

PHIL 3200-001
Social and Political Philosophy
University of Colorado Boulder
Spring Semester 2022

M/W/F, 2:30 pm – 3:20 pm (HLMS 237)

Instructor: Dr. Tristan J. Rogers, Visiting Assistant Professor

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Office Location: Kitt Central N211A

Office Hours: M/W, 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm (or by appointment)

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G.K. Chesterton writes,

In the matter of reforming things, as distinct from deforming them, there is one plain and simple principle; a principle which will probably be called a paradox. There exists in such a case a certain institution or law; let us say, for the sake of simplicity, a fence or gate erected across a road. The more modern type of reformer goes gaily up to it and says, 'I don't see the use of this; let us clear it away.' To which the more intelligent type of reformer will do well to answer: 'If you don't see the use of it, I certainly won't let you clear it away. Go away and think. Then, when you can come back and tell me that you do see the use of it, I may allow you to destroy it. ("The Drift from Domesticity," in *The Thing* [1929], p. 35)

We live in revolutionary times of change and uncertainty. This is an opportunity for political philosophy, that is, to think anew about the future of a better society. But, as Chesterton warns, thinking about what could be without first understanding the reasons for what exists leads to careless change. Alternatively, political philosophy can help us articulate and assess the central operational ideas that undergird the foundations of our society, so that cautious, responsible change may proceed. This course is about those ideas: virtue, justice, natural law, rights, democracy, freedom and tradition, in the work of philosophers and political thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Aquinas, Augustine, David Hume, Edmund Burke, Alexis de Tocqueville, F.A. Hayek, and Roger Scruton.

Catalogue Description: Introduces students to an in-depth examination and analysis of central operational ideas in social and political philosophy, such as power, freedom, equality, democracy, justice, rights, community, individuality, civil disobedience, and law. A thorough treatment of any of these ideas may call for some cross-cultural and/or comparative political and social analysis. *Sophomore Standing or higher to enroll*

Required Texts:

Cahn, Steven M. (ed.) *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*, 3rd ed. (Oxford UP)
All other texts will be provided in PDF format where noted below.

Course Goals:

1. Develop competence in central operational ideas in social and political philosophy.
2. Develop written and oral communication skills as those are associated with argumentative writing and public speaking.
3. Develop close-reading and critical thinking skills in the study of classic texts in social and political philosophy.

Assessment:

15% - Weekly Review Questions
40% - Two Short Papers
40% - Final Exam
5% - Participation

Late Work and Attendance Policy: Generally speaking, work will not be accepted late unless merited by the circumstances. You may make a written petition in advance (preferably) if you believe an exception is warranted, and given the circumstances, most reasonable petitions will be granted and alternative arrangements made. Attendance will not be taken for lectures, but attendance and engagement in the course will be informally observed for the purposes of the course participation grade.

Required University Policy Statements:*Classroom Behavior*

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution policies](#).

Requirements for COVID-19

As a matter of public health and safety, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements and all public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Students who fail to adhere to these requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#). For more information, see the policy

on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#). If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please follow the steps in the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

CU Boulder currently requires masks in classrooms and laboratories regardless of vaccination status. This requirement is a precaution to supplement CU Boulder’s COVID-19 vaccine requirement. Exemptions include individuals who cannot medically tolerate a face covering, as well as those who are hearing-impaired or otherwise disabled or who are communicating with someone who is hearing-impaired or otherwise disabled and where the ability to see the mouth is essential to communication. If you qualify for a mask-related accommodation, please follow the steps in the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus. In addition, vaccinated instructional faculty who are engaged in an indoor instructional activity and are separated by at least 6 feet from the nearest person are exempt from wearing masks if they so choose.

If you feel ill and think you might have COVID-19, if you have tested positive for COVID-19, or if you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you should stay home and follow the further guidance of the [Public Health Office](#) (contacttracing@colorado.edu). If you are fully vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay home; rather, you should self-monitor for symptoms and follow the further guidance of the [Public Health Office](#) (contacttracing@colorado.edu).

Accommodation for Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

Preferred Student Names and Pronouns

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code academic integrity policy. Violations of the Honor Code may include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu; 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found on the [Honor Code website](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. The university will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by or against members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or email cureport@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and the support resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when they are made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about their rights, support resources, and reporting options. To learn more about reporting and support options for a variety of concerns, visit [Don't Ignore It](#).

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Course Schedule

PART ONE: Virtue and Politics

Week 1 – Plato [Remote]

Monday, January 10

Topic: Introduction to the Course

Wednesday, January 12

Topic: Wisdom and the Good Life

Reading: Plato, "Defense of Socrates" (*Apology*), pp. 5-12 [thru line 28b]

Friday, January 14

Topic: Justice and Virtue

Reading: Plato, "Defense of Socrates" (*Apology*), pp. 12-22 [to the end]

Week 2 – Plato [Remote]

Monday, January 17

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

NO CLASS

Reading: Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," pp. 1117-1128

Wednesday, January 19

Topic: Civil Disobedience

Reading: Plato, *Crito*, pp. 22-27 [thru line 50a]

Friday, January 21

Topic: The Rule of Law

Reading: Plato, *Crito*, pp. 27-30 [to the end]

Week 3 – Aristotle

First in-class meeting

Monday, January 24

Topic: Politics and Happiness

Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.1-1.8, pp. 142-146

Wednesday, January 26

Topic: What is a Political Community?

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, III.6-12, pp. 187-195

Friday, January 28

Topic: Causes of Faction and Stability

Reading: Aristotle, *Politics*, V.1-2, V.8-9, pp. 203-210

First Short Paper Topics Posted

Week 4 – Cicero

Monday, January 31

Topic: What is a Republic?

Reading: Cicero, *On the Republic*, pp. 227-229 [up to Sec. XXV]

Wednesday, February 2

Topic: The Mixed Constitution

Reading: Cicero, *On the Republic*, pp. 229-233

Friday, February 4

Topic: Justice and Law

Reading: Cicero, *On the Laws*, pp. 234-238

PART TWO: Natural Law and the Limits of Politics

Week 5 – Augustine

Monday, February 7

Topic: Rome's Moral Decline and First Critique of Cicero

Reading: Augustine, *City of God*, II.19-21 (PDF)

Wednesday, February 9

Topic: The Two Cities

Reading: Augustine, *City of God*, pp. 243-249 (thru Ch. 17)

Friday, February 11

Topic: Second Critique of Cicero; Augustine's definition of a "people"

Reading: Augustine, *City of God*, pp.249-251

First Short Paper Due

Week 6 – Aquinas

Monday, February 14

Topic: What is Law?

Reading: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, pp. 256-259

Wednesday, February 16

Topic: Natural Law

Reading: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, pp. 259-263

Friday, February 18

Topic: Applying the Natural Law

Reading: Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, pp. 264-267

PART THREE: Rights, Revolution, and the Pursuit of Happiness

Week 7 – David Hume

Monday, February 21

Topic: The Utility of Justice

Reading: David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, pp. 470-474

Wednesday, February 23

Topic: Order and Authority

Reading: David Hume, "Of the Origin of Government," pp. 485-487

Friday, February 25

Topic: Allegiance

Reading: David Hume, "Of the Original Contract," pp. 477-485

Week 8 – Edmund Burke

Monday, February 28

Topic: Critique of Abstract Political Principles

Reading: Edmund Burke, "Preface," to a *Vindication of Natural Society*, pp. 63-9 (PDF)

Wednesday, March 2

Topic: Liberty and Government

Reading: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 78-85 (PDF)

Friday, March 4

Topic: Revolution, Reform and Inherited Institutions

Reading: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 85-94 (PDF)

Second Short Paper Topics Posted

Week 9 – Edmund Burke

Monday, March 7

Topic: Inequality and Rights

Reading: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 94-101 (PDF)

Wednesday, March 9

Topic: Sentiment, Manners, and Prejudice

Reading: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 101-108 (PDF)

Friday, March 11

Topic: Society as an Inheritance

Reading: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 109-122 (PDF)

Week 10 – The Federalist Papers

Monday, March 14

Topic: Defending the New Constitution

Reading: Hamilton, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 1, pp. 551-553

Wednesday, March 16

Topic: Guarding against Faction

Reading: Hamilton and Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 9 & 10, pp. 553-559

Friday, March 18

Topic: Separation of Powers; Checks and Balances

Reading: *The Federalist Papers*, No. 51, pp. 573-576

Second Short Paper Due

March 21-25

[SPRING BREAK]

PART FOUR: Democracy and Its Discontents

Week 11 – Alexis de Tocqueville

Monday, March 28

Topic: Democracy and Rights

Reading: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 649-654

Wednesday, March 30

Topic: Law and Patriotism

Reading: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 649-654

Friday, April 1

Topic: The Tyranny of the Majority

Reading: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, pp. 658-666

Week 12 – John Stuart Mill and James Fitzjames Stephen

Monday, April 4

Topic: Mill's Doctrine of Liberty

Reading: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 1, pp. 747-755

Wednesday, April 6

Topic: Critique of Mill's Doctrine

Reading: James Fitzjames Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, pp. 189-202 (PDF)

Friday, April 8

Topic: Liberty and Morality

Reading: James Fitzjames Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, pp. 202-209 (PDF)

PART FIVE: Freedom and Tradition

Week 13 – F.A. Hayek

Monday, April 11

Topic: Epistemic Limits to Economic Planning

Reading: Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society" (PDF)

Wednesday, April 13

Topic: Democracy and Freedom

Reading: Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, pp. 861-870

Friday, April 15

Topic: Distributive Justice

Reading: Hayek, "The Mirage of Social Justice," pp. 325-334 (PDF)

Week 14 – Robert Nozick

Monday, April 18

Topic: The Entitlement Theory of Justice

Reading: Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 957-960

Wednesday, April 20

Topic: How Liberty Upsets Patterns

Reading: Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 960-964

Friday, April 22

Topic: Property Rights

Reading: Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 964-967

Week 15 – Roger Scruton

Monday, April 25

Topic: Tradition

Reading: Scruton, “Starting from Home,” in *How to Be a Conservative*, pp. 19-30 (PDF)

Wednesday, April 27

Topic: Political Order from the Bottom-Up

Reading: Scruton, “The Truth in Conservatism,” in *How to Be a Conservative*, pp. 119-133 (PDF)

Monday, May 2 - Wednesday, May 4

Exam Week