

Western University

Department of Philosophy

Philosophy 3870G (001): Philosophy of Social Science 2022-23

Classes

Monday 10:30-12:30, Wednesday 11:30-12:30 UC 1225

Instructors

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Office hours: Thursdays 12-1

Klimchuk will teach nine of the weeks we will meet and grade the long papers and exams. Ravikumar will teach three of the weeks we will meet and grade the short papers.

Description

A survey of a number of core philosophical questions raised in and about the social sciences, for example: Can, and ought, the social sciences aspire to objectivity? Is the goal of the social sciences explanation, prediction, understanding, prescription or some combination? Is social life governed by laws? Examples will be drawn from a number of social sciences, especially (but not only) economics and political science. We won't suppose that the answers to our questions will be the same across all disciplines. No particular background in any social science is required—I'll supply such background as is necessary to understand any readings that require it.

See the document "Topics and readings," under the Syllabus tab on the course OWL site for details.

Objectives

This course has two main objectives. The first is to introduce students to the philosophy of the social sciences and to a number of philosophically interesting questions raised in the social sciences. The second is to help them develop the skills philosophy requires: careful reading, critical thinking, and clear writing.

Texts

All readings will be available online, on the course OWL page, in the Resources folder.

Requirements and evaluation

(1) There will be two options for essays:

- (a) You may choose to write two short papers (5-6 double-spaced pages): $30\% \times 2 = 60\%$. There will be three topics for you to choose from, each with its own due date. You may write any two. You may also write a third paper, in which case your best two grades will count toward your final grade. These papers will not require any research.

See the document “Short essays,” under the Syllabus tab on the course OWL site, for more details.

- (b) Alternatively, you may choose to write one longer (10-12 double-spaced pages) research paper, worth 60%. This paper will engage with work on a topic in a social science, bringing to bear on it material and issues we have discussed in this course. This may be an attractive option for students coming from the social sciences. You will need to propose a topic and assemble a short bibliography and submit it for my approval.

2) A final exam, worth 40%.

Late papers

Late paper will be subject to a penalty of 2%/day, to a maximum of 10%. I will accept papers after they have accumulated the full penalty, until the last day of the classes, April 10, 2023.

If you need an extension on a paper, you will need to see an academic counsellor in the office of the dean of your faculty. Your counsellor will get in touch with me with any recommendations they have. I am not permitted to accept any documentation, medical or otherwise; please submit those to your counsellor. See below, under “Accommodation” under “Department Policies” for more information.

Auditing

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

Department of Philosophy Policies

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Evaluation of academic performance

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

Course assignments: final deadlines

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

Academic offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.