

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2020-21**

**Philosophy 2800G
History of Political Philosophy
(Hobbes and the Liberal Tradition, and some critiques)**

Winter 2021

*Mostly Asynchronous
(with some synchronous seminar elements, to
be scheduled Tuesdays 11:30 – 1:30 and
Thursdays 12:30 – 1:30)*

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DESCRIPTION

This course will focus on the development of the liberal tradition in political philosophy. Liberalism is still the dominant force in political theory, and in the political practice of contemporary democratic societies. Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, with its commitment to individual liberty, broad equality and democratic legitimacy is a classically liberal document. There is a sense in which liberalism has become the wallpaper of our political existence: its influence is so broad and so deep that we hardly notice it, but it frames everything that we do, every theory we advance.

We will trace liberalism's origins in the logic of Thomas Hobbes's (decidedly illiberal) contract theory, through its classic expression in the work John Locke and John Stuart Mill. Like any long-dominant force, liberalism has been assailed (and re-shaped) by critical forces. So, we will consider some of the historical challenges and critiques that were advanced by Mary Wollstonecraft and Karl Marx. And we will also address some contemporary critiques regarding the connection between liberalism and racism, economic inequality and gender oppression.

TEXTS

We will be reading selections from the following texts – will use electronic versions wherever possible. The definitive versions will be posted before the start of the course.

Thomas Hobbes – Leviathan

John Locke – Two Treatises of Government

Mary Wollstonecraft – A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

Karl Marx – The Communist Manifest

The 1844 Manuscripts

John Stuart Mill – On Liberty

The Subjection of Women

And a selection of articles, which will be available through the University Library.

OBJECTIVES

As noted above, the liberal tradition is the currently dominant political framework in democratic countries around the world, including Canada. It is also quite possibly the most critiqued tradition in the history of political philosophy. The goal here is to understand both its appeal and its shortcomings. Questions to consider include: is the liberal tradition still viable? How does/how can the tradition respond to demands for justice and equal treatment from women, racialized peoples and the economically disadvantaged? Does the liberal approach suffer from internal inconsistencies, or can apparent tensions be resolved in a way that maintains the essential commitments to equality and liberty? Addressing primary texts and select secondary materials, and situating these in our contemporary context, will make it both possible and necessary to develop philosophical and analytical skills to a high level of academic accomplishment.

REQUIREMENTS

As of July 2020, the precise format of the assignments is still somewhat fluid. Much will depend on the degree to which we will be able to hold small group seminars online. Here is the current plan:

- 1 short essay (5-7 pages) – 25% of the grade
- 5 “seminar reports” (1-2pages) – 35% of the grade
- 1 long final essay (10-15 pages) – 40% of the grade

AUDIT

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** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <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.

SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting

assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances: http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322

EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive 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 ASSIGNMENT

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.