

PHIL 144/ LGST 144
Topics in Social and Political Philosophy
Instructor: Rachel Achs

rachs@ucsc.edu

Office: Cowell College Faculty Annex, Room 107

Office Hours: Mondays 3-4pm in person; Tuesdays 1-2pm on Zoom (access through canvas)

Course Canvas: <https://canvas.ucsc.edu/courses/66161>

Course Description

From voting (or not), to paying taxes (or not), to driving on the right (or left) side of the road, we all inevitably face many choices in life about how to interact with government and its laws. This class investigates several questions that are especially pressing to consider as we make those choices. They include: Do we have an obligation to obey the law (and why or why not)? What's a crime, and what, if anything, justifies punishment for it? Can we imagine a criminal justice system that looks radically different from our own? What types of laws or social arrangements should we protest, and what are the limits of permissible protest? Should people be free to say whatever they want, or are some types of speech so pernicious that they should be canceled or banned? Who should we listen to in forming our political opinions, and how trustful should we be of ourselves?

Class Time and Location

Time: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday: 1:20PM – 2:25PM.

Room: Soc Sci 2 075

Readings

All readings will be made available on the course's Canvas site, under the "Files" tab.

Assignments and Grading

10 % – 10 Reading Questions (out of 15 opportunities to submit)

25% – Short Paper 1 (500 – 750 words); 5% of this grade will be a "cover letter"

25 % – Short Paper 2 (500 – 750 words); 5% of this grade will be a "cover letter"

40% – Final Paper (1250 – 1750 words); 5% of this grade will be a "cover letter"

Detailed descriptions of each assignment will be posted under the "Assignments" tab on canvas.

Late Assignment/Extension Policy

I won't grant extensions on Reading Questions (but note that you need only complete 10 out of 15). On paper assignments, I'll usually be happy to grant extensions to accommodate any sort of conflict, *provided that you ask for them at least 24 hours in advance*. Papers that are late and haven't been granted an extension will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day. (Of course, exceptions may be made to this policy in extenuating circumstances.)

Disability

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please affiliate with the DRC. I encourage all students to benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu. For

students already affiliated, make sure that you have requested Academic Access Letters, where you intend to use accommodations. Please also come introduce yourself! I would like us to discuss how we can implement your accommodations in this course to ensure your access and full engagement.

Title IX/Care Advisory Statement

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) Office by calling (831) 502-2273. In addition, Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) can provide confidential, counseling support, (831) 459-2628. You can also report gender discrimination directly to the University's Title IX Office, (831) 459-2462. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1. For emergencies call 911. Faculty are required under the UC Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment to inform the Title IX Office should they become aware that you or any other student has experienced sexual violence or sexual harassment.

Plagiarism

Philosophy is a collaborative endeavor, and I encourage you to discuss course content with your peers, your families, your, friends, your enemies, and even to share paper drafts and give one another comments if you wish. However, work you submit must reflect your own knowledge and your original contribution. If someone else suggests, either in conversation or in written comments, a point that constitutes an addition to your paper, you need to cite that person (e.g., include a footnote: "This point/example/argument was suggested to me in conversation by Name").

More generally, you are responsible for being familiar with UCSC's policies on plagiarism and proper sourcing (see: <https://ue.ucsc.edu/academic-misconduct.html>). Plagiarism is a serious academic offense; at a minimum, plagiarism will result in failing this course (!). If you have any questions about how to avoid plagiarism and ensure the originality of your work, please speak to me.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

Using AI based on language models (e.g., ChatGPT, Bing, Anthropic, etc.) to help complete assignments in any way* will be treated as plagiarism, and hopefully that will provide some incentive not to do it. Here's a better incentive: The point of this class (indeed, of any philosophy class) is for you to *think*, sometimes by yourself, and sometimes in conversation with others. This involves having insights, analyzing, reflecting, forming your own opinions, and figuring out how to express them – all skills that, like playing saxophone, Olympic surfing, and decorating a wedding cake, require practice and effort. Thinking in this way can be very painful and deeply unsettling. It is also – I promise – one of the most rewarding things we can do in life. And it's what doing philosophy *is*. Of course, you can do *some* thinking while using AI. But AI helps you *avoid* thinking, and, the more you use it, the less you're having precisely the experiences doing and learning to do philosophy that the assignments are designed for you to have. So, if you're taking

* Should I make an exception for letting ChatGPT check your spelling? Probably. But why not just use spellcheck, and avoid temptation?

this class because you're interested in doing philosophy, then using AI is counter to your own purposes. If, on the other hand, you're not really interested in doing philosophy, then there are many other courses you'd probably be better off taking!

In-Class Technology Policy

Let's chat!

What You Can Expect of Me

I'll do my best grade all assignments in a timely manner, and to respond to your emails within 24 hours on a weekday, and 48 hours on a weekend. You should feel free to send me emails about course content, but it is possible that I'll invite you to discuss your message with me in person during office hours, rather than responding in writing. I can't read paper drafts ahead of time, but I'm very happy to talk through ideas with you before your papers are due.

Course Schedule

F Sept 29 – Introduction

Unit 1: Political Legitimacy

M Oct 2 – Plato, *Crito*; **Reading Question 1 due 6am**

W Oct 4 – [continue with Plato; no new reading]

F Oct 6 – John Locke, selections from the *Second Treatise on Government*: Chs 2-3; Chs 8-9; Ch 11; **Reading Question 2 due 6am**

M Oct 9 – [continue with Locke; no new reading]

W Oct 11 – Jean-Jacques Rousseau, selections from *The Social Contract*: Book I, Chs 4-7; Book II, Chs 3-4; Book III, Ch 1 and Ch 15; **Reading Question 3 due 6am**

F Oct 13 – [continue with Rousseau; no new reading]

Unit 2: (Crime and) Punishment

M Oct 16 – H.L.A Hart, “Prolegomenon to the Principles of Punishment”; **Reading Question 4 due 6am**

W Oct 18 – [continue with Hart; no new reading]

F Oct 20 – Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, chapters 1 and 6; **Reading Question 5 due 6am**

M Oct 23 – [continue with Davis; no new reading]

W Oct 25 – Lucy Allais, “Restorative Justice, Retributive Justice, and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission”; **Reading Question 6 due 6am**

F Oct 27 – [continue with Allais; no new reading]

Unit 3: Protest and Civil Disobedience

M Oct 30 – John Rawls, selections from *A Theory of Justice* and Martin Luther King Jr. “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”; **Reading Question 7 due 6am**

W Nov 1 – [continue with Rawls and King; no new reading]

****Th Nov 2 – First Short Paper due at 11:59PM****

F Nov 3 – David Lyons, “Moral Judgment, Historical Reality, and Civil Disobedience”;

Reading Question 8 due 6am

M Nov 6 – [continue with Lyons; no new reading]

W Nov 8 – Alex Gourevitch, “The Right to Strike: A Radical View”; **Reading Question 9 due 6am**

F Nov 10 – *no class* Veterans Day

Unit 4: Freedom of Speech and Political Correctness

M Nov 13 – John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chapter 2; **Reading Question 10 due 6am**

W Nov 15 – [continue with Mill; no new reading]

F Nov 17 – Ronni Sadovsky, “Political Etiquette”; **Reading Question 11 due 6am**

M Nov 20 – [continue with Sadovsky; no new reading]

W Nov 22 – C. Thi Nyugen, “Twitter Gamifies Communication”; **Reading Question 12 due 6am**

F Nov 24 - *no class* Thanksgiving

Unit 5: Political Epistemology: Ideology, Ignorance, and Social Location

M Nov 27 Tommie Shelby “Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory”; **Reading Question 13 due 6am**

****Tu Nov 28 – Second Short Paper due at 11:59PM****

W Nov 29 [continue with Shelby; no new reading]

F Dec 1 Charles Mills, “White Ignorance”; **Reading Question 14 due 6am**

M Dec 4 [continue with Mills; no new reading]

W Dec 6 Lidal Dror, “Is There an Epistemic Advantage to Being Oppressed?”; **Reading Question 15 due 6am**

F Dec 8 [continue with Dror; no new reading]

****Th Dec 14 – Final Paper due at 11:59PM****