***Philosophy 20425: Contemporary and Political Philosophy***2:00 – 3:15 TR 335 DeBartolo

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***Description***

The last four decades have been an extraordinarily exciting time in the development of political philosophy. Many of the central questions in the subject have received their most authoritative formulation and treatment since the 19th century. This course will survey developments in English-speaking philosophical world in that period. We will begin with two sessions on current events. A good deal of attention will then be devoted to the ground-breaking writings of John Rawls. We will also look briefly at some writing of Pope Francis, asking whether it is as radical as it seems, and we will spend some time on human dignity and its political implications. Other topics to be covered include toleration and the teaching of intelligent design in public schools. The course will be run as a seminar.

***Books***

The following titles are available in the book store:

* John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*
* Martha Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance*

1. All other readings for the course will be made available on the class web site:

<https://www3.nd.edu/~pweithma/contemporary_political_philosophy/index.html>

* + - 1. It contains folders that are self-explanatory.

***Assignments, grades, and requirements:***

(1) Two seminar paper of 1500-1800 words, each worth 20%; (2) Five 300-600 word critical responses to seminar papers, total 30%. (3) Class contribution to seminar discussion: 15%; (4) Oral final exam: 15%; (5) Because all the papers in this course are designed to contribute directly to class meetings, seminar papers up to one day late will be penalized two full letter grades; papers later than this, and late responses, will receive no credit.

***Procedure for seminar papers and critical response****s:*

Seminar papers to be discussed on Thursdays are due at 2 PM on the Tuesday before they are to be discussed. Seminar papers to be discussed on Tuesdays are due at noon on the Saturday before they are to be discussed. Seminar Papers must be e-mailed to all class members and the professor.

Responses are due by midnight of the night before the target paper is to be discussed. By that time, you must e-mail an electronic version of your response to the professor and to all members of the class. You must submit three comments before spring break and two after break.

Seminar papers should focus on one important argument or claim in the reading for that day. Briefly state and then *critically assess* the argument or claim. Critical responses should never merely express agreement or disagreement with a seminar paper, nor discuss style or grammar, but should engage the details of the arguments. In both the seminar papers and the responses, you do not necessarily have to disagree with the point you assess, but might instead extend or apply it in a new way, or provide more or better support for it than the text itself.

Regular and informed participation in seminar discussions is required. All will be expected to have a detailed grasp of the day's readings, including the seminar papers.

***Class Calendar, Spring 2016***

January 12 – “Major Tax Issues in 2016”

January 19 – Rawls, *TJ*, §§5-9

***First Student Paper Discussed***

January 26 – Rawls, *TJ*, §§13 and 14

February 2 – Rawls, *TJ*, §§20-25

February 9 – Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapter 2

February 16 – Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapter 5

February 23 – Nozick, *Anarchy* 183-230

March 1 – Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?*, pp. 1-45, Stiglitz, “Inequality is a Choice”

***Paper should focus on Cohen***

March 8 – ***Spring Break***

March 15- Rawls, “Idea of Public Reason”, §§1-4,7,8

March 22 – Class Visit by Kevin Vallier[[1]](#footnote-1)

***No Student Paper***

March 29 – Andrew March, “Political Islam: Theory”

Anthony Lewis, “Hail and Farewell”

***Paper should focus on March***

April 5 – ***Class cancelled***

April 12 – Nussbaum, *New Intolerance*, pp. 98-188

April 19 – Thomas Pogge, “Are We Violating the Human Rights of the World’s Poor?”

April 26 – Discuss thesis presentations

January 14 – Rawls, *TJ*, §§1-4

January 21 – Rawls, *TJ*, §§10-12

January 28 – Rawls, *TJ*, §§15-19

February 4 – Rawls, §§26 and 29

February 11 – Nozick, *Anarchy*, pp. 1-54

February 18 – Nozick, *Anarchy*, 149-82

February 25 – Frankfurt, “Equality and Respect”

March 3 – Cohen, *Why not Socialism?*, pp. 46-82, Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, paras. 50-60

***Paper should focus on Cohen***

March 10 – ***Spring Break***

March 17 – Finnis, “God and the State”

March 24 – ***Class Cancelled – Holy Thursday***

March 31 – Nussbaum, *New Intolerance*, pp. 1-58

April 7 – Nussbaum, *New Intolerance*, pp. 59-97

April 14 – ***Class Cancelled***

April 21 – Williams, “The Makropolos Case” plus Benedict XVI, “Spe Salvi”, §§10-31[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. Class dinner with Professor Vallier at 6 PM at the [Mark Dine & Tap](http://themarkdineandtap.com/). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Students are required to attend the Honors Colloquium on Thursday, April 22 at 7 PM in the Eck Visitors Center. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)