

Intro to Social & Political Philosophy

Spring 2019

Class Information

Scott Hall 205

Tues. & Thurs., 6:10–7:30

Instructor Information

Ben Bronner

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Readings

Assigned readings will alternate between chapters from Jonathan Wolff's *An Introduction to Political Philosophy* and short passages by the philosophers, or about the ideas, that Wolff discusses. All readings will be available on the course website, including those from Wolff. Visit sakai.rutgers.edu and log in with your NetID and password. Then find the course site for 01:730:255, titled 'Social & Political Phil.', and click on the 'Resources' tab.

Office Hours

For each week that our class meets, I will hold office hours on Friday, 11:00–1:00, in the philosophy department's small seminar room. Let me know if you would like to meet but are not free during those hours, in which case we will find another time to meet. The philosophy department is located on the fifth floor of 106 Somerset Street, next door to the Barnes & Noble. I can email more detailed directions to anyone who needs them.

Electronics Policy

Except in the case of a documented medical or educational need, laptops, tablets, and smartphones are not to be used in class. Research suggests that laptops decrease learning even when used to take notes.¹ Students who multi-task (rather than just take notes) impair not only their own learning but also that of their peers.²

Plagiarism

All written work for this course will be uploaded to Sakai and checked for plagiarism by Turnitin. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the assignment in question or the course

¹ Mueller PA, Oppenheimer DM. 2014. 'The pen is mightier than the keyboard.' *Psychological Science* 25(6): 1159–68.

² Sana F, Weston T, Cepeda NJ. 2013. 'Laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers.' *Computers & Education* 62: 24–31.

as a whole. Plagiarism will also be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, which may result in suspension or expulsion.

Plagiarism includes not only word-for-word copying of others' work without proper attribution, but also paraphrasing others' work without proper attribution. Proper attribution is required for all information and ideas that you derive from other sources — whether written, spoken, freely available on the Internet, etc.

You will be held accountable for all instances of plagiarism that are identified, regardless of your professed intent or understanding of the norms governing citation practices. Judgments about plagiarism can be subtle. If you have any questions, please ask me before submitting your work.

Grade Appeals

If you believe that some portion of your coursework merits a higher grade than it received, you are welcome to make your case to me, under the following conditions. We must talk in person, and you must explain why your work merits a higher grade, given what you have written. Thoughts in your head do not count unless they are committed to paper, nor do interpretations of what you've written that would not occur to an attentive reader. The time or effort that you spend is not relevant to your grade, except insofar as it results in better work. Nor is it relevant what someone else, even one of your professors, thinks of your work. If what you've written deserves a higher grade, then you should be able to explain that to me without mentioning any of these other things.

Grade appeals are sometimes successful. The overwhelming majority of the time, however, the mistake has been made by the student rather than the instructor. In that case, I will explain why I believe that your grade is fair, and how you can do better next time — something that I am always happy to do.

Grading

At the end of the semester, your letter grade will be determined by your numerical grade, as follows.

A	90–100
B+	85–89.99
B	80–84.99
C+	75–79.99
C	70–74.99
D	60–69.99
F	0–59.99

Your numerical grade, in turn, will be the average of the scores that you receive for each of the five categories listed below. This will be a weighted average, so that each component has an equal effect on your grade for the semester.

Peer evaluation	20%
In-class work	20%
Homework	20%
Midterm paper	20%
Final paper	20%

See the following for details on each of these aspects of the course.

Peer Evaluation

The class will be divided up into teams of 5–6 people, and each team will work together for the rest of the semester. As described below, much of your grade will depend on the performance of your team members. Some students will be inclined to do less than their fair share of work. The use of peer evaluations is meant to provide students with an incentive to contribute to team-based activities and assignments, as well as to reward those who do contribute. At several points during the semester, you will be asked to provide a numerical score and written comments for each member of your team. The scores and comments that you provide (and receive) will be anonymized, though I will know who assigned which scores and wrote which comments. The details of the peer evaluations will be discussed later in the semester.

In-Class Work

Class sessions will often begin with a multiple-choice reading quiz. Some of the questions should be easy to answer if you have done the assigned reading for the day, while other questions will be quite difficult. After taking the quiz individually, you will meet with your team to discuss the questions. Each team will complete its own version of the quiz, which will be followed by a class discussion. There may be answers that you or your team think are correct (or partially correct) but which I claim are not. If you make a convincing case for your answer during the class discussion, then that answer will receive credit (or partial credit).

Your score for in-class work will depend equally on your individual performance on the reading quizzes and on your team's performance. Other team-based class activities may be introduced later.

If you miss an individual reading quiz because you are absent, you can take a makeup quiz. You can do this either by coming to my next set of office hours or by making an appointment to meet at another time. Except in the case of an extended illness or other special

circumstances, you will have one week from the date of your absence to make up the quiz, after which a score of zero will be recorded.

If you miss an individual reading quiz because you are late to class, you will not be allowed to take a makeup quiz. Once you have been present for a class discussion of the assigned reading, there is little point in taking a quiz designed to test whether you have done that reading. Exceptions to this policy may be made for extreme and unforeseeable circumstances.

Homework

There will be one homework assignment due each week. The assignment will typically involve writing out answers to a number of questions about one of the week's readings. Each team will submit a single set of answers. Team members are expected to work on the assignment together outside of class, communicating through a Slack channel that I will monitor. (We'll talk about what Slack is, and how to use it, in class.) You are allowed to discuss homework assignments with your teammates by other means, including in person. If you do so, then you should enter a summary of the discussion into your team's Slack channel so that I can see it. Be sure to specify which contributions were made by which team members.

The score that you receive on a homework assignment will be determined as follows: I will begin by assuming that your score for the week should be equal to the numerical grade assigned to the assignment that your team submits. I will then look at your team's Slack channel and modify your score, either increasing it or decreasing it, depending on your contribution to the team's discussion of the assignment. If you are doing significantly less than your share of work, I will decrease your score. If you are doing significantly more than your share of work, I will increase your score. Both quantity and quality of contributions will be taken into account.

Each week's homework assignment must be uploaded to the 'Assignments' tab in Sakai as a word-processing document (not a PDF, and not a link to a Google doc). Sakai will close for submissions 48 hours before the start of the class period in which the homework is to be discussed. Late assignments will not be accepted. If your team has not completed the assignment, then submit whatever portion of the assignment has been completed. If one or more members of your team are ill or otherwise unable to submit the assignment, then another member of your team should submit it.

I will return a graded copy of the assignment, with written comments, to each member of your team at least 24 hours before the start of class. The homework questions will then be discussed in class. There may be answers that you or your team think are correct (or partially correct) but which I claim are not. If you make a convincing case for your answer during the class discussion, then that answer will receive credit (or partial credit).

Midterm and Final Papers

Before submitting a paper, you must submit an abstract containing a statement of your paper's thesis and a summary of your argument for that thesis (250–500 words). I will send you written comments on your abstract. I may require that you submit a revised version of your thesis or argument before beginning to write your paper.

Papers will also be returned with written comments. You are allowed (but not required) to rewrite each paper once, in which case the grade on your original paper will be replaced by the grade on your rewrite. Papers (including rewrites) must be between 1250 and 1500 words.

Due to constraints on my own time, I will not provide written comment on drafts, except as indicated above. You are, of course, encouraged come to my office hours to discuss anything related to the course, including your papers.

The abstract, the paper, and the rewrite (if you choose to do one) must each be uploaded to the 'Assignments' tab in Sakai as a word processing document (not a PDF, and not a link to a Google doc). Sakai will close for submissions at the times listed below. Except in the case of significant, unexpected, and unavoidable events, late submissions will not be accepted. If you have not completed your abstract, paper, or rewrite by the deadline, then submit whatever portion has been completed. If you are having difficulty with these assignments, please let me know as soon as possible so that I can help.

Midterm paper deadlines:

11:59 p.m., March 1: Thesis and summary

11:59 p.m., March 15: Paper

11:59 p.m., March 29: Revised paper

Final paper deadlines:

11:59 p.m., April 5: Thesis and summary

11:59 p.m., April 19: Paper

11:59 p.m., May 3: Revised paper

Paper topics and expectations will be discussed at a later date.

Student Wellness Services

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling

CAPS is a university mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health Services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / vpva.rutgers.edu

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / ods.rutgers.edu

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation (ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the registration form on the ODS web site at: ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / scarlet.listeners@gmail.com

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.