

## **PHILOSOPHY 341: JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

Fall 2009  
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Office Hours: MWF 1:00-2:00  
TR 12:30-1:30

### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

Catalog Description: A systematic investigation of the historical origins of the concept of justice and its application to domestic and international issues involving human rights. Special attention is given to the related issues of power and social control. This is an approved General Education course.

Course Objectives:

- 1) to examine a variety of issues involving matters of justice and human rights.
- 2) to consider a variety of theories of justice and how they apply to these issues.
- 3) to critically evaluate each theory.

Course Content: The course begins with a look at the distribution of income and wealth in the United States. We will then examine the consequences of the globalization of the world's economy focusing on the effects of our way of life on that of other nations. We will then proceed to study a variety of theories of justice, from Plato to Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau to Adam Smith and the Federalists to contemporary theorists such as Rawls and Nozick, all the time considering the implications of these theories on the issues of wealth, power and inequality.

Texts: *Phil 341 Reader*, available at The Print Shop, 730 Main St. The Print Shop accepts cash and credit cards, but NOT checks.

Course Requirements: There will be three exams and one term paper. The exams will be based on the reading assignments, lectures and discussions. The term paper will entail the selection of an issue of personal interest inspired by the material covered in class. Part of your task is to come up with a specific topic for your paper. Since potential paper topics will come up periodically in class, I will point them out to you as possibilities or as points of departure for your own musings. The paper is not to exceed 6 pages in length (typewritten and double-spaced).

Course grades will be determined on a straight percentage scale. If you accumulate 90% or more of the total points you will receive an 'A'. A 'B' will go to those who earn 89-80% of the total points, etc. The definition of each letter grade (A, B, C, D and F) is provided in the College catalog.

Points will be accumulated as follows:

3 exams	100 points each	300 pts.
1 term paper		<u>100 pts.</u>
		400 pts.

Notes and Suggestions: Come to class prepared for that day's discussion. The study of philosophy does not entail the mere learning of certain facts. One must learn to think, critique and argue in a certain way. That is, philosophy is not an academic subject; it is an intellectual activity. You will learn by doing. You must therefore be prepared for what we are doing each day.

It will be necessary for you to complete the assigned reading before class. But it will not be sufficient for you to do so. Allow time to think about what you've read. After completing an assigned reading, consider whether you agree or disagree with the philosopher's view. Come to class with a personal agenda - what do you want clarified?; what do you wish to say in support of a particular view?; what objections do you desire to make? You will find that, no matter how much time is allotted for a particular topic, many interesting avenues of argument and discussion will go unexhausted. (These avenues are often good indicators of potential term paper topics). I encourage you to continue discussions outside of class. Other class members are excellent candidates for honing your philosophical skills (again, by doing philosophy). I too will be available for outside discussion. Office hours are scheduled for your benefit. Take advantage of them.

In order to complete this course successfully, you must attend class. Attendance will not be directly rewarded. But active attendance will dramatically increase your chances of mastering the course material. This will most assuredly be reflected in the quality of your exams and paper. Should you miss a class meeting, it is your responsibility to obtain notes and the next reading assignment from fellow class members. Do not contact me for this information. Never ask me if you missed anything important; the answer is always "yes".

All written assignments must reflect standard English usage. Proper spelling, grammar, punctuation and syntax count because they are necessary for the accurate expression of ideas. Philosophy is hard enough without the additional complexity of (easily correctable) imprecision.

Exams will not be rescheduled without extremely compelling reasons. Hospitalization is extremely compelling. A malfunctioning alarm clock is not. If you are sick enough to go to the doctor, you are sick enough to miss an exam. If you are not sick enough to go to the doctor, you are not sick enough to miss an exam. If you cannot provide a doctor's note, you will not be allowed to make up an exam. Do not schedule trips home or to Tahoe or to your sister's wedding or to any other place on a day when class meets. If there is a test on a day when you've planned to be out of town, then you will have to change your plans (even if you've already paid for a nonrefundable airline ticket). Exams are not optional or to be taken at your convenience. You are responsible for taking them when scheduled. I will hold you to that responsibility.