

PHIL 1433 The Social Contract

Spring 2025

MEETINGS

Lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:45-2:45 pm

Recitations on Fridays

TEACHING TEAM

Professor: Jennifer M. Morton

E-mail: jmmorton@sas.upenn.edu

Office Hours: <https://calendly.com/jmmorton> (W & Th), Cohen 426

Section Leaders: Shawn Hernandez

E-mail: shawnxh@sas.upenn.edu

Office Hours: Friday 10-11am, Cohen 401

Luca Garzino Demo

E-mail: lgarzino@sas.upenn.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 12-1, Cohen 403

DESCRIPTION: A survey of thinkers in the Social Contract Tradition, such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, Marx, and Rawls, as well as contemporary critiques. This course is a required course for PPE majors, and also satisfies the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) sector requirement in the General Education Curriculum.

COURSE GOALS & OBJECTIVES: The primary goal of this course is to familiarize you with the core ideas and key thinkers in the social contract tradition. By the end of this course, you will have a clearer understanding of these concepts and will have developed your own perspective on them.

The second goal is to introduce you to philosophical methods of thinking and writing that will enable you to critically and rigorously approach the subject matter. By the conclusion of this course, you will be able to articulate your ideas about the core concepts in the social contract tradition clearly and persuasively.

Finally, this course aims to empower you to engage critically in contemporary political debates. By the end of this course, you will appreciate why these ideas remain relevant today.

READING: Jonathan Wolff's An Introduction to Political Philosophy (Oxford University Press) is required. Note that no particular edition of this text is required. I **strongly recommend** getting a hard copy of the text and seeking used copies online, which are much, much cheaper. All other readings will be available on Canvas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:	Section Assignments & Participation	15%
	Lecture Attendance & Quizzes	10%
	Oral Exam	15%
	In-Class Written Exam	30%
	Final Group Project	30%

GRADING POLICY: TBA

PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE: The success of this course relies on each person's commitment to taking ownership of their learning. We expect everyone to contribute to discussions in various ways. Speaking up in class is just one method of participation. Other ways include emailing us with questions you'd like to see addressed, listening to classmates with respect, helping others articulate their points, continuing conversations outside of class, and attending office hours if a class discussion sparks your interest in exploring an idea further. Some topics we will cover may be controversial or challenging for certain classmates. Please be considerate and attentive to one

another during these discussions. To foster a great learning environment, let's all adopt a mindset of epistemic humility and intellectual curiosity. **We expect you to attend every class unless you are ill or facing a personal or family issue.** While you are an adult and may have other priorities, missing more than three classes can negatively impact your grade. If you anticipate needing to miss more than three classes, please talk to us in advance to discuss accommodations.

CLASSROOM DEVICE POLICY: No phones or internet-connected devices are allowed in class. If absolutely necessary, you may use a Remarkable tablet or a similar device. I understand that we all feel the urge to check our social media accounts and experience anxiety when we can't, but this classroom is meant for you to build an intellectual community with your peers in real life (IRL). Your devices will still be there for you after class, but this unique opportunity to engage won't last. Additionally, using devices or phones during class can be distracting to those around you. If you have a genuine emergency and need to have your phone on or visible, please step outside to address the situation without disrupting the class. If you require an accommodation to use your device, please discuss this with us so we can find a way to make it work without distracting your classmates. Thank you for your understanding.

ORAL EXAM: Your first assessment will be a 5-minute oral exam conducted by your section instructor. In this exam, you will demonstrate your understanding of the reading and your ability to communicate your understanding of the reading in conversation. We will provide you with possible questions beforehand.

IN-CLASS EXAM: Your second assessment will be a traditional in-class exam consisting of multiple-choice questions and an essay based on a "new to you" text provided on the exam day. This exam will allow you to demonstrate your critical understanding of the course material and your burgeoning ability to assess an objection to an argument we have discussed in class. We will provide you with an exam guide beforehand.

FINAL GROUP PROJECT: Your final major assessment will be a group project in which you will produce a 5-to-8 minute video demonstrating your understanding of the ideas we have discussed in this course by using material from our class to illuminate a contemporary issue in our society. To complete this project, you will conduct research, write a script, and use your creativity to create a final product that synthesizes the skills you have acquired in this course. As part of this assessment, you will be asked to view and comment on each other's work. We will provide you with a detailed guide to completing the final assignment in due course.

HONOR CODE: All students are expected to follow the guidelines of Penn's Code of Academic Integrity. In particular, students are expected to refrain from "lying, cheating, or stealing" in an academic context (but it's also probably good to avoid doing these things in general). If you are unsure about which actions violate that honor code, please consult <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity>. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Always cite any resource that you use (including generative AI).

BASIC NEEDS SUPPORT: It is important to me that you have the resources you need to be able to focus on learning in this course – this includes both the necessary academic materials as well as taking care of your day-to-day needs. Students experiencing difficulty affording the course materials should reach out to the Penn First Plus office (pennfirstplus@upenn.edu). Students who are struggling to afford sufficient food to eat every day and/or lack a safe and suitable space to live should contact Student Intervention Services (vpul-sisteam@pobox.upenn.edu). Students may also wish to contact their Financial Aid Counselor or Academic Advisor about these concerns. You are welcome to notify me if any of these challenges are affecting your success in this course, as long as you are comfortable doing so – I may have resources to support you.

ACADEMIC & DISABILITY SUPPORT: The Weingarten Center offers a variety of resources to support all Penn students in reaching their academic goals. All services are free and confidential. To contact the Weingarten Center, call 215-573-9235. The office is located in Stouffer Commons at 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300.

MODIFICATIONS TO SYLLABUS: I reserve the right to make changes to the Syllabus, including project due dates and test dates, when unforeseen circumstances occur. These changes will be announced as early as possible so that you can adjust your schedules.

Class Date		Reading that must be completed before class	Skill Developed
THE STATE OF NATURE			
Th	1/16	What is this course about? Introduction to the Social Contract	Careful Reading
T	1/21	Ch. 1 of IPP (pp. 6-17), Hobbes, <u>Leviathan</u> Ch. 13 C*	
Th	1/23	Ch. 1 of IPP (pp. 17-23), Locke, <u>Second Treatise</u> Ch. 2-3 C	
T	1/28	Ch. 1 of IPP (pp. 24-33), Rousseau, <u>Discourse</u> Selections C	
Th	1/30	Tommie Shelby, “Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto” C	
T	2/4	Oral Exam Week—No Lecture, instead you will sign up for an Oral Exam slot	
Th	2/6		
JUSTIFYING THE STATE			
T	2/11	Ch. 2 of IPP pp. 34-48, Hobbes <u>Leviathan</u> Ch. 17 C	Critical Engagement
Th	2/13	Locke, <u>Second Treatise</u> Ch. 8-9 C	
T	2/18	Ch. 2 of IPP (pp. 48-61), Mill, <u>Utilitarianism</u> Ch. 2 C	
Th	2/20	Saptarishi Bandopadhyay, “After the Storm” C	
WHO SHOULD RULE?			
T	2/25	Ch. 3 of IPP (pp. 62-74), Plato, <u>The Republic</u> Ch. 6 C	Defending An Argument
Th	2/27	Ch. 3 of IPP (pp. 74-87), Rousseau, <u>The Social Contract</u> Selections C	
T	3/4	Ch. 3 of IPP (pp. 87-103), Madison, Federalist Paper #10 C	
Th	3/6	Alex Guerrero at <u>New Books in Philosophy</u> (Podcast) C	
THE PLACE OF LIBERTY			
T	3/18	Ch. 4 of IPP (pp.104-132), Mill, <u>On Liberty</u> Chapter 2 C	Considering Objections
Th	3/20	Marx, <u>The Communist Manifesto</u> Selections C	
T	3/25	Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty C	
Th	3/27	Paul Schofield, “An Inconvenient Truth” (Slate) C	
T	4/1	Exam Review	
Th	4/3	Exam II	
THE DISTRIBUTION OF PROPERTY & CRITIQUES OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT			
T	4/8	Ch. 5 of IPP (pp. 133-143) Locke, <u>Second Treatise</u> , C	Putting it All Together
Th	4/10	Rawls, “Justice as Fairness” Ch. 5 C	
T	4/15	Ch. 5 of IPP (pp. 143-152), Nozick, <u>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</u> C	
Th	4/17	Ch. 5 of IPP (pp. 152-168) Marx <u>Estranged Labor</u> Selections C	
T	4/22	Charles Mills, “Ideal Theory as Ideology” C	
Th	4/24	Ch. 6 of IPP	
T	4/29	Wrap-Up & Final Projects Due	

***IPP** designates Introduction to Political Philosophy by Wolff; **C** designates reading is on Canvas