

Philosophy 125
Political Philosophy
Fall Term 2000

Mon, Wed 10.30 - 11.20, WLH 119
Sections to be arranged

Mathias Risse
SSS 902
432 1689
Office Hour Wed 2-3 and by appointment
mathias.risse@yale.edu

Teaching Assistant: Desmond Hogan, desmond.hogan@yale.edu

A central concern of political philosophy is to assess the extent and limits of legitimate state power. The contractarian tradition provides a set of responses to this concern. The pivotal idea of this tradition is that legitimate state power is to be derived, in one way or another, from some form of consent given by the individuals who are subject to such state power. Different writers have developed this core idea into very different accounts of legitimacy of state power. In this class we will study excerpts from the writings of five of the most influential writers in this tradition: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Rawls, and Robert Nozick. But these philosophers are not merely among the most influential in their own tradition. Rather, their writings to a large extent set the stage for contemporary political thought and thereby for the theoretical underpinnings of politics, in particular in the Anglo-American countries. Familiarity with these authors is invaluable for anybody aiming at a career that is only remotely connected to legal, political, or social matters. No prior exposure to philosophy is required; but students should be willing to read difficult and dense philosophical texts slowly and carefully in order to get used to thinking through philosophical arguments. We will not read any secondary literature. Papers for this class (as will be explained in more detail in class) are expected to discuss “small” questions in depth, rather than “big” question superficially.

Requirements

One midterm paper (6-8 pages), one final paper (6-8 pages), and a final exam. A selection of essay topics will be distributed in advance for each assignment. The midterm paper will count 25%, the final paper 35%, the final exam 30%, and section attendance/participation 10%. Students are required to attend both the lectures and the sections.

Required Reading

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge)
 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge)
 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings* (Hackett)
 Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Basic Books)
 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard – Revised Edition only!!)

These books are available for purchase at Bookhaven, York Street.

Schedule

Wed, Sept 6	Introduction
Mon, Sept 11	Editor's Introduction to the <i>Leviathan</i> (recommended); Hobbes, chapters 6, 10-11, and 13-17
Wed, Sept 13	Hobbes, chapters 18-19, and 29-30
Mon, Sept 18	Hobbes, chapters 21, 24, and 28
Wed, Sept 20	Hobbes, no new reading
Mon, Sept 25	Editor's Introduction to the Two Treatises of Government, pp 16-66; Locke, Second Treatise, chapters 1-4
Wed, Sep 27	Locke, Second Treatise, chapter 5
Mon, Oct 2	Locke, Second Treatise, chapters 7-9
Wed, Oct 4	Locke, Second Treatise, chapters 10-14
Mon, Oct 9	Locke, Second Treatise, chapters 17-19
Wed, Oct 11	Rousseau, Social Contract, book 1
Mon, Oct 16	Rousseau, Social Contract, book 2
Wed, Oct 18	Rousseau, Social Contract, book 3

Fri, Oct 20 – Midterm papers due

Mon, Oct 23	Rousseau, Social Contract, book 4
Wed, Oct 25	Nozick, pp. 3-35, 48-53
Mon, Oct 30	Nozick, pp. 96-119
Wed, Nov 1	Nozick, pp. 149-182
Mon, Nov 6	Rawls, sections 1-4 and 20-25
Wed, Nov 8	Rawls, sections 5-7 and 11-17
Mon, Nov 13	Rawls, no new reading
Wed, Nov 15	Rawls, sections 26-30

break

Mon, Nov 27	Nozick, pp 183-231
Wed, Nov 29	Rawls, sections 9, 40-41, and 87
Mon, Dec 4	Rawls, sections 18-19 and 51-52
Wed, Dec. 6	Conclusion

Final paper deadline and final exam to be arranged