

**Social and Political Philosophy**  
Core 289 (3 credits)  
King's College, Spring 2016

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Class meeting time and location:  
MW, 2:00-3:15 p.m., McGowan 118

**Course description**

This course introduces students to major issues and thinkers in social and political philosophy. Topics include social contract theory, rights, constitutional interpretation, church and state, the family, the rule of law, immigration and citizenship, war, race, affirmative action, and economic, social, and global justice. Prerequisite: Core 280.

**Specific Learning Outcomes**

As a result of taking this course, students should be able to:

1. read and analyze primary philosophical texts on social and political philosophy;
2. discuss major figures and central issues in social and political philosophy;
3. formulate, express, and defend their own views on the philosophical issues studied in the course;
4. write an essay on a course topic that meets the assessment standards for argumentative and/or critical essays established in Core 100 (Liberal Arts Seminar) and Core 110 (Effective Writing); and
5. demonstrate knowledge of U.S. politics, in particular with respect to the upcoming presidential elections.

**General Learning Goals**

As a result of taking this course, students should:

1. come to appreciate the value of philosophical reflection in Western civilization and in the life of every liberally educated person;

2. form a habit of philosophizing and leading an examined life;
3. form a habit of reading and rereading classic and contemporary philosophical texts that they find interesting and relevant;
4. begin to develop their own critically reflective philosophy of life; and
5. realize the practical value of philosophy in clarifying and contributing to current social and political debates.

Other nuts-and-bolts goals of this course are to help you develop *skills* that will serve you both in school and in your subsequent careers.

Goal		Method of assessment
Read and think critically	Analyze and bring critical understanding to difficult theories, arguments, and social and political problems and controversies	Participation in class discussion, weekly journal, paper, exam
Write well	Write clearly and persuasively, supporting your positions with argumentation and evidence	Weekly journal, paper, co-curricular event reports, Voter Registration and Issue Awareness Project
Communicate effectively orally	Articulate your own views based on your reading and in response to the contributions of other students	Participation in class discussion
Master co-operative learning skills	Work with and learn from other members of the class in a climate of mutual respect and support	Participation in class discussion, Voter Registration and Issue Awareness Project

### **Assessment, etc.**

#### *Attendance/participation*

Attendance/participation will be worth 14 percent of the final grade: one-half point per meeting. Please note that attendance is expected at all meetings, with due allowance for reasonable excuses. Each class that you miss will result in your losing 1 point.

The attendance/participation grade will be determined using the following rubrics. Class participation deserving of an A grade (90-100) will be strong in most categories; participation that is strong in some categories but needs development in others will receive a B (80-90); a grade of C (70-80) reflects a need for development in most categories; D work (65-69) is typically unsatisfactory in several categories; and F work, unsatisfactory in nearly all.

	Strong work	Needs development	Unsatisfactory
Listening	Actively and respectfully listens to peers and instructor	Sometimes displays lack of interest in comments of others	Projects lack of interest or disrespect for others
Preparation	Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed, and notes on reading, observations, questions	Sometimes arrives unprepared or with only superficial preparation	Exhibits little evidence of having read or thought about assigned material

Quality of contributions	Comments are relevant and reflect understanding of: assigned text(s); previous remarks of other students; and insights about assigned material	Comments sometimes irrelevant, betray lack of preparation, or indicate lack of attention to previous remarks of other students	Comments reflect little understanding of either the assignment or previous remarks in seminar
Impact on seminar	Comments frequently help move seminar conversation forward	Comments sometimes advance the conversation, but sometimes do little to move it forward	Comments do not advance the conversation or are actively harmful to it
Frequency of participation	Actively participates at appropriate times	Sometimes participates but other times is “tuned out”	Seldom participates and is generally not engaged

### *Writing assignments*

As noted in the schedule below, you will be required to attend one co-curricular event the eleventh week of the semester, Tuesday, April 5, 7:00 p.m. For this event, write me, *within one week after it*, an email 1) describing the event (just the facts) and then 2) reflecting substantively on it, in part by connecting it to our assigned readings for that week. The co-curricular event report counts for 6 percent of the final grade. The reports will be graded using the following rubric:

	Strong work: full credit	Satisfactory: partial credit	Unsatisfactory: no credit
Summary of the event	Account of the facts is accurate and clear	Account of the facts needs development or clarification	Account of the facts is inaccurate and unclear
Reflection on the event	Reflection is substantive and thoughtful	Reflection needs development	Reflection does not engage substantively with the event

Another writing assignment for this course is a journal that you will be required to keep weeks 2 through 11 of the semester (10 weeks total). Keeping this journal is connected to the service learning component of this course, namely, participation in the College’s Voter Registration and Issue Awareness Project. Our task will be to produce a voter’s guide for the Republican and Democratic primary elections on April 26. Your work on the voter’s guide, which will be made available to the College community, is worth 20 percent of the final grade. We will finish the voter’s guide week 12 of the semester, which is to say around two weeks before the elections.

For the journal, write around 1 to 2 pages per week on a Democratic or Republican candidate of your choice. Use as your resource the *New York Times*, to which you will have a subscription for the semester.

Email me your reflections (to [bernardprusak@kings.edu](mailto:bernardprusak@kings.edu)) by the end of the weekend. For example, your reflections for week 2 of the semester must be sent to me by the end of Sunday, 1/31.

Each week’s journal is worth 2 percent of the final grade: 1 point simply for doing it on time and 1 point for content. A very poor journal entry, however, will be given 0 points whether it was done on time or not.

You will also be required to write one paper, worth 20 percent of the final grade. The papers will be graded using the following rubric:

### **Five**

The writer's main conclusion or thesis is clearly stated. The argument is supported throughout with credible, well-substantiated evidence. Conclusions are supported by sound reasoning. Fallacies and logical inconsistencies are avoided. Credible sources are used. Key terms are defined. Important assumptions are identified. Competing points of view are identified and examined fairly. Opposing arguments are addressed and rebutted convincingly. Implications and consequences are clearly identified and are amply supported by the evidence presented.

### **Four**

The writer's main conclusion or thesis is clearly stated. With minor exceptions, the argument is supported with credible, well-substantiated evidence. Conclusions are supported by sound reasoning, but some minor logical lapses occur. Fallacies and logical inconsistencies are avoided. Credible sources are used. Key terms are defined, but not always with sufficient clarity. Assumptions are generally identified, but a few are left unexamined. Competing points of view are identified and with minor exceptions are examined fairly. Opposing arguments are stated fairly, but some arguments are not fully rebutted. Implications and consequences are identified and are substantially supported by the evidence presented.

### **Three**

The writer's main conclusion or thesis is stated, but not with complete clarity. The argument is mostly supported with credible, well-substantiated evidence, but some claims are dubious. For the most part, conclusions are supported by sound reasoning, but some significant logical lapses occur. Fallacies and logical inconsistencies are generally avoided, but some fallacious and/or inconsistent arguments or claims are offered. A few sources are not credible. Key terms are generally well-defined, but some important terms are undefined or are defined imprecisely. Some important assumptions are left unexamined. Some points of view are not acknowledged or are not examined with complete fairness. Opposing arguments are generally stated fairly and rebutted convincingly, but some important opposing arguments are unexamined or are not successfully rebutted. For the most part, implications and consequences are identified and adequately supported by the evidence presented.

### **Two**

The writer's main conclusion or thesis is stated, but is unclear or varies as the argument develops. Some parts of the argument are supported with credible, well-substantiated evidence, but significant portions are not. A number of conclusions are not supported by sound reasoning. Some major fallacies and/or logical inconsistencies are committed. A number of sources are not credible. Several important key terms are left undefined. Some significant assumptions are unidentified. A number of key competing points of view are unidentified or are not examined fairly. Some important opposing arguments are

unexamined, stated unfairly, or not sufficiently rebutted. Some notable implications and consequences are unidentified or not sufficiently supported by the evidence presented.

### **One**

The writer fails to state his or her main conclusion or thesis. The argument is not supported with credible, well-substantiated evidence. Conclusions are not supported by sound reasoning. Several major fallacies and/or logical inconsistencies are committed. Many sources are not credible. Key terms are undefined. Important assumptions are unidentified. Competing points of view are unidentified or are examined unfairly. Opposing arguments are unexamined, stated unfairly, or not adequately rebutted. Implications and consequences are unidentified or are poorly supported by the evidence presented.

A punitive grade of F will be given to work found to have been plagiarized. Please discuss with me any questions that you might have about the use of secondary material.

As a word to the wise, read your paper out loud to yourself, asking yourself whether you would say what you have written. *Don't write just as you speak, but be sure that you would say what you write.* As you write, imagine that you are going to present your paper as a speech. *Picture your audience: first and foremost, other students!* Make sure that every sentence is clear and precise so that you can go on.

Note that late papers will be penalized one letter grade per day that they are late. (So a paper that would have been an A will be a B if it is late by a day, a C if it is late by two days, etc.) Again, due allowance will be made for reasonable excuses. You may also request extensions if need be. I urge you to take advantage of my office hours, listed above, in order to discuss the course generally and the paper in particular.

### *Exam*

There will be one final, take-home exam worth 20 percent of the final grade. Students will have approximately two weeks to complete this exam.

In sum:	Attendance/participation	= 14 percent
	Journal	= 20 percent
	Paper	= 20 percent
	Co-curricular report	= 6 percent
	Voter Registration and Issue Awareness Project	= 20 percent
	Final exam	= 20 percent
		= 100

### **Academic integrity**

To quote (with a few edits) from the Student Handbook (76-77):

In order for faculty members to perform their duty of fostering and accurately

evaluating the individual academic progress of each student, they need to assume that laboratory reports, examinations, essays, themes, term papers, and similar requirements submitted for credit as a part of a course or in fulfillment of a College requirement are the original works of the student. Put simply, a violation of academic integrity is an action where a student tries to violate this assumption of the faculty member. Therefore, students shall not knowingly

1. receive or attempt to receive non-authorized assistance in the preparation of any work (when direct quotations are used, they are to be properly cited, and when the ideas of another are incorporated into a paper or paraphrased, they are to be appropriately acknowledged by citation);
2. sell, give, lend, or otherwise furnish, or attempt to sell, give, lend, or otherwise furnish unauthorized assistance to another in such preparation of any work;
3. take or attempt to take, steal, or otherwise procure in an unauthorized manner any material pertaining to the conduct of a class, including tests, examinations, grade change forms, grade reports, roll books, or reports, etc.;
4. sell, give, lend, or otherwise furnish to any unauthorized person any illicitly obtained material that is known to contain questions or answers to any examination scheduled to be given at some subsequent date or time offered by the College;
5. submit the same work for more than one course unless the faculty member to whom the work is being submitted has given their prior consent;
6. possess or use, without authorization of the instructor, copies of tests, answer sheets, books, notes, calculators, computers, cheat sheets, or similar means that could interfere with the fair, accurate testing or evaluation of a student;
7. obtain, without authorization of the instructor, answers from another student's exam, quiz, computer, or paper; and
8. provide false information to an instructor or College official for the purpose of misrepresenting an activity outside of class (reports on field experiences, internships, etc.), or improperly seeking special consideration or privilege (excused absences, postponement of an exam or due date of papers or project, etc.).

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

All students who have a documented learning or physical disability are encouraged to schedule an appointment with the instructor during the first week of class to discuss any needed accommodations.

### **Required texts**

Subscription to the *New York Times* (courtesy of the McGowan Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility); Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), ISBN 9780691158112; Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), ISBN 9780812993547; Pope Francis, *Praise Be to You/Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015), ISBN

9781621640813; John Rawls *The Law of Peoples with "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), ISBN 9780674005426, plus texts on Moodle

**Schedule** (which may be revised as we proceed)

Week 1

Monday, 1/18 (COMPRESSED SCHEDULE, meeting 2:15-3:15)

Introduction

Wednesday, 1/20

Reading (on Moodle): Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen United States of America (1776) and Constitution of the United States

Week 2

Monday, 1/25

Reading (on Moodle): John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1689), ch. 2, ch. 16; Stanley Fish, "Stand Your Ground, Be a Man," *New York Times*, July 22, 2013; Justin P. McBrayer, "This Land Is Your Land. Or Is It?" *New York Times*, January 5, 2016

Wednesday, 1/27

Reading: Locke et al., continued

Week 3

Monday, 2/1

Reading (on Moodle): Supreme Court of the United States, *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008)

Recommended but not required (on Moodle): Supreme Court of the United States, *McDonald v. City of Chicago* (2010)

Wednesday, 2/3

Reading (on Moodle): Stephen Breyer, *Active Liberty: Interpreting Our Democratic Constitution* (Tanner Lectures, 2004), parts 1-2, part 3, section A, pp. 3-32

Recommended but not required (on Moodle): Supreme Court of the

United States, *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976) and *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010)

Week 4

Monday, 2/8

Reading (in part on Moodle): John Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” in *The Law of Peoples*, introduction, §§1, 3, 4, pp. 131-140, 149-156; and Pope Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965)

Recommended but not required (on Moodle): Barry Hudock, “The Fight for Religious Freedom: John Courtney Murray’s Role in *Dignitatis Humanae*,” *America*, November 30, 2015

Wednesday, 2/10

Reading (on Moodle): Supreme Court of the United States, *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* (2013)

Week 5

Monday, 2/15

Reading (in part on Moodle): Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” in *The Law of Peoples*, §§5-7, pp. 156-180; Judith Jarvis Thomson, “Abortion,” *Boston Review* 20 (Summer 1995); Ross Douthat, “Why the Pro-Life Movement Opposes Violence,” *New York Times*, December 1, 2015; and Cathleen Kaveny, “Vigilante Injustice: The Right to Life and the Rule of Law,” *Commonweal*, December 29, 2015

Wednesday, 2/17

Reading: Rawls et al., continued

Week 6

Monday, 2/22

Reading: Reading (on Moodle): William Galston, “Mark of Belonging: Why Circumcision Is No Crime,” *Commonweal*, May 5, 2014; and Elizabeth Brake, “Minimal Marriage: What Political Liberalism Implies for Marriage Law,” *Ethics* 120 (2010): 302-337

Recommended but not required (on Moodle): William Galston, “Two Concepts of Liberalism,” *Ethics* 105 (1995): 516-534; and Supreme Court

of the United States, *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015)

Wednesday, 2/24

Reading: Galston and Brake, continued

Week 7

Monday, 2/29

Reading: Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, introduction, pt. 1, §§2-4.3, pp. 3-10, 23-39; and Joseph Carens, "Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders," *Review of Politics* 49 (1987): 251-273

Recommended but not required (on Moodle): Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), ch. 2, "Membership," pp. 31-63; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano, "A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States" (2003); and Omri Boehm, "Can Refugees Have Human Rights?" *New York Times*, October 19, 2015

Wednesday, 3/2

Reading (in part on Moodle): Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, pt. 2, pp. 59-88; Katherine Zoepf, "Sisters in Law," *The New Yorker*, January 11, 2016; and David E. Sanger, "U.S. in a Bind as Saudi Actions Test a Durable Alliance," *New York Times*, January 4, 2016

Recommended but not required (on Moodle): Matt Schiavenza, "Why the U.S. Is Stuck with Saudi Arabia," *The Atlantic*, January 24, 2015; and "Room for Debate: Saudi Arabia: A Dangerous Ally?" *New York Times*, January 4, 2016

SPRING BREAK

Week 8

Monday, 3/14

Reading (in part on Moodle): Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, pt. 3, §§13-14, pp. 89-105; Elizabeth Anscombe, "Mr. Truman's Degree," in *Ethics, Religion, and Politics*, vol. 3 of *The Collected Papers of G.E.M. Anscombe*, ch. 7, pp. 62-71; and Richard Goldstein, "Paul W. Tibbets Jr., Pilot of Enola Gay, Dies at 92," *New York Times*, November 1, 2007

Recommended but not required (on Moodle): New York Times, “70 Years after Nagasaki Bombing, Atomic Debate Yield Little Consensus,” *New York Times*, August 8, 2015

Wednesday, 3/16

Reading (on Moodle): Bernard Prusak, *Catholic Moral Philosophy in Practice and Theory: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 2016), ch. 4, “Just Warriors, Unjust Wars? The Evolution of Just War Theory,” pp. 89-109; and Rachel Aviv, “The Refugee Dilemma,” *The New Yorker*, December 7, 2015

Recommend but not required (on Moodle): Supreme Court of the United States, *Gillette v. United States* and *Negre v. Larsen* (1971)

## Week 9

Monday, 3/21

Reading: Steve Coll, “The Unblinking Stare,” *The New Yorker*, November 24, 2014; Mary Ellen O’Connell, “Seductive Drones: Learning from a Decade of Lethal Operations,” *Journal of Law, Information and Society* (2011)

Wednesday, 3/23

Reading (in part on Moodle): Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, pt. 3, §15.1, pp. 105-106; and Richard Miller, “Equity in the Greenhouse”

## Week 10

NO CLASS Monday, 3/28

Wednesday, 3/30

Reading (in part on Moodle): Pope Francis, *Praise Be to You*, introduction, chs. 1, 4-5, pp. 9-45, 97-135

## Week 11

Monday, 4/4

Reading: Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, ch. 1, pp. 1-22

Tuesday, 4/5, 7:00 p.m., Burke Auditorium

CO-CURRICULAR EVENT: “Old Poison in New Bottles: How Racism Thrives in Integrated Schools and Why This Is a Problem of Justice,” Derrick Darby,

Professor of Philosophy, University of Michigan

Following up on September's panel discussion "After Ferguson" about race, crime, and policing, this lecture will stimulate reflection on the question: *How is the racist ideology of the past (that blacks are inferior to whites in intelligence and character) sustained by systemic practices within our schools today, and why is this unjust?* The focus will be on student tracking and school discipline practices.

Wednesday, 4/6

Reading (in part on Moodle): Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, ch. 2, pp. 23-43, and Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration," *The Atlantic*, October 2015

### Week 12

Monday, 4/11

Workshop on Voter Registration and Issue Awareness Project

Wednesday, 4/13

Workshop on Voter Registration and Issue Awareness Project

### Week 13

Monday, 4/18

Reading: Coates, *Between the World and Me*, pt. 1, pp. 1-71

Recommended but not required: James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1962)

Wednesday, 4/20

Reading: Coates, *Between the World and Me*, pts. 2-3, pp. 75-152

### Week 14

Monday, 4/25

Reading: Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, chs. 5-6, pp. 89-134

Tuesday, 4/26

Pennsylvania Primary Election Day

Wednesday, 4/27

Reading: Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, chs. 7-8, pp. 135-179

Recommended but not required (on Moodle): Adam Liptak, "Supreme Court Justices' Don't Bode Well for Affirmative Action," *New York Times*, December 9, 2015; and Derrick Darby and Argun Saatcioglu, "Race, Justice, and Desegregation," *Du Bois Review* 11 (2014): 87-108

Week 15

Monday, 5/2

Review

NO CLASS Wednesday, 5/4

Final exam