

PHIL 4/51020: Social and Political Philosophy

Spring 2025, Sections: 001 (CRN: 16097 and 16102)

TR 11:00-12:15PM Classroom: Bowman 315

Professor: Dr. Daniel E. Palmer

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Office Hours: 9:30-11:00 AM and 3:30-4:30 PM TR and by appointment (virtual appointments available)

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description: In this course we will explore a number of philosophical issues and problems within social and political philosophy. In particular, we will be concerned with questions concerning the justification and limits of the state, the relation of individuals to the state, the foundation and limits of political rights, the scope and justification of various social and political liberties, and the nature of social and political justice (within and beyond the state). Our treatment will be both historical and systematic. We will begin with an examination of the classical political theory of Aristotle before turning to the foundations of classical liberalism and social contract theory as found in Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. We will then turn to John Rawls and his influential expression of contemporary social contract theory as well as various contemporary critics of social contract theory (including libertarian and communitarian views). We will conclude by considering some problems of justice within a global context.

Course Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to explicate various historical and contemporary accounts of the nature of the state, views on the source and limits of political rights, the nature and scope of distributive justice, the foundations of political liberty, and the sources of social and political obligations. Students will also develop an ability to explain and contrast various theoretical views associated with different ways of responding to these questions, including classical liberal, libertarian, feminist, contractarian, and communitarian perspectives.

Prerequisites: Any 30000-level philosophy course.

Course Requirements

Required Textbook: Cahn, *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 2022)
Additional readings will be provided to students as handouts or on the Canvas website for the course

Required coursework:

**Undergraduate Students: Take-Home Midterm Exam, Final Paper (5-7 pages)
5 Discussion/Reading Notes**

Graduate Students: Take-Home Midterm Exam, Final Paper Prospectus/Literature Review, Final Paper (10-15 pages), Class Presentation

NB: In addition to the formal graded work, I would emphasize that as a seminar course students will be expected to attend class regularly and participate frequently. Students are expected to read all assigned material before coming to class and be prepared to discuss course material. I strongly encourage students to formulate questions, comments, or criticisms concerning the reading material prior to coming to class and to be prepared to discuss these insights with the rest of the class. As such, if a student is routinely absent from class (or fails to actively participate in the course) may have his or her final grade reduced accordingly.

Assignment Distribution and Grading Scale:

Undergraduate Students

Method of Assessment	Points
Take-Home Midterm Exam	100 Points
Final Paper	100 Points
Discussion/Reading Notes (10 Points Each)	50 Points
Total Points Available	250 Points

Graduate Students

Method of Assessment	Points
Take-Home Midterm Exam	100 Points
Final Paper Prospectus/Literature Review	20 Points
Final Paper	100 Points
Class Presentation	30 Points
Total Points Available	250 Points

Grading Scale:

Percentage of Earned Points	Earned Points	Grade
93% -100%	232-250	A
90%-92%	224-231	A-
88%-89%	217-223	B+
83%-87%	207-216	B
80%-82%	197-206	B-
78%-79%	192-196	C+
73%-77%	180-191	C
70%-72%	174-179	C-
68%-69%	168-173	D+
60%-67%	149-167	D
Under 60%	148 and under	F

University Policies, Procedures, and Resources

University Use of Electronic Email: A university-assigned student e-mail account is the official university means of communication with all students at Kent State University. Students are responsible for all information sent to them via their university-assigned e-mail account. If a student chooses to forward information in their university e-mail account, he or she is responsible for all information, including attachments, sent to any other e-mail account. To stay current with university information, students are expected to check their official university e-mail account and other electronic communications on a frequent and consistent basis. Recognizing that some communications may be time-critical, the university recommends that electronic communications be checked minimally twice a week.

Students with Disabilities: Kent State University is committed to inclusive and accessible educational experiences for all students. University Policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to course content. Students with disabilities are encouraged to connect with Student Accessibility Services as early as possible to establish accommodations. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health, chronic medical conditions, or injuries), please let me know immediately. Student Accessibility Services (SAS) Contact Information:

- Location: University Library, Suite 100
- Email: sas@kent.edu
- Phone: 330-672-3391; VP 330-968-0490
- Web: www.kent.edu/sas

Request for Religious Accommodation: The University welcomes individuals from all different faiths, philosophies, religious traditions, and other systems of belief, and supports their respective practices. In compliance with University policy and the Ohio Revised Code, the University permits students to request class absences for up to three (3) days, per semester, in order to participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization. Students will not be penalized as a result of any of these excused absences.

The request for excusal must be made, in writing, during the first fourteen (14) days of the semester and include the date(s) of each proposed absence or request for alternative religious accommodation. The request must clearly state that the proposed absence is to participate in religious activities. The request must also provide the particular accommodation(s) you desire.

You will be notified by me if your request is approved, or, if it is approved with modification. I will work with you in an effort to arrange a mutually agreeable alternative arrangement. For more information regarding this Policy you may contact the Student Ombuds (ombuds@kent.edu).

Diversity Statement: Kent State University is committed to the creation and maintenance of equitable and inclusive learning spaces. This course is a learning environment where all will be treated with respect and dignity, and where all individuals will have an equitable opportunity to succeed. The diversity that each student brings to this course is viewed as a strength and a benefit. Dimensions of diversity and their intersections include but are not limited to: race, ethnicity, national origin, primary language, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, mental and physical abilities, socio-economic status, family/caregiver status, and veteran status.

Basic Needs Support & Mental Well-being

Kent State University is committed to supporting the overall well-being of our students. This support may take the form of assisting students with basic needs such as food and housing. We recognize that the absence of secure housing and access to food makes it difficult for students to achieve their best in and out of the classroom. If you, or someone you know, are unable to afford groceries or lack a safe, secure, and reliable place to live, please visit the CARES Center basic needs resource website: <https://www.kent.edu/carescenter/basic-needs-resources>.

Mental health challenges may also make it difficult for students to reach their full potential. KSU's mental health and wellness resource page provides information on education and awareness, mental health services, and advocacy intervention. To learn more, please visit Kent State's mental health resources and support website at <https://www.kent.edu/mentalhealth>.

Kent Campus Academic Support Statement

Kent State recognizes many students face challenges and we are committed to supporting your academic journey when you need help. Whether you are struggling in a course, need help

writing a paper or actively working to achieve your goals, use the resources below to start building your support system:

Where can I get help from another student who earned a good grade in this class?

Tutoring (www.kent.edu/asc/tutoring)

Where can I go if I need assistance with how to study and meet my academic goals?

Academic Coaching (www.kent.edu/coaching)

Who can review my writing and help me properly cite my work?

Writing Commons (www.kent.edu/writingcommons)

Where should I go when I don't know where to go?

Academic Advising (www.kent.edu/university-advising)

TRIO Student Support Services (www.kent.edu/studentssupportservices)

There may be additional resources, just ask!

Course Enrollment and Withdrawal: The official registration deadline for this course is 01/19/2025. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashLine) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline. The course withdrawal deadline is 03/30/25.

Statement on Academic Presence Verification: In compliance with federal regulations, the University is required to report that enrolled students have participated in at least one academically related activity. If no academic activity is submitted by the end of the fourth week of the semester (for a full-term course) then a grade of NF (Never attended F) will be assigned. The NF mark will count as an F in computing grade point averages. Students who have received an NF mark will lose their access to the course. To avoid an NF mark, students must participate in at least one academic activity as soon as possible and no later than the end of the fourth week.

Academic Honesty: University policy 3-01.8 deals with the problem of academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. None of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. If you have any questions, please read the policy at <http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-regarding-student-cheating-and-plagiarism> and/or ask your instructor.

Academic Complaint Policy: The Philosophy Department Grievance Procedure for handling student grievances is in conformity with the Student Academic Complaint Policy and Procedures set down as University Policy 4-02.3 in the University Policy Register. For information concerning the details of the grievance procedure, please see the departmental chairperson.

Notice of My Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights: Any intellectual property displayed or distributed to students during this course (including but not limited to handouts, quizzes,

examinations, etc.) by the professor remains the intellectual property of the professor. This means that the student may not distribute, publish, or provide such intellectual property to any other person or entity for any reason, commercial or otherwise, without the express written permission of the professor.

*****Please Note:** The syllabus and course schedule may be subject to change. Changes will be communicated in class and via email. It is the responsibility of students to check email messages and pay attention to in-course announcements to stay current in the course.

Tentative Class Schedule Through Spring Break: Social and Political Philosophy, Spring 2025

Week 1	January 14	Introduction to Class
	January 16	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Handout
Week 2	January 21	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i>, pp. 105-127
	January 23	Aristotle Continued
Week 3	January 28	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>, pp. 199-212
	January 30	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>, pp. 212-230
Week 4	February 04	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>, Continued
	February 06	Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i>, pp. 251-279
Week 5	February 11	Locke, <i>Letter Concerning Toleration</i>, pp. 279-287
	February 13	Rousseau, <i>A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality</i>, pp. 208-323
Week 6	February 18	Rousseau, <i>Of the Social Contract</i>, pp. 323-348
	February 20	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i>, pp. 594-608
Week 7	February 25	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> Continued
	February 27	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i>, pp. 708-723

Week 8	March 04	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i>, pp. 708-723
	March 06	Rawls, Continued
Week 9	March 11	Spring Break, No Class
	March 13	Spring Break, No Class