

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Undergraduate Course Outline 2024-25

PHILOSOP 2801G
Contemporary Political Philosophy

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

PREREQUISITE CHECKING

N/A

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the prerequisites for this course or have special permission to take the course without the prerequisites. [Student Responsibility for Course Selection](#)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course introduces students to some of the major philosophical perspectives that continue to inform contemporary social and political thought. With automation of jobs as a threat on the horizon as well as the loss of the idea of work as a vocation or as a career, how should we think of work? One answer we will focus on will be the idea of the Universal Basic Income. We then switch to the contemporary crises in democracy. I put crises in plural because there are multiple worries that voters are gravely uninformed but also systematically misinformed as well as polarized. There is also the problem that elites and the rich are actually in control. For our final unit, after setting up the problem, we will look at new solutions to many of these problems from so called “lottocratic” solutions, voter restrictions as well as dispersing power away from elites.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Tue., Jan. 7 – How to do a discussion question, no reading.

Thu., Jan. 9 – VICE future of work and video on AI

Tue., Jan. 14 - Is the goal better work or no work? (Reading on Marx + Work as an Adaptive Preference)

Thu., Jan. 16 – Lowery – Give People Money

Tue., Jan. 21 – Anderson – Is Your Boss a Dictator

Thu., Jan. 23 – Graeber - BS Jobs

Tue., Jan. 28 – Weeks – Post-Work Feminist Case for UBI; Kate Mangino – What to do about an Unequal Partnership in Domestic Labour (Optional reading)

Thu., Jan. 30 - Cassass – Unconditional Freedom

Tue., Feb. 4 – Cassass – Unconditional Freedom

Thu., Feb. 6 - Benanav - Automation and the Future of Work

Tue., Feb. 11 - Dahl – Intrinsic Justification of Democracy

Thu., Feb. 13 – Estlund - Instrumental Justification of Democracy

Tue., Feb. 18 – Reading Week

Thu., Feb. 20 – Reading Week

Tue., Feb. 25 – Plato’s Critique of Democracy

Thu., Feb. 27 – Brennan – Against Democracy

Tue., Mar. 4 – Tallise on Polarization

Thu., Mar. 6 – Abizadeh – Representation, Bicameralism, Political Equality and Sortition

Tue., Mar. 11 – Guerrero Lottocracy

Thu., Mar. 13 - Guerrero Lottocracy

Tue., Mar. 18 – Lever – “The Circumstance of Democracy”: Why Random Selection is Not Better than Elections

Thu., Mar. 20 – Liquid Democracy??

Tue., Mar. 25 – Bagg – Dispersion of Power

Thu., Mar. 27 – Bagg - Dispersion of Power

Tue., Apr. 1 – Landmore – Open Democracy (Optional: Lessons from the French Citizens’ Convention [Lottocracy] for Climate)

Thu., Apr. 3 - Landmore vs Brennan book

TEXTS

All texts will be on OWL Brightspace.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Midterm: (1000 words) Essay on the Work and UBI unit - 20%

Critical Response (1500 words) to one of the readings in Democracy unit – 25%

Final paper (2000 words) on Democracy unit – 35%

Randomized discussion questions: Throughout the semester, you will be randomly picked in class to ask the class a discussion question based on the reading that day – 20%

OWL Brightspace

Students are responsible for checking the course site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. Students may access the OWL Brightspace Learner Support site for assistance: <https://brightspacehelp.uwo.ca/> For IT related issues, they may contact Western Technology Services Helpdesk directly: <https://wts.uwo.ca/helpdesk/>.

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.

AUDIT

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

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

No aids are permitted for this exam. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

“In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If plagiarism or unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes and/or drafts of assignments after the assignment has been submitted. Students must keep all notes and first drafts until the assignment is returned to them.”

“For me, grading was never about grades; it was about the intensive feedback, the ongoing revisions of drafts, the individual conversations with students, that went into doing good work. Good work was never about writing good papers. It was about being able to order your world, to take the confusion that one is confronted with, and turn it into something meaningful and coherent. And to know that that doesn't just happen spontaneously or instinctively; it's a practice, requiring, well, work.

That's not simply a skill for college classes. That's a life-long practice, of being able to see a situation, pick out those elements that matter and lend it significance, and bring clarity out of chaos...

The only thing, in my life, that has even come close to what writing forces me to do is psychoanalysis, not therapy, but five days on the couch, with your analyst behind you saying almost nothing. Only on the couch have I been led to externalize myself, to throw my thoughts

and feelings onto a screen and to look at them, to see them as something other, coldly and from a distance, the way I do when I write.”

- Corey Robin <https://coreyrobin.com/2023/07/30/how-chatgpt-changed-my-plans-for-the-fall/>

Personally, I think the importance of writing your own work is threefold: 1) Writing is not discovering or uncovering fully formed ideas and arguments you already have. Writing itself generates the knowledge, helps us think through an idea. Writing *is* thinking. 2) Writing *should* allow us to manifest our own point of view, but this can only happen if we work to develop our own “voice”. 3) Just as it is going from a novice to an expert in any craft, becoming a writer is a self-transformative experience. I think using ChatGPT and other AI writing tools as a crutch when things get hard robs you of these three learning experiences and so, to that end:

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 https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western](#)

Student Medical Certificate (SMC) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test".

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.

SCHOLASTIC 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

Statement on the use of plagiarism-checking software

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>).

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) 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 (24/7 availability).

GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.