

POLI 367: Liberal political thought
Fall 2022, McGill University
Wed/ Fri 11:35 am-12:55 pm, Arts 150

Professor Jacob T. Levy
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Office hours Tuesdays noon-2 pm

Syllabus of readings and sessions

Part 1: Introduction

August 31: Introduction:

Handout: some remarks on liberalism (Robert Frost, Adam Smith, Lord Acton, Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Schumpeter)

John Gray, *Liberalism*, pp. xi-xii

Liberal International, Oxford Manifesto of 1947

Liberal International, Andorra Manifesto of 2017

North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*, pp. 18-27

September 2: Benjamin Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients and the Moderns”

September 7: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*

September 9: continued

Recommended reading for a paper on hate speech: Jeremy Waldron, *The Harm in Hate Speech*, ch. 4-5

September 14: John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, Parts 1 and 2

September 16: [no class, to be made up at the end of term]

September 21: Finish Rawls

September 23: Judith Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear”

Michael Walzer, “On Negative Politics”

Part II: Some key ideas

September 28-30: Rights

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, ch. 2, 4, 5; ch 9 par 123.

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 39-42

Ronald Dworkin, “Rights as Trumps”

Jeremy Bentham, *Anarchical Fallacies*, “A Critical Examination of the Declaration of Rights,”

Article II (the section on MyCourses is a little longer in case you want more, but Article II is the focus, and really primarily p. 501)

Virginia Declaration of Rights

Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom

(French) Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen

Benjamin Constant, *Principles of Politics*, Book 2, ch. 7, “On the Principle of Utility Substituted for the Idea of Individual Rights”

Frederick Douglass, excerpts from “Letter to Thomas Auld” and *Narrative*, Appendix

September 30: discussion

October 5: Liberty

Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty"

Recommended reading:

Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong With Negative Liberty"

Philip Pettit, *Republicanism*, ch. 1 section 2, ch. 2 sections 1 and 2

October 7: The rule of law and the separation of powers

Locke, *Second Treatise*, ch 7 paras 87-93

Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, pp 722-23

Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, excerpts

Publius, *Federalist* # 47, 47, 51, 78, 79

Shklar, "Political Theory and The Rule of Law"

October 12: No class, fall break

Part III: Is liberalism neutral? If so, what does that mean?

October 14: Ronald Dworkin, "Liberalism," in *A Matter of Principle*

October 19: excerpt, Michael Oakeshott, "The Rule of Law." F.A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*, vol 1: *Rules and Order*, pp. 35-57, 94-110, 112-13, 122-44

October 21: Hayek continued, and "The Use of Knowledge in Society"

Discussion

October 26: Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 424-433; *Political Liberalism* Part 2

October 28: Kant, "An Answer to the question: 'What is Enlightenment?'"

November 2: Humboldt, *Limits of State Action*, ch. 1-4 and 6-11

November 4: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 2: "Higher and lower pleasures;" and reread *On Liberty*

Discussion

November 9: Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, ch. 1-8

November 11: John Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*

Part IV. Topics and debates

November 16-18: Liberalism and democracy: A marriage of convenience? Or more, or less?

Think about Constant, Shklar, Dworkin, Berlin, Hayek, Rawls, Mill's *Representative Government* and *On Liberty*

Federalist #10

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1 ch. 15-16; vol. 2 book 2 ch. 1; book 4 ch. 2-3, 6-7

Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 290-292

Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*, vol. 3 ch. 1, 16; ch. 18 pp. 484-502

Jeremy Waldron, *Law and Disagreement*, Introduction sections 1, 3, 5; ch. 10-11. Recommended: ch. 7.

November 18: Discussion

November 23-25: Liberalism and markets

Revisit Hayek, Rawls

Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, excerpts
Mises, *Liberalism: The Classical Tradition*, ch. 2
Hobhouse, *Liberalism*, ch. 4 and 8
Dewey, "Liberalism and Social Action,"
Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, excerpts
Elizabeth Anderson, Tanner Lectures 1 and 2 (you can skip the footnotes)

November 25: discussion

November 30: Mill, *Subjection of Women*, complete
excerpts from Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, pp. 3-7, 51-67
Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, ch. 5, 7, 8

December 2: Charles Mills, *Black Rights, White Wrongs*, ch. 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, epilogue

December 5 (makeup day): Pluralism and associations
Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge), Book 29, ch. 1, 18, 19
Benjamin Constant, *The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation*, in *Political Writings* (Cambridge),
Part I, ch 13, and "Additions to the fourth edition," chapter 1
Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Liberty Fund edition, VI.ii.2, "Of the order in which
Societies are by nature recommended to our Beneficence"
Lord Acton, "Nationality"
Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, section 2, ch. 5-7

Recommended reading throughout the term, to consult on topics or authors that strike your interest
(use the index!)

Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism*
Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory*
Edmund Fawcett, *Liberalism: The Life of an Idea*
Guido de Ruggerio, *The history of European liberalism*
Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*
Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*
Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*

American:

Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*
Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*
Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals*

French:

Annelien de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville*
Raf Geenens and Helena Rosenblatt, eds., *French Liberalism from Montesquieu to the Present Day*

20th century:

Joshua Cherniss, *Liberalism in Dark Times*
Kenneth Dyson, *Conservative Liberalism, Ordoliberalism, and the State.*
Quinn Slobodian, *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*

Important organizational material distinct to this class

Prerequisites:

POLI 231 or PHIL 240, or permission of the instructor. E-mail jacobtlevy@gmail.com with information on your other relevant background if you haven't taken one of those courses.

Texts:

The following works are available for required purchase at Paragraphe:

John Rawls, *Justice As Fairness: A Restatement*

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays*, Oxford World Classics

Other required readings, and many recommended readings, will be online in MyCourses. Many readings are also available in the Ferrier 4th floor reading room, on an informal reserve basis; please read them there rather than taking them away.

Class format and grading

The class is larger than ideal for discussion, but there's value in those who want it having the chance to talk. Accordingly, there are two grading options.

A. Participation track. Participation will make up 10% of the grade. One paper of 3500 words ($\pm 10\%$) due October 18 will be worth 44%, and one paper of 3800 words ($\pm 10\%$) due December 4 will be worth 46%.

B. Papers track. One papers of 3500 words ($\pm 10\%$) will be worth 49% and one paper of 3800 words ($\pm 10\%$) due December 4 will be worth 51%.

In other words, under either option, the second paper of the semester has tiebreaking weight.

French requires more words than English, and so the word ranges increase by 10% for French papers (3500 words becomes 3850, 3800 words becomes 4180, and the $\pm 10\%$ bands go around those higher numbers.)

While participation isn't "extra" credit, and it will be graded as described below, those who do the reading, give it some thought, and participate on a reasonably regular basis will earn high grades on participation, so the extra work should count in your favor overall in grade terms. But if you're not comfortable participating or simply don't want to put in that extra time, just use the papers-only track. Track A is opt-in; anyone who does not explicitly sign up for it (by e-mail) by **September 28** is in Track B

There are two no-questions-asked 24-hour extensions available per student; that is, you could take a 2-day extension on one paper, or a 1-day extension on each of the two papers. Otherwise, late papers will be penalized at 2/3 of a grade per day—that is, an A paper becomes a B+ paper when it is up to 24 hours late, a B- paper when it is 24-48 hours late. Papers are due at 5 pm Eastern on the appropriate date.

The no-questions-asked extensions are meant to *include* the possibility of minor illness and injury up to and including low-level COVID-19 infections that don't require going to a doctor. Any other extensions will require medical documentation that attests that you were unable to work for at least three days. (You can't *add* the two-day free extension to a one-day doctor's note.)

Participation grades for Track A

Graded participation consists of all of the following.

- A) **Generating questions.** In the five weeks when there is a discussion class on Friday, students on the discussion track should e-mail potential questions for discussion to jacobtlevy@gmail.com by midnight on Wednesday. The questions should refer to the readings, should be substantial (normally a couple of sentences, up to a paragraph), and should reflect some initial intellectual work on your part. “What does this book mean?” is not a satisfactory question. The questions for the discussion will be By 3 pm on Thursday, I will e-mail the class a list of questions, substantially (though not completely) drawn from those submitted by students.
- B) **Responses to cold-calling about those questions.** Discussion of each of the questions will begin with my calling on people randomly to offer argued, well-reasoned responses. You’re expected to be present, and to have something substantial to say, with textual references if appropriate.
- C) **Further in-class discussion** after those initial responses; we’ll do the best we can given the class size.

Students who aren’t on track A are welcome to attend discussion classes; some of those might be part-lecture, part-discussion anyway. And they’re welcome to volunteer contributions during the “further discussion” portion. But I’ll ask for some sorting in the classroom space so that I can see who’s who, and students on Track A will have priority for being called on.

This class is graded on a 4.0 scale not a 100-point scale, as per https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2010-2011/university-regulations-and-information/gi_grading_and_grade_point_averages

Aims and Learning Objectives:

The aims of the course include:

- 1) To introduce students to a variety of ways of understanding liberal political ideas, liberal political philosophy, and liberalism as a set of practices and institutions; to offer substantive knowledge about various philosophical foundations, key concepts, and normative disputes in the liberal tradition(s);
- 2) To offer students the opportunity to learn to interpret and understand theoretical and philosophical texts about politics, and to adjudicate among rival understandings or interpretations of those texts;
- 3) To offer students the ability to critically evaluate those texts, both with respect to the quality of their arguments and with respect to their normative or explanatory claims;
- 4) To offer students the ability to improve their own ability to make normative and explanatory arguments about politics and society;
- 5) To improve students’ skills at communicating such arguments in discussion and in written work.

Taking notes: I encourage you to print out the readings, bring them to class in hard copy, and take notes by hand. Notes taken by hand have been consistently found to aid in memory and understanding better than the kind of transcription that tends to characterize notes taken by laptop. Moreover, an open laptop is an invitation to distraction for yourself, and is often distracting to those around you and behind you.

If you choose to take notes on laptop, please sit toward the back of the class, and please just use the laptop for notes and for consulting the readings. If people end up using laptops in distracting ways for those around them (videos, games) I reserve the right to ban the use of laptops.

Organizational material that is not distinct to this class.

1. McGill Statement on Academic Integrity: 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 (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/> for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/>).

2. Language. Students in this course have the right to submit any written work that is to be graded in either English or French.

3. Land acknowledgement. McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous peoples whose presence marks this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

4. In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

5. Miscellany.

a) While I am bureaucratically required to put item 4 on the syllabus, I am not bureaucratically forbidden to make fun of it. So, on the one hand: if a highly contagious disease epidemic breaks out, we will meet in person less frequently and less mandatorily. This was the worry that first prompted the addition of that language to syllabi; the fact that it needed to be said demonstrates how foolishly bureaucratized and legalistic the interpretation of the *Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities*, ch. 1, Articles 10-11 (<http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/academicrights/course>) has become over the years thanks to challenges to any change made in the syllabus after the second week. It should also be noted that if an earthquake destroys the building in which our classroom is located, we may change classrooms, and that shall not be interpreted as a breach of contract; and if the End of Days arrives before the end of the semester, it is possible that final grades will be delayed. More seriously: we have learned over the last two years that all kinds of things can change midstream as the University and municipal, provincial, and national authorities make new rules in response to rapidly changing public health crises, and those changes may override the syllabus. On the other hand, you have my commitment that I will not invoke "extraordinary circumstances" unless health, safety, or physical necessity demand it. Strikes, protests, and boycotts, for example, will not alter either my or your responsibilities to the class; no classes will be canceled, no deadlines delayed, etc.

b) In a class such as this one, with unfamiliar history and names showing up quite often, wikipedia is a valuable resource, *if used selectively*. It's unreliable as a guide to ideas; don't look up "Aquinas" and think you're going to learn anything you can count on about his philosophy. But it's usually very reliable about dates, institutions, political and social changes, and so on, especially if what you need are basic facts and orientations. An even better resource is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP), <http://plato.stanford.edu>. You may be assured that I have read the relevant SEP entries and will recognize any prose copied and pasted from them into papers. Using the SEP and similar resources while writing papers is fine, **provided that full and complete citations and attributions are given**. I pursue plagiarism cases vigorously and to the fullest extent University policies allow.

Some guidelines for writing papers- Jacob T. Levy.¹

1. You must seriously consider serious objections to your argument. For example, if you are criticizing an author, you must construct and respond to a strong defense of the author, and if you are defending, you must construct and respond to a strong criticism. Attacking straw men is bad, and a complete lack of attention to possible counterarguments is worse. If you cannot imagine serious counterarguments to your thesis, then your thesis is probably trivial (or your imagination is too constrained). ***Do not underestimate the importance of this. A paper that considers no counterarguments or only very brief and weak ones is not a persuasive or successful paper. In my classes, such a paper will typically end up with a C-range grade or worse.***
2. Meeting #1 requires taking a clear position on the question you are addressing. "This paper will explore the issues related to" is not a thesis (and, obviously, doesn't allow for any interesting counterargument).
3. Most of what they taught you in secondary school composition (if your school had such a course) remains true. Outlining before you start writing is useful. A thesis paragraph at the beginning of the paper, thesis statements at the beginnings of many paragraphs, and periodic signposts about what has been proven so far and what remains to be proven, help keep a paper clear. It is true that overdoing this kind of thing can make essays seem mechanical and unlovely; but it is better to err on the side of a clear unloveliness than to err on the side of stylish confusion. As with grammatical rules, you should know the rules of composition and be able to use them easily before you decide that their violation is warranted in this or that case for stylistic reasons. So, for example, one sometimes has good reason to use the passive voice. Unless one understands the problems with the passive voice, however, one can't distinguish the rare appropriate uses from the many sloppy ones.
4. Logic counts.
5. Spelling counts. Running a spell-check is the beginning, not the end, of finding spelling errors.
6. Grammar and correct usage count. Using the grammar-check in Microsoft Word is *not* recommended as a method of finding grammatical errors. Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*, and Shertzer's *The Elements of Grammar* are much more reliable guides. If you own none of these, you should invest in one or more as soon as possible. (I recommend Fowler.)
7. Style counts, but see #3.
8. A metaphor is not an argument. A list is not an argument. Even an analogy, by itself, is not an argument.
9. One argument can refute, undermine, or override another. Refutation: "This is wrong. The evidence otherwise, the causality runs the other way, there is no logical link here..." Undermining: "This may be correct, but look where else it gets us in the long term, or what other consequences the argument has that proponents didn't notice, or what obviously ridiculous cases the argument actually has to cover on its own terms, or..." Overriding: "This may be correct, but this other issue is more important, because it is more urgent, because there is some logical or moral ranking of principles, because justice is more important than utility..." If your argument overrides another, you normally have to give reasons why x is more important than y, not simply assert it.

¹ Creative Commons license: I grant permission to anyone who wishes to circulate these guidelines or use them in their own teaching, but ask to be acknowledged as their author.

10. Beware of introductions and conclusions, especially in short papers. A lengthy introduction discussing how important a question is and how many great thinkers have thought about it for how many centuries is a waste of space, and space is your most precious resource. Cut to the chase; offer your thesis and outline your argument. Conclusions should not include surprises; they should clearly state the conclusions that have already unfolded through the course of the argument. Unsupported speculations about other related questions, or unargued-for controversial claims about the wider significance of what you have established, can only weaken the force of the arguments you *have* made.

11. Statements such as "I think X," "I believe X," and (worst of all) "I feel X" are autobiographical. They tell the reader something about you; they tell the reader nothing about claim X. Sometimes—rarely—there is a call for such constructions, but don't use them when you really mean to be arguing in support of X. These certainly cannot be theses, which you can tell because the only possible objections would come from a mind-reader or psychologist showing that you *don't* think, believe, or feel X.

12. Beware of what the old T.V. show "Yes, Minister" jokingly referred to as *irregular verbs*: "I give confidential security briefings. You leak. He has been charged under section 2a of the Official Secrets Act" or "I have an independent mind, you are eccentric, he is around the twist." Compare Hobbes: "There be other names of government in the histories and books of policy; as tyranny and oligarchy; but they are not the names of other forms of government, but of the same forms misliked. For they that are discontented under monarchy call it tyranny; and they that are displeased with aristocracy call it oligarchy: so also, they which find themselves grieved under a democracy call it anarchy..."

Irregularities you might commit: "I believe in freedom, you believe in license, he believes in anarchy." "I belong to a denomination, you belong to a sect, he belongs to a cult." "I have principles; you have an ideology; he is a fanatic." "I believe in appropriate regulation; you are an authoritarian; he is a fascist." "I am a philosopher; you are a casuist; he is a sophist." In each case there are legitimate distinctions to be drawn; but there is also a temptation to score rhetorical points by simply renaming the phenomenon depending on whether it is liked or disliked. If you draw these distinctions, you should be able to defend them. It is not an argument simply to give what you like a nice name and what you don't like a rude one.

13. I wish this went without saying, but: no emoticons, no internet or chat-based shorthand, and no vulgarity. Vulgar words may of course be quoted in appropriate contexts, such as a paper about censorship. The rule against them does not apply to religious words used in their strict sense, e.g. *damn* and *hell* (and, of relevance to students from Quebec, *tabernacle* and *chalice*.)

“You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”
Inigo Montoya

This is a list of some common mistakes, but is by no means complete. Buy and use a style guide such as Fowler's for more complete guidance. Examples and explanations are short and sometimes incomplete; when they conflict with fuller accounts in a style guide or dictionary, rely on the latter.

You will be held fully responsible for errors on these points. Using “disinterested” for “uninterested” **will** have an effect on your grade.

Some of these are subtle points but many are not, and they are important not only for this class but also for your ability to come across as a literate and competent user of English. Writing “would of” instead of “would have,” or mixing up “its” and “it’s” or “loose” and “lose,” is sloppy and leaves an unprofessional, childish impression.

Observe the following distinctions.

CATEGORY 1: RULES. Violations of these are simply mistakes. Even in casual writing, you should maintain these distinctions; otherwise, you’re just using the wrong word.

disinterested/ uninterested. *disinterested* means impartial; someone who doesn't care is *uninterested*.

its/ it's *its* means *belongs to it*; *it's* is short for *it is*

affect/ effect A affects B; A effected a change in B; C is the cause, D is the effect; a prisoner turns over personal effects; he affects a cane, pocket watch, and bowtie in order to appear eccentric. Unless you’re quite sure of this distinction, stick to using *affect* as a verb and *effect* as a noun.

imply/ infer The author implies, the data imply; the reader or the researcher infers.

refute/ deny/ disagree *refute* requires logical success; it is a disproof of the other position, not a mere assertion that it is wrong. Monty Python’s [Argument Clinic](#) (“This isn’t an argument.” “Yes it is!” “No it isn’t, it’s just contradictions!” “No it isn’t!”) offers only denials, not refutations. When you say that A *refutes* B, you must be prepared to show why and how A’s *denials* of or *disagreements* with B’s view are successful.

lay/ lie *lay* is a transitive verb; it requires an object. I lay the book down; I went to lie down on the bed. The Christian prayer goes “Now I lay *me* down to sleep,” not “now I lay down to sleep;” “me” (or in normal speech “myself”) is the object, and is necessary.

less/ fewer *fewer* for discrete objects you can count, *less* for general amount. Less reading, but fewer pages of reading. We need less labor; we need fewer workers.

of/ have would *have*, should *have*, could *have*, must *have*; not would of, could of, should of, must of

populace/ populous *Populace* is a noun; the population, the people. *Populous* is an adjective.

discreet/ discrete *discrete* means noncontinuous or individuated, not subtle or quiet or private.

everyday/ every day The adjective meaning "routine" or "normal" is *everyday*, one word.

principle/ principal *Principle* is the noun that means a rule, a norm, a goal. *Principal* is the adjective meaning primary, or the noun that refers to a primary actor, the first officer of our university, or the director of an agent.

precedent/ president *According to the precedent set in Clinton vs. Jones, a President may be sued while in office.*

dissent/ descent *Hobbes worries that too much dissent might begin a society's descent into civil war.*

ensure/ insure Ordinarily one *insures against* a bad outcome, e.g. by buying insurance. One aims to *ensure* (that is, bring about or guarantee) a good outcome. Hobbes does not try to *insure* peace.

lose/ loose To *loose* something is to release it from some kind of restraint, to let it go. *Loose* as a verb isn't an everyday construction; it can always be replaced by *release* or *let loose*. If the sentence doesn't work with such a replacement, then you mean *lose*, the opposite of *gain* or *find*. I *lose* my freedom, my glasses, or my job; I have the most to *lose*.

ambiguous/ ambivalent *Ambiguous* refers to a problem of interpretation; I don't know what a text means because it's *ambiguous* on an important point. *Ambivalent* is the attitude of being divided between two options. It may be that a text is *ambiguous* on a question because the author was *ambivalent* about the correct answer; or it may just be that the author expressed himself or herself unclearly. Your facial expression might be *ambiguous*; I, as an observer, don't know how to interpret it; that might be because your inner state of mind is *ambivalent*, or might be because you're very good at concealing what are actually very strong thoughts and feelings on your part.

tenant/ tenet Unrelated. A *tenant* inhabits a house or a piece of land. A *tenet* is a belief or a principle. A philosopher, or any other landlord, who held his or her *tenants* firmly would be guilty of assault.

imminent/ immanent/ eminent *Eminent* means well-known, distinguished. *Imminent* means soon. *Immanent* is a specialized word meaning *inherent* or *internal*; if you're not absolutely sure that it's the one you mean, it's probably not. Its most common use for our purposes is in the phrase *immanent critique*, a critique that takes place within the boundaries or assumptions of the existing argument. An immanent critique does not challenge the foundations of an argument, but tries to show that those foundations really lead to different conclusions.

which/ that *which* for clauses that aren't necessary to identify the object, usually set off by commas; *that* for clauses that are necessary to specify the one being talked about.

who/ whom/ that Avoid *that* when the antecedent is a person. *Who* is to *whom* as *I* is to *me*. To whom should I give the ball? Give the ball to me. Who wrote the paper?

may/ might When speaking about a present or future action, *might* expresses some doubt, while *may* is agnostic about likelihood. When speaking about past actions, only *might have* is correct for counterfactuals, things that could have happened but didn't. "If Japan had won the battle of Midway, it might have won the war."

may/ can *can* refers to possibility, *may* to permission

comma/ semi-colon/ colon Semi-colons separate full independent clauses in the same sentence, or items in a list that contain commas within them. A colon precedes a list, or separates two independent clauses in the same sentence when the second is a restatement or an amplification of

the first. Commas set off most phrases and dependent clauses, and separate the items in a list except when the items themselves contain commas.

To beg the question is to assume the conclusion. It is *not* merely “to invite the follow-up question” or “suggest the next question.” “I win the argument because I’m right” begs the question; if we already knew that you were right, then who won the argument wouldn’t be under dispute. *If you don’t understand the difference between assuming the conclusion and inviting a follow-up question, you’re probably misusing “to beg the question” and you should avoid the phrase.*

The phrase is "**all intents and purposes,**" not "**all intensive purposes.**"

Many **–ism** nouns for ideas and ideologies have **–ist** counterparts for the people who hold them or for their manifestations in the world, or as their adjectival forms: **communism/ communist, socialism/ socialist, monarchism/ monarchist, fascism/ fascist, capitalism/ capitalist, absolutism/ absolutist, anarchism/ anarchist, nationalism/ nationalist, multiculturalism/ multiculturalist, consequentialism/ consequentialist, syndicalism/ syndicalist, humanism/ humanist.** But this is not true for all **–ism** words: **liberalism/ liberal, conservatism/ conservative, libertarianism/ libertarian, Naziism/ Nazi, whiggism/ whig, republicanism/ republican, progressivism/ progressive, communitarianism/ communitarian, utilitarianism/ utilitarian, radicalism/ radical.** In general, if you drop **–ism** from the word and you’re left with a complete word you could use to denote a person holding the beliefs (*liberal, conservative, progressive*, but not *social, capital, monarch, human*), then that’s where you stop; don’t add **–ist** onto that complete word. If you’re not left with such a complete adjective, add **–ist** to get the adjective, or the noun of a person who holds the beliefs. **There is no such thing as a *liberalist*, and in POLI 367 in particular, I would very much like to see zero occurrences of that non-word.**

Relatedly: many such words are sometimes capitalized and sometimes not. They are proper nouns and adjectives when they refer specifically to a political party, otherwise not (which means, in political theory papers, most often not). To be a Liberal is to be a member of a Liberal Party; to be a liberal is to hold liberal beliefs (and these only sometimes overlap). Likewise for, *e.g.*, Communist and communist. (*Nazi* is a special case; it is almost always a proper noun or adjective.)

CATEGORY 2: CONTROVERSIAL RULES, OR STRONG GUIDELINES. In all these cases I think the distinction is worth making, and that the rule I describe is the right one. In formal writing you’ll almost always be better off maintaining these distinctions. But in some cases ordinary usage has come to vary quite widely from the traditional rule; in others there’s disagreement about whether there is such a rule; and in others the rule is maintained in formal writing but not in casual writing or in speech. I ask that you at least observe these distinctions in writing for this class, and urge you to observe them in other formal writing. In any case, I think you’re better off at least *knowing* the traditional formal rule.

if/ whether *if* demands an implicit or explicit *then* in consequence. *Whether* takes an implicit or explicit *or not*. If your sentence or thought begins with "I wonder," [*implied "then"*] it should take "whether," not "if." I wonder *whether* [*implied "or not"*] there are any exceptions.

farther/ further (*farther* for actual physical distance, but "Nothing could be further from my thoughts.")

tolerance/ toleration Usually *tolerance* is a personal attitude, *toleration* a policy, as in state toleration of religion; this is not as hard and fast a rule as the others on this list.

hopefully/ I hope that *hopefully* does not mean what you almost certainly think it means. "He looked up his grade hopefully," not "Hopefully, it won't rain today." Say "I hope that it won't rain today."

sensuous/ sensual Anything appealing to the senses, such as a painting or a piece of food, can be sensuous. Most of us most of the time don't find food sensual.

between/among *between* for two people or objects, *among* for three or more.

like/ such as *Like* creates a category that *excludes the example you're about to mention*. In this course we read books *like [but not including] Rousseau's Emile*. We read books *such as [and possibly including] his Social Contract*.

Pay careful attention to:

subjunctive verbs, noun-pronoun agreement, subject-verb agreement, correct use of apostrophes, parallel constructions

Be careful to avoid:

dangling participles: "Being unready to face the day, coffee helped." It wasn't the coffee that was unready.

prepositions after transitive verbs: "He advocated for the position that..." One advocates a position, not *for* a position.

incorrect prepositions: "different from" is usually the best construction. "Different to" is acceptable in informal British English; "different than" is usually incorrect.

switching verb tenses mid-thought ("Aristotle argues x; further, he said y."). This is a frequent problem in papers in political theory that draw on past thinkers.

I am not a stickler about dangling prepositions provided that they don't create a lack of clarity.²

There is no rule in English against splitting an infinitive or beginning a sentence with a conjunction. In both cases, be attentive to clarity; and if you begin a sentence with a conjunction be sure that it is a complete sentence and not a fragment.

When using a pronoun for a person whose gender is indeterminate, the traditional English rule is to use male pronouns—the so-called "generic 'he'". That is correct English and you won't be penalized for its use, but it's also increasingly archaic and I encourage you to move away from it. I prefer "he or she" to the singular "they," but neither one is perfect and "he or she" can often get cumbersome. Some writers choose to deliberately switch to a "generic 'she.'" This is also acceptable. Lacking a perfect solution to a thorny problem in English composition, I leave you to your own devices.

² "That is the sort of nonsense up with which I will not put"— attributed to Winston Churchill, commenting on the dangling preposition rule, but Churchill had a surer mastery of the language than most of us do.

The overuse of parentheses is a stylistic problem, but not one I worry about too much. The misuse of parentheses is a more serious problem. If you've written a sentence with a parenthetical aside in the middle of it, you should be able to subtract the whole parenthetical aside and be left with a meaningful, coherent sentence. Among other things, that means that material in parentheses cannot be the sole antecedent for a subsequent pronoun or the sole subject for a subsequent verb; and the material in the parentheses does not affect the *number* of a subsequent pronoun or verb.