

## Individuals in Society, PHIL 2

**Professor: Dr Desiree Lim ([dyl10@psu.edu](mailto:dyl10@psu.edu), office hours Monday 2.30-3.30 pm, 203 Sparks and by appointment)**

**Teaching assistant: Erika Grimm ([eng10@psu.edu](mailto:eng10@psu.edu), office hours 2-3pm in 228 Sparks and by appointment)**

**Lecture time and venue: Monday and Wednesday, 1.25-2.15 pm, Forest Resources Building 107**

### **Course description:**

This course provides a survey of five closely interlinked key topics in social and political philosophy: Freedom, Rights, Justice, Inequality, and Responsibility. We begin with the enduring question of what freedom is: that is, when are individuals truly 'free'? Next, in recognition of the value of freedom, which individual rights must the state guarantee? What happens if these come into conflict with other values? Thirdly, if our individual rights are subject to constraint on particular grounds, to what extent can they be limited to preserve a justice society? Furthermore, what is the nature of gender and racial inequalities, and how ought the state respond to them? Finally, what responsibilities do we owe to fellow citizens? Are we morally obliged to obey the law – and yet also to break it on occasion? We will largely examine these issues through the lens of contemporary Anglo-American philosophy, as well as a number of canonical political philosophers from the same tradition.

### **Readings**

All readings will be available on Canvas under 'Files'.

### **Course requirements**

*Participation:* Attendance of all lectures and sections is **mandatory**. No student can expect to pass this course if a significant number of lectures and discussion sections are missed. If you are unable to attend a discussion section, you **must** let the teaching assistant know **before** class begins. In the absence of a legitimate reason (e.g. illness), you will lose one participation mark.

You are also **strictly required** to do the assigned reading before each lecture and discussion section.

You will not be able to fully grasp the lecture content without first reading the material, or participate in the discussion sections with only the knowledge of what was talked about in the lecture.

Finally, the typical rules of lecture etiquette apply. While laptops and other electronic devices are permitted, they can only be used for purposes of note-taking. Other uses are distracting to surrounding students and may result in the student being asked to discontinue the use of the device.

*Coursework:* There will be two term paper assignments: a mid-term essay, 6-7 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, **due Monday 10/8 by 6pm EST**) and a final paper, also 6-7 pages with the same formatting requirements (**due Monday 12/10 by 6pm EST**). Please email your papers directly to the TA ([eng10@psu.edu](mailto:eng10@psu.edu)). A list of questions will be uploaded to the 'Files' section on Canvas, and you should pick two. There should be absolutely no content overlap between the two papers.

*Late submissions:* All students are entitled to a **single one-day extension** that can be used once, on either of the two papers. If you plan to use your extension, please let the TA know **by midnight the day before the paper is due**. Once the extension has been used, late papers will be penalized by **3 marks** for each day that a paper is late.

### **Grading:**

Your final grade will consist of the following components:

Section discussion attendance: 15%

Mid-term paper: 35%

Final paper: 50%

Your final grade will be based on a 100 point scale. **All grades are fixed and will not be re-evaluated.**

94-100: A    77-79: C+

90-93: A-    70-76: C

87-89: B+    60-69: D

84-86: B     0-59: F

80-83: B-

**You are guaranteed a full attendance grade if you don't miss any of the sections without a legitimate reason.** Both term papers will initially be graded out of 100, and then added together for your final mark (in line with the listed percentages). Your final mark will be the first decimal place rounded to the nearest whole number (e.g. 97 for **96.543** and 96 for **96.481**).

### **Schedule and core readings:**

#### **Freedom**

#### **Week 1: Negative Freedom**

8/20 – Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Conceptions of Liberty'

8/22 – G. A. Cohen, 'Freedom and Money'

## **Week 2: Positive Freedom**

8/27 – Charles Taylor, 'What's Wrong with Negative Freedom?'

8/29 – Nancy Hirschmann, selected readings from *The Subject of Liberty: Towards a Feminist Theory of Freedom* (p. 7- 14 followed by Chapter 3)

## **Week 3: Freedom as Non-Domination**

9/3 – NO CLASS DUE TO LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

9/5 – Philip Pettit, *Republicanism* (Chapter 2)

## **Rights**

### **Week 4: What Are Rights?**

9/10 – Joseph Raz, 'On the Nature of Rights'

9/12 – Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Chapter 7)

### **Week 5: Property Rights**

9/17 – John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (selected readings)

9/19 – Margaret Jane Radin, 'Property and Personhood'

### **Week 6: Free Speech Rights**

9/24 – John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (selected readings)

9/26 – Caroline West – 'Words That Silence? Freedom of Expression and Racist Hate Speech'

## **Justice**

### **Week 7: Justice and Equality**

10/1 – John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Chapter 1)

10/3 – John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Chapter 2 and 3)

## **Week 8: Justice and Bad Luck**

10/8 – Ronald Dworkin, 'What is Equality? Part II: Equality of Resources'

10/10 – Elizabeth Anderson, 'What is the Point of Equality'

## **Week 9: Challenges to Equality**

10/15 – Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Chapter 7)

10/17 – Harry Frankfurt, 'Equality as a Moral Ideal'

## **Inequality**

### **Week 10: What is Inequality?**

10/22 – Scanlon, 'When Does Inequality Matter?'

10/24 – Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Chapter 1 and 2)

### **Week 11: Gender Inequality (guest lecture by Erika Grimm)**

10/29 – Susan Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (Chapter 6 and 7)

10/31 – Catharine MacKinnon, 'Sexuality'

### **Week 12: Racial Inequality (guest lecture by Erika Grimm)**

11/5 – Tommie Shelby, 'Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto'

11/7 – Charles Mills, 'Retrieving Rawls for Racial Justice? A Critique of Tommie Shelby'

## **Responsibility**

### **Week 13: Civic Obligations**

11/12 – A. John Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (Chapter 3 and 4)

11/14 – A. John Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (Chapter 4 and 5)

[THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS ON 11/19 AND 11/21]

**Week 14: Civil Disobedience**

11/26 – Martin Luther King, ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’

11/28 – Kimberley Brownlee, ‘Conscientious Objection and Civil Disobedience’

**Week 15: Structural Injustice**

12/3 – Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (Chapter 2 and 4)

12/5 – Catherine Lu, ‘Colonialism as Structural Injustice’