

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
GRADUATE COURSE OUTLINE 2018-19**

**Philosophy 9214B: The Social Contract from Plato to Rawls**

**Winter Term 2017  
Fridays 9:30 – 12:30  
StvH 1145**

**Instructor: Dennis Klimchuk  
StvH 3145 519-661-2111 ext.85758  
klimchuk@uwo.**

The dominant approach to political philosophy in the early modern period was social contract theory, according to which the only basis on which coercion can be legitimately exercised is through a set of institutions to which each has consented (or would or could consent), and is limited by the terms that structure such an agreement. We will focus the rise of social contract theory in the seventeenth century, starting with Grotius, to the beginning of its decline in the eighteenth, with Kant. Between the two we will also read Locke and Rousseau and some early modern critics of social contract theory such as Filmer and Hume. We will begin with a dialogue of Plato's that anticipates many ideas in this tradition and, after Kant, read Rawls, who followed it in many ways. We will conclude by considering some contemporary scholarship on the tradition and ask what we can learn from it today.

This course will count as a survey in either history or MPL.

**TEXTS**

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)  
John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett)  
Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Hackett)

In addition, a number of other readings will be made available on the course OWL page

**REQUIREMENTS**

There will be two options for the work in this course:

1. Four short papers (5pp), commenting on issues in the readings, topics first approved by me (informally). Each will be due two weeks after the class for which the reading on which you are commenting was discussed. For these papers you are welcome but not required to do research into the relevant scholarly literature.
2. A term paper on a topic of your choice (100%), about 15 pp. For a term paper you will be expected to look into the relevant scholarly literature. I will help get you started.

**AUDIT**

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

Incompletes are granted at the *exclusive* discretion of the Graduate Program Chair, and only on the basis of documented medical or compassionate grounds. If, during the course, you envisage any difficulty completing all the required work by the completion deadline, consult immediately with the instructor *and* the Graduate Program Chair.

### **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is unacknowledged copying or paraphrasing of words or ideas of another person. Whenever students take an idea or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy pp. 29-30 in the 2001 Western Academic Calendar).

### **PLAGIARISM CHECKING**

The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.