

Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy (01:730:255:01)

Adam Gibbons

adam.gibbons@rutgers.edu

106 Somerset Street, 5th Floor

Office 535

Office Hours: Wednesday 1pm-2pm (or by appointment)

Course Outline

This course will mostly be structured around readings related to some core concepts in social and political philosophy: justice, rights, equality, freedom, and democracy. Along the way, we will also examine some more applied issues in contemporary social and political philosophy, including whether we have a duty to give to charity, voter ignorance, proposed alternatives to democracy, gun rights, and immigration.

Course Requirements

Attendance and participation – 10%

Reflection pieces – 30%

Exams – 60%

Attendance and Participation

I expect students to come to class with papers read in advance, ready to discuss the relevant issues. The class will be far more engaging when you actively participate – raise objections, express your frustration or confusion, discuss your own original ideas and arguments, bring up relevant current examples, and so on. Throughout the term, I will be taking note of who contributes, ultimately factoring such contribution into the overall grade.

Reflection Pieces

Over the course of the term, you will write **six** short reflection pieces on the articles you have read. These pieces will be **1-2** (typed) pages and must engage critically with some argument or theme present in one of the assigned readings. You can criticize the authors, defend the authors from criticisms discussed in class, raise unnoticed issues, construct your own arguments, etc. However, you must not simply describe or summarize the authors' positions.

These pieces can be on any of the assigned readings. You can spread them out over the course of the term, write on the first six readings, write on the last six, and so on. I ask only that they are not all sent at the one time, and that you write only one piece per reading.

Exams

There will be two exams, both worth 30% of the overall grade. Rather than sitting the exams in class, these will be **take-home exams**. This will give you more time to answer the questions, but it also means that I will be expecting higher quality answers. The first will be distributed **October 30th** and will be due back to me **November 4th**. The second will be distributed **December 11th** and will be due back to me **December 15th**.

Grade Breakdown

A: 90-100

B+: 85-89

B: 80-84

C+: 75-79

C: 70-74

D: 60-69

F: 0-59

Course Schedule

(Note: no textbook is required for this course. All readings will be made available through Sakai.)

Sep 4th: Introduction

Sep 9th: The Basics of Argument and Reasoning

Sep 11th: Core Concepts in Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy

Rights

Sep 16th: Wenar, 'Rights', SEP (Sections 1-2.1.6)

Sep 18th: Wenar, 'Rights', SEP (Sections 2.2., 6.1-6.2)

Justice

Sep 23rd: Driver, 'Utilitarianism'

Sep 25th: Driver, 'Utilitarianism', ctd.

Sep 30th: **NO CLASS**

Oct 2nd: Rawls, 'A Theory of Justice' (Sections 1-6, 11)

Oct 7th: Nozick, 'The Entitlement Theory of Justice'

Oct 9th: Cohen, 'Why not Socialism?' (Sections 1-3)

Equality

Oct 14th: Temkin, 'Equality: A Complex, Individualistic, and Comparative Notion'

Oct 16th: Narveson, 'Egalitarianism: Partial, Counterproductive, and Baseless'

Oct 21st: Phillips, 'Defending Equality of Outcome'

Freedom

Oct 23rd: Mill, 'On Liberty'

Oct 28th: Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty'

Oct 30th: Pettit, 'Republican Political Theory' [**First take-home exam distributed**]

Democracy

Nov 4th: Bird, 'Democratic Rule' [**First exam due**]

Nov 6th: Valentini, 'Justice and Democracy'

Nov 11th: Somin, 'Knowledge About Ignorance'

Nov 13th: Brennan, 'The Right to a Competent Electorate'

Nov 18th: Guerrero, 'Against Elections'

Wealth and Morality

Nov 20th: Singer, 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality'

Nov 25th: Wolf, 'Moral Saints'

Nov 27th: **NO CLASS**

Gun Rights

Dec 2nd: Huemer, 'Is There a Right to Own a Gun?'

Dec 4th: Dixon, 'On Philosophers and Handguns'

Immigration

Dec 9th: Huemer, 'Is There a Right to Immigrate?'

Dec 11th: Joshi, 'For (Some) Immigration Restrictions' [**Second take-home exam distributed**]

Plagiarism Guidelines

Please be sure to adhere to Rutgers policy on plagiarism and academic integrity. This website should contain the information you need: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

Accessibility

As students at Rutgers, you are each entitled to equal access to educational opportunities at this university. (Or to put things in a way we will later come to understand, you each have a *claim-right* against the university that you are afforded such equal access.) Feel free to speak to me about any issues you may have, and please avail yourself of the services provided by the ODS (Office of Disability Services). Here is a link to their website: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Student Wellness

Here are some links that may prove useful during your time here at Rutgers:

Rutgers Student Wellness Program

<https://ubhc.rutgers.edu/swp/index.html>

CAPS

<http://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/>

Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance

<http://vpva.rutgers.edu/>