

Philosophy 340
Social and Political Philosophy
MWF 10-10:50, Lang 302
Spring 2008

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Office Hours: MWF 11-12:10

CATALOG DESCRIPTION

A philosophical examination of the nature and function of the human community and the political state, and of the implications for individual life of alternative conceptions of society and politics.

COURSE GOALS

1) to examine some of the concepts, issues and arguments in social and political philosophy; 2) to prompt critical reflection on your own views about these topics; and 3) to develop your skills in reading, conversing, and writing about philosophical topics.

CLASS FORMAT

Lecture, discussion, small-group. You will be asked to express and support your own views on controversial issues. Sometimes I will call on you.

TEXTS: Michael Sandel, *Justice: a Reader*
Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*
Recommended: Plato, *Republic* (Hackett, trans. Grube)

REQUIREMENTS:

1. *Daily Writing Assignments* (20%). These are one-page, hand-written essays, graded pass/fail, based on the readings, due at the start of each class session. The purpose of homeworks is to encourage regular reading, so that class discussions will be well-informed, lively, and enlightening. There are no make-ups, even for serious illness, except for University-sponsored activities (with a faculty member's written explanation in advance). You may miss two assignments; after that, your overall grade for writing assignments will be dropped a full grade for each additional missed assignment (e.g. from 95 to 85). (Alternative: 20-page term paper; see me.)
2. *Presentations* (10%, two 10-minute presentations). Each presentation will consist of five minutes during which you talk to the class about something of interest to you in the reading for the week, and then another five minutes in which you respond to questions from other students. Any serious effort to engage the reading and other student questions will receive an A. Before your presentation you must visit me during office hours to discuss your plan.
3. *Two Papers* (30%/40%). Each paper will be a 5-7 page discussion of a philosophical topic discussed in the readings. Any student caught plagiarizing will be turned over to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action (for more info, see www.csuchico.edu/sjd).

SCHEDULE - Tentative

Weeks 1-9	Sandel, Chpts. I-IX
Week 10	Wolff; First Paper Due Fri, Apr. 11
Week 11	Plato (selections)
Weeks 12-15	Sandel, Chpts. X-XIV
Finals week	Final paper due Tue., May 20, 4 p.m.

Some quotes for the first day:

1. *When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

- American Declaration of Independence

2. *We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

- Preamble to the Constitution of the United States

3. *The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.*

- 11th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States