

**PHIL 110H: Philosophical Texts that Changed the World:
An Introduction to Philosophy through Great Works**
UNC Chapel Hill, Fall 2021

Instructor: Prof. Alex Worsnip (aworsnip@unc.edu)

Class meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2-3:15, Peabody 2066

Virtual office hour: Wednesdays, 11-12

In-person office hour: Thursdays, 3:30-4:30

- weather permitting: outside, at a table by the Blue Ram Café (at the back of the Campus Y)
- otherwise: in my office (Caldwell Hall, 202B). I'll email if I'm moving my office hour indoors.

Meetings outside of office hours are also always available by appointment.

Course description.¹ This course is two things at once: an introduction to some great works of philosophy on one hand, and an introduction to the art of reading, understanding and philosophically engaging with historical works of philosophy on the other. We will focus on works of social and political philosophy. In the first part of the course, we'll read some of the key works of the classical Western tradition, by Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Mill. In the second part of the course, we'll read some radical responses to this tradition, starting with Marx, and then moving on to two more recent (but already very important) books – Carole Pateman's *The Sexual Contract* and Charles Mills's *The Racial Contract* – which critique the classical tradition from the perspective of feminist theory and critical race theory, respectively.

Note on reading load and expectations. This is a texts-based introduction to philosophy, and the whole point is to read and grapple a wide range of texts in the original. As such, the class has a demanding reading load – typically 40-50 pages per class meeting (i.e. 80-100 pages per week), and the texts are dense and complex. To do well in the class (and to effectively learn from and enjoy it), you will need to be able to put in the time to read this material carefully and thoughtfully. While the course is challenging, it is also in my experience *exceptionally* rewarding for those who are ready and willing to throw themselves into the challenge. In the past, teaching this as an Honors College class has made for exceptionally motivated and talented groups of students, excited to take on the challenge of grappling with classic texts and to learn from each other in an intense but supportive environment. I hope to foster this same ethos this time round.

Course materials. There are eight assigned texts for this course. You will need to buy these books; they are available through the UNC bookstore. We will often do close readings of passages from them in class, so you'll need to have a physical copy on hand. I have made a special effort to select affordable editions of each book and they are generally under \$15 each. In some cases, cheaper copies can be found online, e.g. on Amazon, but if you order your books this way, be sure to get the correct

¹ Here's the generic description from the official course catalog, which I'm apparently required to include on this syllabus in addition to the semester-specific description: "PHIL 110. Philosophical Texts that Changed the World: An Introduction to Philosophy through Great Works. 3 Credits. An introduction to philosophy focusing on several great books from the history of Western philosophy. See course description at the department's website for which books will be covered each semester. Honors version available. Gen Ed: PH. Grading status: Letter grade."

edition/translation as listed below. This is crucial as we need to all be (literally) on the same page when we're reading together in class. Here is the list, in the order we'll read the texts:

1. Plato, *Republic* (trans. Grube, revised by Reeve; Hackett)
2. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (ed. Curley; Hackett)
3. John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (ed. Macpherson; Hackett)
4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (trans. Cranston; Penguin)
5. J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (ed. Rapaport; Hackett)
6. Karl Marx, *Selected Writings* (ed. Simon; Hackett) NB: *not to be confused with the Oxford University Press edition of the same name, edited by McLellan!*
7. Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Polity Press/Stanford University Press)
8. Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Cornell University Press)

Requirements/assessment

Participation (20% of grade). You will receive two participation grades over the course of the semester, each worth 10% of your course grade. Your participation grade will reflect both your attendance record (including punctuality) and – since this is a discussion-oriented class – your contributions to class discussions. Your contributions to class discussions will be assessed in terms of whether you made a good-faith effort to make productive and helpful contributions. This includes contributing with at least moderate frequency, in a way is respectful, reflects having listened to others' contributions, and reflects having done the reading and thought carefully about it. However, you will not be graded on the philosophical quality of your contributions: I want class to be a place to speak freely and try out ideas without fear of judgment. Please also bear in mind that asking questions, including clarificatory questions, can be a great way to contribute.

Perfect attendance without any contributions to the discussion will earn you a maximum participation grade of C. To help make participation easier, we'll use the "traffic light system" described [here](#). Additionally, if you are finding participating in discussions difficult or intimidating, please get in touch with me, and we will work on strategies and/or workarounds together.

Question Sets (25% of grade in total). These are sets of short-answer comprehension questions. Each question set will cover the readings for a number of class sessions. I recommend that you complete the question sets bit by bit, as you do the reading for each class; this will save you a lot of time. The answers to each set should amount to at least two double-spaced pages (with the exception of Question Set 0, which could but need not be a bit shorter).

- Question Set 0 (on Plato, first two sessions) due Thurs 8/26, 1pm. *0% of grade,² but (on-time) submission is required.³*

² This (short) question set is for practice only. It is to get you used to the format of the question sets and to get some early feedback. I will score it to give you an idea of how you're doing, and also provide sample answers to give you a model for future question set assignments. However, your score won't count toward your final grade, unless it turns out at the end of the semester that your score on this question set is actually above your average for the other question sets. If that happens, then including this score would be to your benefit, so I will then include it when calculating your final grade.

³ I.e., if you don't submit this assignment completed in full and on time, your overall grade for the question set component of the class will be dinged.

- Question Set 1 (on Plato, final four sessions) due Thurs 9/9, 1pm. *5% of grade.*
- Question Set 2 (on Hobbes) due Thurs 9/23, 1pm. *5% of grade.*
- Question Set 3 (on Locke & Rousseau) due Thurs 10/14, 1pm. *5% of grade.*
- Question Set 4 (on Mill & Marx) due Thurs 11/4, 1pm. *5% of grade.*
- Question Set 5 (on Pateman & Mills) due Tues 11/30, 1pm. *5% of grade.*

Papers (45% of grade total). Two papers of 1500-2000 words (\approx 5-7 double-spaced pages) each. A choice of paper topics/questions will be provided.

- Paper 1 (on Plato or Hobbes): due Sun 10/3, 8pm. *20% of grade*
- Paper 2 (on Locke, Rousseau, Mill or Marx): due Sun 11/14, 8pm. *25% of grade*

Final (Group) Project (10% of grade). In place of a final exam, you will present final projects, in groups, at the scheduled exam time (Tuesday December 7th). Your final project will be on Pateman and/or Mills. You will be graded as a group. Further guidelines will be provided closer to the time.

Policies

Attendance. I take attendance at each class meeting, and as a general policy (in-person) attendance is required. However, as per the university's instructions, you should **not** attend class if you are showing any symptoms of COVID-19 (find the full instructions [here](#)).⁴ Instead, contact me via email and we will work out a plan. If you are showing symptoms but are well enough to join class remotely via Zoom, that can be arranged. The top priority is your safety and that of your fellow classmates, and I will show flexibility to ensure that we can prioritize this without your grade being affected. I only ask that you stay in touch so that I'm aware of your situation and can make accommodations.

Beyond physical illness, the pandemic is continuing to make life difficult for all of us in myriad other ways. Consequently, you can have up to two further (non-illness-related) absences over the course of the semester, no questions asked, without any impact on your participation grade.

Other Safety Measures during COVID-19. As per UNC's policy this semester, you are required to wear a mask in class at all times. This also applies to in-person office hours when they are held indoors.

I also encourage you in the strongest possible terms to get vaccinated if you haven't already done so. (For your own peace of mind: I am fully vaccinated myself.) This is the best way to prevent a major outbreak at UNC and to ensure that in-person learning, and the full and rewarding college experience that comes with it, can continue throughout the semester and beyond. Moreover, as the parent of a very young child who cannot yet get vaccinated, it's a matter of great personal importance to me that I minimize the extent to which my teaching an in-person class puts her at risk. Your being vaccinated provides an additional layer of protection for me from getting infected and thus risking exposing her to the virus – so I really appreciate your doing so.

⁴ This is in addition to those who have been ordered to isolate/quarantine due to a positive test or a recent exposure. Obviously, you should not attend class under those circumstances either! Under these circumstances, you will be eligible for an official excuse from the [University Approved Absence Office](#).

Electronic Devices. The use of laptops, tablets and cell phones in class is forbidden, unless they are required for class participation due to a disability.

Office Hours and Meetings. Since student preferences differ during the pandemic, one of my scheduled office hours is virtual (via Zoom), and the other is in-person (outside when weather permits; in my office [mask required] when it doesn't). See the top of this syllabus for times and locations.

Both the virtual and in-person office hours are “drop in”, which means you can attend without giving any prior notice, and anyone is welcome to arrive and depart as they like. You are warmly encouraged to attend whenever you like, and/or to coordinate with classmates to attend together. This is a terrific opportunity to discuss the material of the class further and understand it better, typically in a setting resembling a “[tutorial](#)” with a very low teacher-to-student ratio.

If you want to meet in a private one-on-one setting, where the time is reserved for you and others can't enter the conversation, I am also happy to do this (outside of my scheduled office hours); please email me to set up an appointment. This would be the appropriate setting to meet in if you want to discuss (e.g.) your individual progress in the class, among other things.

I strongly recommend that you take the opportunity to meet with me (either in drop-in office hours or in a one-on-one appointment) ahead of writing papers, to try out your ideas and get feedback. This is free advice that almost always improves your paper (and grade).

Submitting Assignments. All written assignments should be submitted via the Assignments function on Sakai. I grade all written assignments in anonymized form. To facilitate this, please don't include your name in the text or the file name; include your PID instead.

Extensions.

- For question sets, I will only grant extensions under extraordinary circumstances. These are regular check-ups to make sure you are doing the readings before class.
- For papers, I am somewhat more flexible. If you have a good reason, make a reasonable extension request **in advance** of the deadline, and the extension doesn't pose any major logistical challenges, I will usually grant your request.
- If any assignment is late without my having agreed to an extension, it will lose 1/3 of a letter immediately, and a further 1/3 of a letter grade every 24 hours thereafter.

Grade Boundaries are as follows: A = 93% or higher, A- = 90-93%; B+ = 87-90%, B = 83-87%, B- = 80-83%, C+ = 77-80%, C = 73-77%, C- = 70-73%, D+ = 67-70%, D = 63-67%, F = <63%.

Note: these boundaries should be interpreted so that 93.0% is an A, but 92.99% is an A-, and similarly for each other boundary.

Honor Code. UNC's honor code, which is available at honor.unc.edu, applies to all class assignments. Violations of the honor code will be taken very seriously and will be reported to the Student Attorney General. In addition, please take note of the following points:

- Reusing a paper that you have written for another class qualifies as academic dishonesty.
- Summarizing ideas or arguments that you have found in articles or on the internet, without citing your sources, qualifies as academic dishonesty. It doesn't matter if you put them into

your own words. If you have gotten an idea from a source, you must acknowledge the debt by citing the source.

If you are in any doubt at all about whether something constitutes academic dishonesty, err on the side of caution and talk to me before you submit the assignment to clarify the policies.

Accessibility & Equity.

- I am committed to making class fully accessible, and to providing accommodations for those who need them. If I can do anything to help make class more accessible to you, please let me know, or have UNC Accessibility Resources & Service (ARS) contact me on your behalf.
- I am also committed to making the class a safe space for everyone irrespective of gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, religion, or other individual or group identity. As should go without saying, personal attacks or discriminatory treatment of others on any of these bases will not be tolerated under any circumstances.
- I am a Safe Zone Ally, trained and certified by the university LGBTQ center. I am available to meet during office hours or by appointment to offer support.
- I encourage you to make use of the following campus resources as appropriate:
 - For accommodations for students with disabilities or other accessibility needs: Accessibility Resources & Service (ARS), ars.unc.edu
 - For those experiencing mental health challenges: Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), caps.unc.edu
 - For LGBTQ students in need of support or community: lgbtq.unc.edu
 - For those experiencing discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking: visit safe.unc.edu, or contact the Director of Title IX Compliance (adrienne.allison@unc.edu), the Report & Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance (EOC) Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), or the Gender Violence Service Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential).

Schedule of readings (tentative – subject to change)

Thurs 8/19 (Introductory session.) Read syllabus.

Plato, *Republic*

Tues 8/24 Book I, Book II up to 369b (pp. 1-44)

Thurs 8/26 Book II 369b-376c, Book III 412b-end, Book IV (pp. 44-51, 88-121)

Tues 8/31 Book V, Book VI up to 504a (pp. 122-177)

Thurs 9/2 Book VI 504a-end, Book VII (pp. 177-212)

Tues 9/7 Book VIII, Book IX up to 580d (pp. 213-251)

Thurs 9/9 Book IX 580d-end, Book X 608b-end (pp. 251-263, 279-292)

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Books I & II)

Tues 9/14 Introduction, chs. I, III-VI, X-XI (pp. 3-7, 12-35, 50-63)

Thurs 9/16 Chs. XIII-XVI (pp. 74-105)
Tues 9/21 Chs. XVII-XX (pp. 106-135)
Thurs 9/23 Chs. XXI, XXV §1-5, XXVI (pp. 136-145, 165-166, 172-189)

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*

Tues 9/28 Chs. I-V, VI up to §65 (pp. 7-36)
Thurs 9/30 Chs. VII-XI (pp. 42-75)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

Tues 10/5 Book I (pp. 49-68)
Thurs 10/7 Book II (pp. 69-100)
[Tues 10/12 No class – University Day Ceremony]
Thurs 10/14 Book III, Book IV chs. 1-3, 6 (pp. 101-157, 170-174)

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*

Tues 10/19 Chs. I-II (pp. 1-52)
[Thurs 10/21 No class – Fall break]
Tues 10/26 Chs. III-V (pp. 53-113)

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*

Thurs 10/28 Extracts from “On the Jewish Question” (pp. 1-21)
Tues 11/2 Extracts from “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts” (pp. 56-79)
Thurs 11/4 Extracts from “The German Ideology” (pp. 102-32, 147-53, plus additional extracts on Sakai)

Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*

Tues 11/9 Chs. 1-2 (pp. 1-38)
Thurs 11/11 Ch. 3 (pp. 39-76)
Tues 11/16 Chs. 4 & 8 (pp. 77-115, 219-234)

Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract*

Thurs 11/18 Introduction & ch. 1 (pp. 1-40)
Tues 11/23 Ch. 2 (pp. 41-90)
[Thurs 11/25 No class – Thanksgiving break]
Tues 11/30 Ch. 3 (pp. 91-134)

Tues 12/7 Presentations of (Group) Final Projects [in place of Final Exam]
12-3pm