Social Philosophy

PHIL 0320

Fall 2024

University of Pittsburgh

Class location: 324 Cathedral of Learning
Meeting times: Tu & Thu, 1-1:50pm

Instructor: Dr. Shawn Simpson
Pronouns: he/him/his
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Office hours: TBD
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Calvin and Hobbes© by Bill Watterson

Overview:

Social philosophy, broadly construed, considers issues related to the social world. Whereas a philosopher of biology might ask about the nature of biological individuals or whether genes carry information, a social philosopher might ask about the nature of nation-states or whether it makes sense to think about money as real or socially constructed. The purpose of this course will be to provide students with an introduction to a variety of key issues in social philosophy. Topics covered will include, but not be limited to, the nature of groups, issues related to legal interpretation, the problem of cooperation, the paradox of tolerance, and more.

Required Texts:

There is ***no*** required book for this course. All readings will be made available online through the course Canvas page via the "Files" section.

Grading

Attendance/participation	10%
Essay 1	25%
Midterm	20%
Essay 2	25%
Final exam	20%

Essays will be a minimum of 5 pages and double-spaced.

Exams will be multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and matching.

Schedule

Required readings are marked with a star *. All other readings listed are optional.
Assignments are marked with a triple star ***.

Aug 27 Introduction
Brief overview the course and syllabus.
Overview of social philosophy…
*No assigned readings

Aug 29 Group Agency
*Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions"
Optional: SEP on "Shared Agency"

Sep 3 Group Agency
*Block, "Troubles With Functionalism"
Optional: Dennett, "Intentional Systems"

Sep 5 Prisoner's Dilemma
*Pettit, "The Prisoner's Dilemma and Social Theory"
Optional: Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons"

Sep 10 Stag Hunt
*Skyrms, *Stag Hunt,* selections

Sep 12 Convention
*Lewis, *Convention,* selections
Optional: Skyrms, *Signals,* selections

Sep 17 Group Communication
*Pettit, "Groups are Not…"

Sep 19 Group Communication
*Simpson, *Art as Communication*, selection #1
Optional: Planer, "Going Dennettian about Gricean Communication"

Sep 24 Group-level Selection
*Simpson, *Art as Communication*, selection #2
Optional: Carroll, "The Arts, Emotion, and Evolution"

Sep 26 Group Agency in Animals
*Simpson, *Art as Communication*, selection #3
Optional: Tollefsen, "A Dynamic Theory of Shared Intention and the Phenomenology of Joint Action"
******First Paper Due******

Oct 1 Evil Groups?
Scarre, "Evil Collectives"

Oct 3 The Social Contract
*Rousseau, *The Social Contract,* selections
*Mills, *The Racial Contract,* selections
Optional: Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"

Oct 8 Legal Interpretation
*Scalia, "Common Law Courts…"

Oct 10 Legal Interpretation
*Fallon, "The Chimerical Concept of Original Public Meaning"
*Solum, "Originalist Methodology"

Oct 15 No Class
--- Fall Break ---

Oct 17 Justice (vs. Revenge)
*Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations,* selections

Oct 22 Democracy
*Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, selections
Optional: Dewey, "Philosophy and Democracy"

Oct 24 Midterm Exam
******Midterm exam******

Oct 29 Socialism
*Einstein, "Why Socialism?"

Oct 31 Fascism
*Stanley, *How Fascism Works?* Selections
Optional: Palmieri, "Fascism and the Meaning of Life"

Nov 5 Anarchism
*Wolff, In Defense of Anarchism, Ch. 1

Nov 7 The Paradox of Tolerance
*Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, selections

Nov 12 The Paradox of Tolerance
*Godfrey-Smith & Kerr, "Tolerance: A Hierarchical Analysis"

Nov 14 Revolution
*Locke, Second Treatise of Government, Chapter XIX and section 227
Optional: Flikschuh, "Reason, Right, and Revolution: Kant and Locke"

Nov 19 Revolution
*Hobbes, *Leviathan*, selections
*Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, selections
Optional: *Korsgaard, "Taking the Law into our own Hands: Kant on the Right to Revolution"

Nov 21 Revolution
*Marx, "Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844", selections
******2nd Paper Due******

Nov 26 No Class
--- Thanksgiving ---

Nov 28 No Class
--- Thanksgiving ---

Dec 3 Art
*Davies, *Philosophy of Art*, selections
**Optional:* Simpson, *Art as Communication*, selection

Dec 5 Maps
*Simpson, *Art as Communication*, selection
*Goodman, *Problems and Projects*, selection

Dec 10 Money
*Alden, *Broken Money*, selection
*Case studies: Yapese Rai stones, Bitcoin

TBD *Final Exam Date*
***** Final Exam *****

Course & University Policies & Services

Academic Integrity
Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the Academic Integrity Guide for an overview of the topic. For hands- on practice, complete the Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial.

Disability Services
If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Classroom Conduct
I expect you to complete the assigned readings before the corresponding class session. Some of the topics we'll be covering will be somewhat controversial and some of your fellow students will hold wildly differing views from you. I expect everyone in this class to treat each other with dignity and respect at all times in class. The purpose of this course is to provide a safe space for each of us to learn and explore ideas with each other – not to simply demean or put each other down.

Content Warning and Class Climate Statement
Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. As with any course in ethics, course topics are often political and personal. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings – anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom.

Class Participation
Lack of participation during class will not lower your grade. I understand that each of us have different degrees of comfort when it comes to talking in large groups and I do not believe in punishing shyness. However, active participation in lecture can affect your grade positively. Discussion during office hours may positively affect your grade too. Attendance is a part of your grade. Arriving to a session 10 minutes or more past start time will count as an unexcused absence (unless given prior permission).

Democracy in the Classroom
This course is meant to benefit *you*. As much as I will try to remain aware of how you all are doing and what is working and not working, you, more than I, know what is working and what isn't, what you are interested in or not, or what you need more time on. To the end of making this course work for you, I give you a say in just about all matters of course content (within university policy limits). Students may propose changes to and vote on when topics are discussed (earlier or later in the schedule), which topics are discussed (within thematic reason), and which readings are focused on during each section. Students may also propose and vote on changes to the general structure of in-class sessions (whether they want primarily lectures or group work or want to change things up for just one class in particular). If you have a proposal, either bring it up at the end of a class session or email me and I'll be happy to put it forward to the class. We'll discuss and vote on proposed changes anonymously through Canvas.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, visit the Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance web page.

I ask that everyone in the class strive to help ensure that other members of this class can learn in a supportive and respectful environment. If there are instances of the aforementioned issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or e-mailing titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be filed online. You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Gender Inclusive Language
Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women's experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX
The University is committed to combating sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University's Title IX office. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware. After a report is made, you will be contacted by the Title IX Office for opportunities for support and options for proceeding.

There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware:

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found here: https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/civil-rights-title-ix-compliance/make-report/information-responsible-employees

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work and advocacy. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, course assignment or public awareness event, are not required to be disclosed to the University's Title IX office.

If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

Title IX Office: 412-648-7860
University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS). This is a confidential resource.

If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121.

Your Well-being Matters
College/Graduate school can be an exciting and challenging time for students. Taking time to maintain your well-being and seek appropriate support can help you achieve your goals and lead a fulfilling life. It can be helpful to remember that we all benefit from assistance and guidance at times, and there are many resources available to support your well-being while you are at Pitt. You are encouraged to visit Thrive@Pitt to learn more about well-being and the many campus resources available to help you thrive.

If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings and/or challenging life events, you are strongly encouraged to seek support. In addition to reaching out to friends and loved ones, consider connecting with a faculty member you trust for assistance connecting to helpful resources.

The University Counseling Center is also here for you. You can call 412-648-7930 at any time to connect with a clinician. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, please call the University Counseling Center at any time at 412-648-7930. You can also contact Resolve Crisis Network at 888-796-8226. If the situation is life threatening, call Pitt Police at 412-624-2121 or dial 911.

LGBTQIA Services
The University Student Affairs has resources for LGBTQIA students at their website: https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/shs/lgbtqia/resources/
There are also non-university affiliated local organizations: Persad Center: https://www.persadcenter.org/ (5301 Butler St #100, Pittsburgh, PA 15201), PGH Equality Center: https://pghequalitycenter.org/ (5401 Centre Ave Suite 103, Pittsburgh, PA 15232), Allies for Health and Wellbeing (5913 Penn Ave 2nd Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15206): https://www.alliespgh.org/).

Writing Center
You are strongly encouraged to trade drafts of your writing assignments with your classmates for editing and to make use of the Writing Center.

Location: 317B O'Hara Student Center — Phone: 412-624-6556
Webpage: https://www.writingcenter.pitt.edu — Email: writecen@pitt.edu

Study Lab
A good resource for helping you plan your semester coursework.

Location: Gardner Steel Conference Center. — Phone: 412-648-7920
website: asundergrad.pitt.edu/study-lab. — Email: study.lab@pitt.edu

Statement on Classroom Recording
To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Contacting the Instructor
Please touch base with me about any issues that you might have that could potentially impact your success in the course. Visit me during my office hours or e-mail me with any questions you might have. I am a resource to help you learn. If you are confused about the readings or my expectations from you, please reach out.

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