

Social & Political Philosophy

1. *Wednesday, January 20.* OVERVIEW
What is the state and why might we want to have one? Diamond describes a society that lacks a state and relies instead on informal enforcement of its rules. That gives us a start on the first question: we can see what the state is by looking at a society that lacks one. He also makes a specific case for the state that relies on an assertion about human nature. We will talk about his specific assertion. We should also note the general pattern of moving from assertions about human nature to conclusions about the need for the state as we will see it in other authors.
Jared Diamond, "Vengeance is ours," *The New Yorker* April 21, 2008.

Plato

2. *Monday, January 25.* QUESTIONS ABOUT JUSTICE
What is justice and why does it matter? Plato worried that the superficial answers given by respectable citizens, such as Cephalus and Polemarchus, led to doubts about justice, such as those presented by Thrasymachus and Glaucon. The *Republic* tries to meet Glaucon's challenge so we will be especially interested in it. What must be shown about justice in order to satisfy the challenge? Do we really have to meet such a demanding test?
(1) *Republic*, Bk. I-II, pp. 1-44; especially Bk. II, 357a-369b, pp. 33-44. (2) The editor's introduction, pp. viii-xviii, and summaries at the beginning of each book, pp. 1, 32, 60 ... (see p. v).
3. *Wednesday, January 27.* WHY GUARDIANS?
The guardians are the rulers in Plato's ideal city. He explained their role by showing why an imaginary city that didn't

have them would create them. What would drive people from that imaginary city to one that requires guardians? And has he explained why they must govern the *internal* affairs of the city? Finally, what is the purpose of the myth of the metals at the end of Book III? Is it acceptable for a society to rely on falsehoods?

Republic, (1) Bk. II especially 368e-376e, pp. 43-52; (2) Bk. III, editor's introduction, p. 60; (3) Bk. III, 412b-417b, pp. 88-93.

4. *Monday, February 1.* JUSTICE IN THE CITY
Socrates's answer to Glaucon turns on an analogy between the city and the soul. Here, he describes the parallel virtues or good qualities of cities and people. Why does the city have the virtues that Socrates attributes to it? What is the difference between the virtues of moderation and justice? They seem to be nearly identical. Finally, justice in the city is defined as everyone's playing their particular role. How is that related to Glaucon's question?
Republic, Bk. IV, 419-434d, pp. 95-110.
5. *Wednesday, February 3.* JUSTICE IN THE SOUL
A just person is good in the same way, and for the same reasons, that a just city is. But is the analogy between the city and the soul a good one? Members in the city are supposed to regulate themselves, but that isn't what parts of the soul do. Rather, some parts of the soul control the other parts. But if the different classes in the just city repress one another like that, it isn't very attractive.
Republic, Bk. IV, 434d-445e, pp. 110-21.
Note First paper topics distributed.
6. *Monday, February 8.* TWO QUESTIONS ABOUT GUARDIANS
First, why do they have to be philosophers? Answer: philosophers have special knowledge. Second, why would they want to rule? Answer: they benefit from the education that gives them this special knowledge.

Republic, (1) Bk. V, 471c-480, pp. 146-56; Bk. VI, 484a-492a, pp. 157-165, and 502d-511e, pp. 176-85; (2) Bk. VII, pp. 186-212.

7. *Wednesday, February 10.* INJUSTICE IN CITY AND SOUL
Plato argued that different kinds of city would tend to decay into other, worse kinds. I want to use this to return to the subject of the analogy between the city and the soul. I also want to take up how Plato uses this to argue against injustice.
Republic, Bk. VIII-IX, pp. 213-63.

Thomas Hobbes

8. *Monday, February 15.* THE STATE OF NATURE
Plato imagined human society beginning in order to accomplish something through specialization and the state emerged out of conflict among groups. Hobbes believed that the state begins to avoid conflicts among individuals and that it, in turn, makes social life possible. Chapter 17 summarizes his view. Chapters 11 and 13 concern the causes of conflict. Chapter 11 appears to be quite specific: some kinds of people prefer conflict to peace, others do not. Chapter 13, though, seems to be quite general: people in general fall into conflict without political authority. We will begin by discussing the general explanation, using some basic game theory, the prisoner's dilemma. Then we will ask whether the specific and the general stories can be combined.
Leviathan, chs. 17, 11, 13.
9. *Wednesday, February 17.* THE LAWS OF NATURE
The definitions of right, law, and obligation. What are covenants and how do they work? The reply to the Fool in chapter 15. Is the reply to the Fool too strong? If Hobbes had really shown that it's in everyone's interest to keep their covenants, why would we need the state?
Leviathan, chs. 14-15.

Note First paper due Thursday, February 18.

10. *Monday, February 22.* JUSTICE
 Hobbes said the following: [1] there is no such thing as justice in the state of nature (13.13), [2] justice means keeping covenants (15.2), and [3] there are valid covenants in the state of nature (14.27). But he can't say all three at the same time. Justice, meaning, "giving each his own" is impossible in the state of nature as nothing is anyone's "own". But it is possible to keep covenants. Hobbes's discussion of the laws of nature is about the conditions under which justice, contractually understood, can exist.
Leviathan, chs. 14-15.
11. *Wednesday, February 24.* SOVEREIGNTY
 Hobbes is said to have an "absolutist" understanding of sovereignty. Chapter 17 describes the social contract (at the end), chapter 18 gives the rights that sovereigns have, and chapter 19 argues that any kind of state will claim these rights. We will ask in what sense is a Hobbes's sovereign absolute and whether his arguments for absolutism are good ones.
 (1) *Leviathan*, ch. 17 ¶13-15; chs. 18-19. (2) Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 18.
12. *Monday, March 1.* CONQUEST AND REBELLION
 Conquest and rebellion are two different cases of political violence. We'll look at how Hobbes's theory deals with them. What is the difference between the "commonwealth by acquisition" and the "commonwealth by institution"? Does Hobbes's account of the liberty of subjects open a back door to rebellion?
Leviathan, (1) chs. 20-1; (2) A Review and Conclusion, ¶1-7, pp. 489-91.

John Locke

13. *Wednesday, March 3.* RIGHTS

(1) What natural rights do we have and where do they come from? Compare Locke's answers with Hobbes's. (2) Locke was trying to show how private property could have emerged from common ownership of the world. The handout explains what the project was.

(1) *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. II-IV, §§1-24, pp. 7-18. (2) Handout on property rights.

Note Second paper topics distributed.

14. *Monday, March 8.*

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Locke has general and specific arguments for private property. The general arguments hold that there has to be *some* way of legitimately acquiring private property. The specific arguments hold that private property is legitimately acquired in a specific way, by laboring. We will concentrate on the specific arguments. These arguments have to show that laboring is a way of making something that *had* belonged to others into your private property. That's not easy!

Second Treatise of Government, ch. V, §§25-51, pp. 18-30.

15. *Wednesday, March 10.*

LOCKE'S SOCIAL CONTRACT

Locke's social contract differs from Hobbes's in at least two ways. First, Locke favored limited government while Hobbes was an absolutist. Second, Locke believed there was a right to revolution significantly broader than anything Hobbes would have accepted.

Second Treatise of Government, (1) §§87-94 (ch. VII), pp. 46-51; (2) §§95-100, 113-122 (ch. VIII), pp. 52-4, 61-5; (3) §§123-31 (ch. IX), pp. 65-8; (4) §§134-42 (ch. XI), pp. 69-75; (5) §149 (ch. XIII), pp. 77-8; (6) §168 (ch. XIV), pp. 87-8; (7) ch. XIX, §§ 211-43, pp. 107-24.

Note Second paper due Friday, March 12.

The Utilitarians

16. *Monday, March 22.*

CLASSICAL UTILITARIANISM

The Utilitarians were reformers. They sought to replace the confusing mess of common laws and commonsense moral belief with one rational system: utilitarianism. We will talk about this motivation, what utilitarianism involves, and the persistent difficulty posed by its antagonistic relationship with commonsense moral beliefs. Both Bentham and Mill try to show that once we understand the psychology underlying our beliefs about justice and morality, we will realize that these beliefs are either implicitly utilitarian or indefensible.

(1) Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ch. 1-4. (2) John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 5.

17. *Wednesday, March 24.* **SIDGWICK'S UTILITARIANISM**
 We will continue our discussion of the relationship between utilitarianism and beliefs about justice, natural rights, and morality. In particular, I would like to discuss Sidgwick's suggestion that utilitarianism is an 'esoteric' doctrine, that is, one whose truth ought to be hidden.
 Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, selections.
18. *Monday, March 29.* **MILL'S HARM PRINCIPLE**
 Mill's famous harm principle sharply limits what the government can do. Today, we will talk about his claim to have derived this principle on utilitarian grounds.
 (1) Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 1-52. (2) Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 26.
19. *Wednesday, March 31.* **MILL'S LIBERTARIANISM**
 Last time, we talked about tensions between Mill's libertarianism and his utilitarianism. Today, we will speak more broadly about his two broad categories: liberty of thought and expression and liberty of action.
On Liberty, pp. 53-91.

Robert Nozick

20. *Monday, April 5.* NOZICK ON RIGHTS
Nozick argues for libertarian conclusions on the basis of a theory of rights, rather than utilitarianism. In fact, he developed his theory of rights in contrast with utilitarianism.
Anarchy, State, and Utopia, pp. 26-35, 48-53.
21. *Wednesday, April 7.* NOZICK ON JUSTICE
Nozick maintains that principles of justice fall into three broad categories: those governing the acquisition of goods, those governing the transfer of goods, and those governing the rectification of violations of the other two. He tries to show that any principles of justice beyond these, such as the utilitarian principle, Rawls's "principle of fair equality of opportunity", or Rawls's "difference principle" objectionably limit liberty by maintaining what he calls "patterns" at the expense of innocent, free choices.
Anarchy, State, and Utopia, pp. 149-64, 167-82.
Note Third paper topics distributed.
22. *Monday, April 12.* CRITICISM OF NOZICK'S THEORY OF RIGHTS
Nozick's libertarianism depends on his theory of rights. Scheffler argues that this theory does not lead to libertarian conclusions. On the contrary, he claims, it more naturally leads to an alternative account of natural rights that is more friendly to the welfare state.
Samuel Scheffler, "Natural rights, equality and the minimal state," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 6 (1976).

John Rawls

23. *Wednesday, April 14.* RAWLS AGAINST LIBERTARIANISM
This reading is from an "informal" exposition of the principles of justice that Rawls supports. Nonetheless, it contains

Rawls's arguments against libertarianism. After discussing them, I will defend "natural aristocracy." See if it can be done!

A Theory of Justice §§11-13, pp. 60-82.

24. *Monday, April 19.* RAWLS'S THEORY
 Today, we lay out the machinery for Rawls's own theory of justice. He will use this to defend an alternative to the utilitarian principle: the two principles of justice we encountered last time. It's a complicated argument, so we need to do some setting up.
A Theory of Justice §§1-4, pp. 3-22; §§24-5, pp. 136-50.
25. *Wednesday, April 21.* ARGUMENT FOR THE TWO PRINCIPLES
 Rawls's argument turns on deciding between two rules for making decisions with limited information. Rawls argues that the parties in the original position should use the maximin rule rather than the rule that tells them to maximize expected utility. If they follow the maximin rule, he claims, would choose his principles of justice rather than utilitarianism.
A Theory of Justice §26, pp. 150-61.
Note Third papers due Thursday, April 22.
26. *Monday, April 26.* ARGUMENTS AGAINST UTILITARIANISM
 There are three arguments against utilitarianism. The first is that it is inappropriate to use the principle of insufficient reason to assume that the probabilities of being any person are equal. The second and third arguments are less technical. They maintain that the parties would want to avoid making an agreement that they might not be willing to keep.
A Theory of Justice §§28-9, pp. 167-83; §82, pp. 542-8.
27. *Wednesday, April 28.* RAWLS ON LIBERTY

Rawls proposes a rule that liberty can be limited only for the sake of liberty. Hart argues that this is inadequate since most political decisions involve sacrificing liberty one way or the other and there is no way to say which sacrifice is more extensive. Hart also questions why the parties in the original position would insist on liberty rather than material wealth. He argues they cannot know that this is what they really want.

H.L.A. Hart, "Rawls on Liberty and its Priority", *University of Chicago Law Review* 40 (1973).

28. *Monday, May 3.* WHAT ABOUT A SOCIAL MINIMUM?
The Difference Principle is a relative standard: it looks at how much some people have compared with what others have. A social minimum uses an absolute standard: it looks at how much people need and is not concerned with equality *per se*. Waldron makes the case for using the social minimum approach.
Jeremy Waldron, "John Rawls and the Social Minimum" *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 3 (1986).
29. *Wednesday, May 5.* REVIEW
What will be on the final exam.

Goals

Political philosophy is about the nature of the state. It tries to answer questions such as these. "Should we have a state at all?" "What is a just state or society like?" "What powers does the state have?" "Should individuals obey the state?" The course will cover some of the historically prominent answers that combine theories of human nature, ethics, and social life. The syllabus seeks to chart a path between a survey of different philosopher's views and specialized study of any one of them. We will give thorough attention to the central issues with each philosopher's political thought.

The materials make heavy demands on their readers' analytical and interpretive skills. Our discussions and writing assignments will focus on the

arguments in these works. That is where your analytical skills will come into play. Since we are reading works from different periods in history, we will also have to work hard at interpreting material that is written in ways that are unfamiliar and that reflects the concerns of different kinds of societies.

Materials

I ordered the following editions through the Huntley Bookstore: Plato's *Republic* (Hackett, second edition, translated by Grube and Reeve); Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (Hackett, edited by Curley), John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett, edited by MacPherson), John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (Hackett, edited by Rapaport), and John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, original edition, not the revised one). Everything else will be made available electronically.

Comments on lectures, announcements, and readings will be available through the Sakai website for this course: <http://sakai.claremont.edu>

Instructor

My name is Michael Green. My office is 207 Pearsons. My office hours are Thursdays, 2-4. My office phone number is 607-0906. I only answer email once a day. I will reply, but if you need an answer quickly, you're probably best off calling or dropping by my office.

Assignments

Grades will be based on four assignments: three papers and a final exam. The papers will be limited to 1800 words which is about five or six pages. They will be due on Thursday, February 18, Friday, March 12, and Friday, April 22. The Final Exam is scheduled for Tuesday, May 11 at 2 pm.

Seniors should make special arrangements to take the exam early. Your grades are due at noon on Friday, May 7.

Grading policies

I am committed to seeing that my students are able to do very high quality work and that high quality work will be recognized. I do not employ a curve and there is nothing competitive about grading in my courses.

Grades apply to papers, not to people. They have no bearing on whether I like or respect you. Nor do they measure improvement or hard work, for two reasons. First, there is no fair way to assess these things. Second, it would be misleading since one may put a lot of effort into trying to make a bad idea work or produce a very good paper with ease. I think we make too much of grades, but they do communicate where written work stands on as objective a scale as we can devise. Just bear in mind that this is really all that they involve.

What the grades mean

- A Work that is accurate, elegantly written, and innovative. It adds something original, creative, or imaginative to the problem under discussion. The grade of A is given to work that is exceptional.
- B Work that is accurate, well written, and has no significant problems. The grade of B is given to very good work. There is less of a difference between A and B work than you might think. Generally speaking, B papers are less innovative than A papers. This may be because the paper does not attempt to add much or because the attempt made is not fully successful.
- C Work that has problems with accuracy, reasoning, or quality of writing. The grade of C means that the paper has significant problems but is otherwise acceptable.

D Work that has severe problems with accuracy, reasoning, relevance, or the quality of writing. Papers with these problems are not acceptable college-level work. Some papers that are fine on their own are nonetheless irrelevant. A paper is not relevant to my evaluation of work for this particular course if it does not address the question asked or if it does not display knowledge of our discussions. This sometimes trips up those taking a course pass/no credit.

F Work that has not been completed, cannot be understood, or is irrelevant.

Final grades will be calculated using the College's 12 point scale as described on page 40 of the 2009-11 Catalog. The numerical average must be greater than half the distance between two grades in order to earn the higher grade.

Letter	Number	Range
A	12	$11.5 < A \leq 12$
A-	11	$10.5 < A- \leq 11.5$
B+	10	$9.5 < B+ \leq 10.5$
B	9	$8.5 < B \leq 9.5$
B-	8	$7.5 < B- \leq 8.5$
C+	7	$6.5 < C+ \leq 7.5$
C	6	$5.5 < C \leq 6.5$
C-	5	$4.5 < C- \leq 5.5$
D+	4	$3.5 < D+ \leq 4.5$
D	3	$2.5 < D \leq 3.5$
D-	2	$1.0 < D- \leq 2.5$
F	0	$0.0 < F \leq 1.0$

Letter and number grades

Late papers and academic accommodations

Late papers will be accepted *without question*. They will be penalized at the rate of one-quarter of a point *per* day, including weekends and holidays. Exceptions will be made in extremely unusual circumstances. Please be mindful of the fact that maturity involves taking steps to ensure that the extremely unusual is genuinely extremely unusual.

To request academic accommodations of a disability, please contact Dean Marcelle Holmes at 607-2147 or mdco4747@pomona.edu.

