me about them.**

### *Grades*

I am committed to a fair and unbiased grading process. As such, **all assignments must be submitted with no identifying information other than your student number.** This allows the teaching team to grade anonymously. If you have concerns about this process, please contact me and we will discuss possible solutions. If you are unsatisfied with your grade and would like to appeal it, the process is as follows. Between 24 and 72 hours after the grades are posted, explain in writing – in a way that responds to each and every one of the comments – how you think the grade/comments are wrong/false/unfair. I promise to consider these appeals and to re-examine your assignment. Please note, however, that a request for regrading can result in your mark going up or down.

### *Accessibility and Support Services*

I want all of you to succeed and flourish philosophically. There are, of course, many ways to learn; I will strive to adapt to your needs, but this means that you must tell me how you learn best. Please feel free to contact me via email or in office hours to let me know what works for you.

Students with disabilities or relevant diagnoses are strongly encouraged to make use of services here at the University. If you require any accommodations in light of any diagnoses or disabilities, please contact Student Accessibility Services. You do not need to disclose any details of any of these matters with me; once you've been in contact with SAS, we will only discuss how to accommodate your needs given practical details of the class.

### *Covid-19*

These are obviously strange, scary, and frustrating times. This semester will be challenging for all of us. When we do meet, it will be via Zoom (provided by McMaster). You do not need to have your cameras on when you attend large group meetings, though it would be nice to be able to see you when we meet privately in office hours. Please make note of the degree of privacy afforded by Zoom virtual backgrounds.

## Please Note the Following Policies and Statements:

### Academic Dishonesty

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## Email correspondence policy

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

## Modification of course outlines

The University reserves the right to change dates and/or deadlines etc. for any or all courses in the case of an emergency situation or labour disruption or civil unrest/disobedience, etc. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. Any significant changes should be made in consultation with the Department Chair.

## McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work. Please note these regulations have changed beginning Fall 2015. You can find information at [mcmaster.ca/msaf/](http://mcmaster.ca/msaf/). If you have any questions about the MSAF, please contact your Associate Dean's office.

## Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

## Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religion and spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the Course Calendar or by their respective Faculty. In most cases, the student should contact his or her professor or academic advisor as soon as possible to arrange accommodations for classes, assignments, tests and examinations that might be affected by a religious holiday or spiritual observance.

## Schedule and Readings

### Schedule of Readings and Assignments

#### **Week 1: Ancient Greek – Justice and cities**

Reading: Plato: *Anthology*, pp. 37-53 (optional: pp. 70-83)

Meeting: 14 Jan 2021, 12-130pm

#### **Week 2: Ancient Greek – Cities and citizens**

Reading: Aristotle: *Anthology*, pp. 177-187; 204-219

Meeting: 21 Jan 2021, 12-130pm

#### **Week 3: Medieval – Virtuous cities**

Reading: Al-Farabi: *Anthology*, pp. 283-296

Meeting: 28 Jan 2021, 12-130pm

#### **Week 4: Medieval – Laws, cities, and citizens**

Reading: Moses Maimonides: *Anthology*, pp. 298-301,  
Christine de Pizan: *Anthology*, pp. 331-339

Meeting: 4 Feb 2021, 12-130pm

**First paper due 11:59pm 5 Feb.**

#### **Week 5: Modern – Social contract**

Reading: Thomas Hobbes: *Anthology*, pp. 414-419; 423-438; 441-448 (Chs 10, 13-15, 17-19).

Meeting: 11 Feb 2021, 12-130pm

### READING WEEK

#### **Week 6: Modern – Social contract**

Reading: John Locke: *Anthology*, pp. 497-510, 517-530 (Chs 1-5, 7-9)

Meeting: 25 Feb 2021, 12-130pm

#### **Week 7: Modern – Inequality**

Reading: Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Anthology*, pp. 623-653

Meeting: 4 March 2021, 12-130pm

**Week 8: Modern – Women and freedom**

Reading: Mary Astell: *Anthology*, pp. 567-577

Olympe de Gouges: *Anthology*, pp. 781-786

Meeting: 11 March 2021, 12-130pm

**Week 9: Modern – Education, freedom, and virtue**

Reading: Mary Wollstonecraft: *Anthology*, pp. 792-810; 816-828

Meeting: 18 March 2021, 12-130pm

**Week 10: 19<sup>th</sup> century – Utilitarianism & the Panopticon**

Reading: Jeremy Bentham: *Anthology*, pp. 877-881; 889-895

Meeting: 25 March 2021, 12-130pm

**Second paper due 11:59pm 26 March.**

**Week 11: 19<sup>th</sup> century – Liberty**

Reading: John Stuart Mill: *Anthology*, pp. 900-923

Harriet Taylor Mill: *Anthology*, pp. 956-963

Sojourner Truth: *Anthology*, pp. 963-964

Meeting: 1 April 2021, 12-130pm

**Week 12: 19<sup>th</sup> century – Capitalism**

Reading: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: *Anthology*, pp. 1031-1046

Meeting: 8 April 2021, 12-130pm