

PHIL 240: Political Philosophy 1

Winter 2021, McGill University



Schedule and “location”: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:35 am to 12:55 pm EST on Zoom

Instructor: Gilles Beauchamp (gilles.beauchamp2@mcgill.ca)

TAs: Sophie Osiecki and Hugo Cossette-Lefebvre

Course overview

This course will serve as an introduction to political philosophy through the study of contemporary and historical texts. The course will cover central problems in political philosophy including, but not limited to, equality, freedom, justice and pluralism.

Course goals

The main goal of the course is to introduce students to the field of political philosophy through the study of central problems and attempts to solve them. The hope is that this overview may provide an accessible entry point to this flourishing area of philosophy to those who are interested in further study and engagement with it.

The second goal, which is omnipresent in philosophy, is to develop nuanced interpretations of the texts, engage critically with them, and to develop the ability to express oneself clearly and persuasively.

Course material

Required material:

- *The Broadview Anthology of Social and Political Thought: From Machiavelli to Nietzsche*. Available in [hard copy](#) or [ebook](#).

Other readings will be directly uploaded to MyCourses or will be available online through the Library.

All the slides will be available on MyCourses.

Method of Instruction

Typically, the Tuesday sessions will consist of a synchronous lecture that will be recorded. The recording will be available on MyCourses soon afterwards for those who were not able to attend at the scheduled time and for anyone who prefers the asynchronous mode.

If the sanitary conditions allow, we will have a number of hybrid lectures. For those who wish to and feel safe to, some lectures will be given in-person on campus (with a maximum of 35 students) while being synchronously connected on Zoom and recorded. At no point in the semester will you be asked to come to campus if you cannot or do not want to. All details will be provided in due time if we are allowed to proceed.

Thursday’s sessions will be more interactive and flexible and will seek students’ participation and engagement with others. There will be live Q&As and further clarification on the lecture material when needed which will be followed by small group discussion. Group discussion will not be recorded.

Assignments & Grades

All assignments for this class will be individual take-home written assignments.

Each week, students will be asked to participate and engage with others, but because of the online format, there will be no participation grade.

Two short papers (30% and 35%): Detailed instructions and grading rubrics will be given at least two weeks prior to the deadline. Students will be asked to write two short papers (under 1000 words each). The first paper will be due before the reading week and the second will be due 14 days before the end of classes. The purpose of these assignments will be to evaluate students' understanding of the texts and their critical engagement with the arguments – these will not be research papers.

Final exam (35%): Students will have 72 hours to complete an online take-home exam on MyCourses. The exam will consist of short development questions and should take 3 hours to complete. The exam will be due on the scheduled final exam end time.

Grades: Grades in this class range from F to A. **C** range grades reflect significant lacunas in understanding and/or writing that need pedagogical attention. **B-** reflects an average understanding of the course material without major errors, but which still lacks nuances and/or understanding of the complexities and/or critical engagement. **B** reflects a good understanding of the course material with very few minor errors. **B+** is a very good mark and reflects good and promising work with nuanced interpretation and articulated expression. **A-** is an excellent grade and reflects an understanding of the complexities of the course material and critical engagement with it. **A** is an excellent grade and is quite rare. It reflects excellent grasping of the subtilities and implications of the material, and well thought and articulated critical engagement.

Schedule

The detailed schedule will be available at the latest on January 7, 2020, in the final version of the syllabus (which will be available on MyCourses).

In-person activities

This course includes some in-person teaching activities. These have been carefully designed and planned such that they will be carried out safely while providing a rich learning experience for all students. Should health directives or the overall situation connected to COVID-19 change over the course of the Winter term, a back-up plan for remote delivery is in place to ensure that the course will continue and to minimize disruption to the student experience.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 on campus

The University has planned all on-campus activities for the Winter 2021 term in a manner that follows strict safety protocols that adhere to all public health directives. Because this course contains some in-person components, students are reminded of the [University's health guidelines](#). All individuals on our campuses are required to wear a mask or face covering at all times when in any indoor shared space, including, but not limited, to classrooms, Teaching and Study Hubs, labs, hallways, elevators, and bathrooms. There are a very few exceptions to this rule – [learn more on the Health Guidelines page](#). It is also essential that individuals practice physical distancing, good hand hygiene, and cough etiquette. You are not to come to class or campus if you have any of the symptoms described on the following [website](#). Students will also need their McGill ID card to enter the teaching spaces.

Language Policy

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

Academic Integrity Policy

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

Work submitted for evaluation as part of this course may be checked with text matching software within myCourses.