

Phil 172 Topics in Political Philosophy

Syllabus
Spring 2024
Tu & Th 11:00 am-12:20 pm
Ridge Walk Academic Complex
Room 426

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My office: RWAC 491
Student drop-in hours: W: 11:00 am-1:00 pm

1. Overview

Robert Nozick is often credited with contributing to the rebirth of political philosophy after a long period of dormancy in the 20th century. This class will engage Nozick's most famous work and the one by him most credited with helping rejuvenate philosophy's engagement with politics, *Anarchy State and Utopia* (ASU). We will pay particular attention to 1) the argument that a government could in principle arise from a state of nature without impermissibly violating anyone's rights, thereby refuting an anarchist critique of the state; 2) the argument that only a minimal state, which does not redistribute resources to the needy, is just; 3) Nozick's critique of John Rawls; and 4) his outline and defense of the diverse utopian communities that could exist in a minimal state, including those that, unlike Nozick's ideal government, extensively redistribute resources.

Nozick's most controversial argument is easily his brief against liberal and socialist conceptions of distributive justice. As one commentator we will read, Eric Mack, has put it, ASU "shocked the philosophical world with its robust and sophisticated defense of the minimal state." We will look at the debate ASU set off concerning the proper role of the state and other topics by reading a range of critical responses. Some of these argue that Nozick's theory suffers from fatal problems that bedevil defenses of unregulated markets in general. Others engage Nozick's view that we should not eat animals, analyze his famous experience-machine thought experiment or invoke his philosophy to defend an immigration policy of open borders. We will devote special attention to the debate over Nozick's view that historical injustices require rectification, and ask what his theory may entail for native Americans and other groups who have experienced injustice on a historic scale.

The class presumes no particular stance toward Nozick's philosophy and students of diverse political views can do well. The spirit of our approach is captured by what another author we will read, Barbara Fried, has said about ASU: "My colleagues who teach the book regularly in courses on political philosophy report that their students—even the vast majority who disagree vehemently with the book's politics—love to read it, because it is just plain fun."

2. Assessment

A 1,500-word essay due at 5:00 pm Wednesday April 24 (25%)

A 2,000-word essay due at 5:00 pm Wednesday May 22 (25%)

A 2,000-word word essay due at 11:30 am Tuesday June 11 (25%)

In-class Participation (15%)

In-class quizzes (10%)

Students taking the class Pass-No Pass will not have to write the exam-week essay if both 1) their average essay grade is B or above and 2) their participation grade at the end of week ten is B or above.

Please note that there is a strong penalty for using ChatGPT to create or partially create written work for this class. Students who are found to have done so will receive a class grade of F (fail).

3. Readings and Schedule

Students are expected to obtain a hard copy of *Anarchy, State and Utopia* to bring to class, cheap copies of which are widely available online. All other readings will be on Canvas.

Week One April 1-5: Intro to Phil 172

Tu: No Reading.

Thurs.: Robert Nozick. *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974): Chapters One and Two.

Week Two: April 8-12: Nozick and Animals

Tu: Nozick. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Chapter Three.

Thurs: Josh Milburn. Robert Nozick on Nonhuman Animals: Rights, Value and the Meaning of Life. *Ethical and Political Approaches to Nonhuman Animal Issues*. Andrew Woodhall and Gabriel Garmendia da Trindade, eds. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017): 97-120.

Week Three April 15-19: The Experience Machine and Protective Agencies

Tu: Felipe De Brigard. If You Like it, Does it Matter if it's Real? *Philosophical Psychology* 23/1 (2010): 43-57.

Thurs: Nozick. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Chapter Four.

Week Four April 22-26: Arguments for The State

Tu: Nozick. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Chapter Five.

First Essay Due Wednesday April 24th 5:00 pm.

Thurs: Nozick. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Chapter Six.

Week Five April 29-May 3: Beyond the Minimal State and Distributive Justice

Tu: Eric Mack. Nozickian Arguments for the More than Minimal State. *The Cambridge Companion to Nozick's Anarchy, State and Utopia*. Ralf Bader and John Meadowcroft, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 89-115.

Thurs: Nozick. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Chapter Seven Part I.

Week Six May 6-10: Historical Injustice I

Tu: Michael McDonald, Aboriginal Rights. *Contemporary Issues in Political Philosophy*. William Shea and J. King-Farlow, eds. (New York: Science History Publications 1976): 27-48.

Thurs: David Lyons. The New Indian Claims and Original Rights to Land. *Social Theory and Practice* 4/3 (1977): 249-72.

Week Seven May 13-17: Distributive Justice

Tu: Barbara Fried. Wilt Chamberlain Revisited: Nozick's "Justice in Transfer" and The Problem of Market-based Distribution. *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 24/3 (1995): 226-245.

Thurs: Justin Weinberg. Freedom, self-ownership, and Libertarian Philosophical Diaspora. *Critical Review* 11/3 (1997): 323-344.

Also Thurs: Nozick. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, 280-3.

Week Eight May 20-24: Rawlsian Justice

Tu: John Rawls. A Theory of Justice. *Moral Philosophy: Selected Readings* George Sher ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987): 453-72.

Second Essay Due Wednesday May 19th 5:00 pm.

Thurs: Nozick. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Chapter Seven Part II.

Week Nine May 27-31: Historical Injustice II

Tu: Jeremy Waldron. Superseding Historic Injustice. *Ethics* 103/1 (1992): 4-28.

Thurs: A. John Simmons. *Boundaries of Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 153-86.

Week Ten June 3-7: Utopia and Open Borders

Tu: Nozick. *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Chapter Ten.

Thurs: Joseph Carens. Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders. *The Review of Politics* 49/2 (1987): 251-273.

Exam-week essay due at start of scheduled exam time.

4. General Information

Student Drop-in Hours

I am happy to meet with students during my scheduled student drop-in hours. I am also available by appointment. I am always happy to discuss any aspect of this course with you.

Email Policy

I am happy to reply to emails sent from UCSD email addresses. I do not reply to emails from non-UCSD addresses. Please note that there are two subjects I do not discuss by email, even if they are sent from a UCSD account. These are:

- a) Requests for information about an exam or other assignment due during exam week that arrive in the 24-hour period immediately preceding the assignment deadline.
- b) Requests to discuss or adjust your final class grade. If you have an issue with your grade please make an appointment to discuss it during my office hour next quarter. If you are graduating let me know and we will make alternative arrangements.

One-time Discretionary Extension

I am happy to grant each student one essay extension of up to 48 hours without requiring medical or other documentation. In order to grant such an extension I need to receive your request before noon (San Diego time) on the day the essay in question is due. Email is fine, but please note that UCSD's email servers sometimes go down, and students are advised not to leave their requests to the last minute. Requests received after noon on the due date will require documentation, as will requests for extensions longer than 48 hours. Please note that if you receive an extension your paper may be returned 48 hours after those that were completed on time.

Note that each student is entitled to only one discretionary essay extension. So if you receive one for your first essay, any extension for the second essay will require documentation.

Also note that discretionary extensions are NOT available for the exam-essay.

Late Essays

For all essays handed in after the due date and without an extension, a five percent penalty applies for the first day of the missed deadline. After that, a subsequent penalty of two percent per day will be applied for the next thirteen calendar days after the due

date (including Saturdays and Sundays). No assignment can be accepted after more than fourteen calendar days except in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with your professor. Assignments that are handed in late without an extension will be graded and returned after those that were completed on time and will not receive comments.

Note that non-essay assignments (e.g. Perusall assignments or online quizzes, if this class has either) are likely to have different lateness penalties. If so these will normally be outlined in the first class.

Accommodation for Disability

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. Contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone), osd@ucsd.edu (email), disabilities.ucsd.edu (web)

Academic Integrity

Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. More information about UCSD's policy on academic integrity is available at <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/process/policy.html>

If you have read this far in the syllabus you deserve a reward. Here it is: when submitting the first or second essay, you can have a free 24-hour extension simply by inserting the phrase "low-key Easter egg" in the coversheet that will be on Canvas when essay submission is enabled. This can be used by itself or with the discretionary 48-hour extension, creating the possibility of a 72-hour extension. Note however that if you communicate electronically with your professor about the Easter egg at any time (e.g. by email, canvas message or the chat feature on Zoom), the Easter egg will cease to be in effect. It is fine to speak to me about it in person or on Zoom.

Health and Well-being

During your time at UCSD, you may experience a range of issues that can negatively impact your learning. These may include physical illness, housing or food insecurity, strained relationships, loss of motivation, depression, anxiety, high levels of stress, alcohol and drug problems, feeling down, interpersonal or sexual violence, or grief.

These concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and affect your ability to participate in day-to-day activities. If there are issues related to coursework that are a source of particular stress or challenge, please speak with me,

Professor's Lamey, so that I am able to support you. UC San Diego provides a number of resources to all enrolled students, including:

Counselling and Psychological Services (858-534-3755 | caps.ucsd.edu)

Student Health Services (858-534-3300 | studenthealth.ucsd.edu)

CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center (858-534-5793 | care.ucsd.edu)

The Hub Basic Needs Center (858-246-2632 | basicneeds.ucsd.edu)

We care about you at UC San Diego, and there is always help available.