

Philosophy 240
Social and Political Philosophy
Instructor: Clark Butler
Fall 2003

The IPFW Bulletin describes Philosophy 240 as a course on the classical theories of social and political philosophy in Western civilization. Political philosophy is the philosophy of the state. Social philosophy is broader, encompassing institutions other than the state, notably the family and the economic market place.

The course has no prerequisites. No prior knowledge of philosophy will be presupposed. Yet the class will take the student into the most basic issues of political and social philosophy. The official course description says that this is a course about the history of Western political thought, but it is a philosophy course and not just a history of philosophy course. It addresses questions such as nature of the ideal state, the purpose of the state, how it is maintained, its legitimacy, the basis of political allegiance, and the relationship between the state and other social institutions.

As a branch of philosophy, political philosophy breaks with the ultra-nationalistic principle "My country right or wrong." Political philosophers must be open to criticism of their respective countries by rational standards, but the criticism may be constructive. Criticism of the policies of one's country is consistent with allegiance to it based on evidence as to its fundamental principles or values.

Political and social philosophy as an academic discipline avoids taking positions in matters of partisan politics. The responsibility for adopting or rejecting any philosophical theory rests with the student. Responsibility for determining any implications of such a theory for existing institutions and policies also lies with the student.

This version of PHIL 240 centers around the concept of human rights. The justification for this focus depends on showing 1. that the moral purpose of the state is to protect human rights, and 2. that human rights are not eternal but arise outside the state, within specific family and socio-economic conditions. The instructor teaches the course as a "heuristic dogmatist." "Heuristic" means "promoting discovery." This means that the instructor does not teach it as an unconditional dogmatist who claims to be right beyond doubt. Arguing forcefully in favor of certain theories is a means by which students are challenged to refute him and teach him.

The text is *The Great Political Theories*, edited by Michael Curtis, vols. 1-2.

The course moves from ancient political/social philosophy, through modern political/social philosophy, to contemporary political/social philosophy. It is taught from the perspective of human rights advocacy, which is what makes a philosophy course, not just a history of thought course. Principal stopping points in the sequence of philosophers examined is: Plato, Aristotle, the Sophists, the Stoics, Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas,

Hobbes, Grotius, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, J.S. Mill, Marx, Rawls, and Habermas.

In discussing each of these philosophers, the concept of human rights will regularly be evoked.

Week One: Human rights Ethics Clark Butler “The Reducibility of Ethics to Human Rights,” published in *Dialogue and Universalism*, 1995. To read this, go to the Philosophy Department website, and then go into my faculty website. Then download first file under *Human Rights Ethics*.

Weeks Two- Three The origin of the concept of human rights in pre-Socratic and Socratic Philosophy: Herodotus, Empedocles, Democritus, Sophocles, Antithenes Plato’s and Aristotle’s opposition to human rights. Human rights and the Orient. *Great Political Theories*, vol. 1, 30-34 (Sophocles), 34-67 (Plato), 64-101 (Aristotle).

Week Four Stoic and Christian Contributions to Human Rights;
-Five: *Great Political Theories*, vol. 1, 106-113 (Seneca), 113-119 (Marcus Aurelius), 131-139 (Cicero), 146-156 (Augustine); vol. 2, 51-64 (Burke); vol. 1, 196-210 (St. Thomas), vol. 2, 411-415 (Maritain).

Week Six Natural Rights and Human Rights in the Modern World
Great Political Theories, vol. 1, 329-349 (Hobbes), 319-325 (Grotius)
Human Rights, 15-20, 26-29, 372-389 (Locke), vol. 2, 64-68 (Tom Paine).

Week Seven J.S. Mill and the utilitarians versus human rights political philosophy
Great Political Theories, vol. 2, 105-129 (Smith, Bentham, J.Mill, J.S. Mill).

Week Eight: Rousseau, Kant, Rawls, and Habermas
-Nine *Great Political Theories*, vol. 2, 18-34
(Rousseau), 457-467, (Rawls) *Great Political Theories*, vol. 2, 40-47 (Kant)

Week Ten Hegel. *Human Rights*, 32-35, 45-47, *Great Political Theories*, vol. 2, 94-104 (Hegel).

Week Eleven Marx *Great Political Theories*, vol. 2, 158-180.

Week Twelve *The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

-Thirteen: Download from my website, under *Human Rights Ethics*

Week Fourteen: World governance, world government

-Fifteen *Great Political Theories*, vol. 1, 180-187 (Dante)
Download “World Governance, World Government” from my website, under *Human Rights Ethics*

On occasion, an additional reading may be made available for downloading on my website.

Students, including home students and studio students, will test themselves for understanding by taking periodic in-class true-false quizzes. The questions will be read out loud in class and discussed. Their purpose is for the student to check their understanding. The grade received on such quizzes will not directly affect the final grade received in the class. The grade for the course will rather depend on a term paper in

which the student demonstrates understanding of all the assigned thinkers in connection with human rights theory. The paper must also defend some thesis regarding human rights in relation to the classical social and political philosophers studied. The paper should be written progressively through the semester, with sections corresponding to the above-listed sections of the syllabus. The instructor will provide the student with periodic criticism by email, and the student's grade will be based both on the paper and on the student's email response to the criticism in revising his or her work. Students are responsible for submitting a draft of each section of his or her paper to me as an attachment in Microsoft Word format.