

**POLS 4190: Special Topics in Theory/Methods:
Morality, Markets, and the State**

University of Georgia, Department of Political Science

Fall 2019

T TR 11:00am-12:15pm

Baldwin 301

Instructor: Harrison Frye

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Office Hours: T TR 2:00pm-3:00pm, and by appointment

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We live in a time of relative dissatisfaction with the basic institutions of liberal democracy. Following the 2008 financial crisis, many began wondering whether we should move away from private property and the market. Elections across the world have led others question the virtue of democratic elections. This course critically investigates the fundamental institutions of liberal democracy to see if such skepticism is warranted. The goal is not just to understand these institutions and how they operate, but also to evaluate them from a moral perspective. To that end, we will read from political scientists, economists, and philosophers on questions such as:

- What (if anything) justifies private property?
- Why organize the economy through a market?
- Is it just that some are paid so much while others are paid so little?
- Are there some goods and services that should not be for sale?
- Do people have a duty to vote?
- Should we entertain alternatives to democracy?

And so on. The hope is that, by integrating different approaches, you will be in a better position to develop critical, informed answers to questions such as these.

The syllabus describes (1) course objectives, (2) course materials, (3) grades and assignments, (4) rules and requirements (including important dates), (5) a course schedule, and (6) short paper prompts.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

1. Course Objectives

- Sharpen analytical thinking and debating skills.
- Understand the moral foundations of economic and political institutions.
- Practice engaging with viewpoints different than one's own.
- Confront difficult moral questions about the way we organize our social life.
- Come to understand one's personal values better.

2. Course Materials

I do not require you to purchase any books for this course. Readings will be available on eLC.

3. Assignments and Grading

The following components will make up your grade in this course:

1. Reading Quizzes: 20%
2. Short Papers: 25%
3. Midterm Paper: 27.5%
4. Final Paper: 27.5%

Participation:

While participation does not appear as a portion of your total grade, participation is a requirement. Repeated absences without sufficient excuse will incur a penalty of up to a full letter grade. If you are unable to attend class, let me know ahead of time.

Participation can also make a difference in your grade. Poor attendance and participation can result in reduction of your final grade by a third of a letter grade. Exceptional participation can result in a boost of your final grade by a third of a letter grade.

Reading Quizzes:

There will be 10 quizzes based on the reading administered randomly throughout the semester at the beginning of class. No make-ups will be administered – so it is important to be on time! These quizzes will ask you to write a few sentences in response to a question about the reading for that day. The questions will not be trick questions, but track main features of the readings.

To prepare for such quizzes, it is a good idea to write notes for each reading. Include in these notes information such as: What is/are the main claim(s) in this reading? How does the author support this/these claim(s)? Are there any key examples/cases? What are these examples/cases supposed to do for the author? You are free to consult your readings and notes during these quizzes.

These quizzes will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Your letter grade for this part of your total grade will be based on the number of passes as follows:

9-10 Passes: A

7-8 """: B+

5-6 """: B

4-5 """: C+

3-4 """: C

1-2 """: D+

Short Papers:

Going through the class schedule, you will have noticed five days where a short paper is due. In section 6 below, I provide a more detailed explanation of these papers. Each paper must be submitted on eLC by class time on the date it is due. I also expect to bring your answer to class that day. The idea is to get you to engage the material on your own terms before going through it in class. I will ask people to share their short papers in class as a way of provoking discussion. The default grade for satisfactory completion is a B+. Insightful answers that show a deeper engagement with the reading will do better. Answers that show limited engagement with the reading will fare poorer.

Midterm and Final Papers:

There will be two 1500-word papers due throughout semester. The midterm paper is due October 4 at 5pm, and the final paper due December 12 at 5pm. More information on the papers will be provided later in the semester.

4. Rules and Requirements

Academic Freedom and Respect:

We will be talking about controversial issues in this course. I expect students to disagree with each other, as well as with me. To that end, it is important to have an open, civil environment to explore and express a variety of positions. The point is to learn something from one another, not to “win.” This requires each of us to engage respectfully with one another, especially when we disagree.

Electronic Devices:

There is good evidence that electronic devices significantly distract from learning. I do not ban laptops because I understand that some people might have very good reasons to use them. That being said, unless you have a very good reason, I recommend not using laptops. From my own experience, not having laptops makes time in classroom more engaging and valuable.

Academic Integrity:

UGA Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated on any assignment. *You* are responsible for knowing and following the honor code and all rules of academic integrity.

Late Work:

For written work, papers submitted past the deadline will incur a penalty of a third of a letter grade for each 24-hour period the paper is late. Emergencies do happen. I will accommodate any that should come up. NB: Computer problems do not count as an emergency. Back up early and often. I recommend using a cloud service such as Dropbox or Google Drive.

Important Dates:

Fall Semester Begins – August 14
Add/Drop – August 14-20
Midterm Paper Due – October 4
Withdrawal Date – October 21
Thanksgiving Break – November 27-29
Classes End – December 4
Final Paper Due – December 12

5. Course Schedule

All readings available on eLC.

August 15 – Introduction

No readings

Part I – Property

August 20 – The Labor Theory of Property

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapter 5; Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, [selections]

August 22 – The Criticism of Private Property

G. A. Cohen, "Freedom, Capitalism, and the Proletariat"

August 27 – Equality and Ownership

Michael Otsuka, "Self-Ownership and Equality: A Lockean Reconciliation"

August 29 – Property in Theory and Practice
David Schmitz, “The Institution of Property”

September 3 – Real, Existing Communism
History and Bylaws of Twin Oaks
Short Paper 1 Due

September 5 – Communal Property
Ran Abramitzky, *The Mystery of the Kibbutz* [selections]

Part II – The Market

September 10 – The Classic Defense
Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* [selections]

September 12 – Alienation and Estrangement
Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* [selections]
Short Paper 2 due

September 17 – Information
F. A. Hayek, “The Moral Imperative of the Market”; F. A. Hayek, “The Use of Knowledge in Society”

September 19 – Transaction Costs
Ronald Coase, “The Problem of Social Cost”

September 24 – Firm Authority
Elizabeth Anderson, “Private Government”

September 26 – The Profit Motive
Joseph Heath, “The “Psychopathic” Pursuit of Profit”

October 1 – Markets without Property
Eric Posner and Glen Weyl, “Property is Monopoly”

October 3 – Midterm Paper
No class for paper writing (**Midterm due October 4 at 5pm**).

Part III – Topics in Markets

October 8 – Commodification
Elizabeth Anderson, “Is Women’s Labor a Commodity?”

October 10 - Commodification, Cont.

Jason Brennan and Peter Jaworski, "Markets without Symbolic Limits"

October 15 - Kidney Markets

Frank McCormick et al. "The Terrible Toll of the Kidney Shortage"

Debra Satz, "The Moral Limits of Markets: The Case of Human Kidneys"

Short Paper 3 Due

October 17 - Exploitation

Benjamin Powell and Matt Zwolinski, "The Ethical and Economic Case against Sweatshops: A Critical Assessment"

October 22 - Just Wages

Joseph Heath, "On the Very Idea of a Just Wage"

October 24 - Environmental Conservation

David Schmitz, "Natural Enemies"

October 29 - Education

Daniel Halliday, "Private education, Positional Goods, and the Arms Race Problem"

October 31 - Boycotts

Waheed Hussain, "Is Ethical Consumerism an Impermissible Form of Vigilantism?"

Part IV - Democracy and Voting

November 5 - Politics and Irrationality

Michael Huemer, "Why People Are Irrational about Politics"

Short Paper 4 Due

November 7 - The Will of the People

Gerald Gaus, "Social Choice Theory"

November 12 - The Duty to Vote

Loren Lomasky and Geoffrey Brennan, "Is There a Duty to Vote?"

November 14 - Campaign Finance

Ryan Pevnick, "Does the Egalitarian Rationale for Campaign Finance Succeed?"

November 19 - Against Democracy

Jason Brennan, "The Right to a Competent Electorate"

November 21 - Epistocracy

Jason Brennan, "The Rule of the Knowers"

Short Paper 5 Due

November 26 – Lottocracy

Alex Guerrero, “Against Elections: The Lottocratic Alternative”

November 28 – Thanksgiving

No Class.

December 3 – More Democracy?

Hélène Landemore, “Inclusive Constitution-Making: The Icelandic Experiment”

Final Paper Due December 12

6. Short Paper Prompts

Please write ~400 words in response to the prompts below, due by class time on the date noted (see also the schedule). While you will turn in short papers on eLC, it is important you bring your answer to class. We will use answers to provoke conversation.

Short Paper 1 (due September 3):

In the previous class, we discussed how private property can solve certain problems of cooperation. Does the commune of Twin Oaks solve these problems? How or how not?

Short Paper 2 (due September 12):

Marx says,

It is true that labor produces for the rich wonderful things – but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces – but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty – but for the worker, deformity. It replaces labor by machines, but it throws one section of the workers back into barbarous types of labor and it turns the other section into a machine. It produces intelligence – but for the worker, stupidity, cretinism.

What support does Marx offer for this statement?

Short Paper 3 (due October 15):

Satz outlines a number of objections to kidney markets. Which do you think is the strongest and why?

Short Paper 4 (due November 5):

Huemer argues that disagreement in politics is a product of irrationality rather than brute disagreement or the complexity of political life. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Short Paper 5 (due November 21):

Brennan describes a variety of forms of epistocracy. Which one of these that seems the most plausible to you? Why?