

PHIL 384.002. Gateway to Philosophy, Politics, and Economics

J. Joseph Porter
jjporter@live.unc.edu

Caldwell Hall 210D

Office Hours: T/R 11:00 AM-12:00 PM (and by appointment)

UNC-Chapel Hill

Fall 2019

Peabody Hall 203

T/R 9:30-10:45 AM

Course Description

This course introduces core concepts and principles of philosophy, political science, and economics, and applies those concepts and principles to contemporary topics such as the war on drugs, poverty, and the minimum wage.

Recommended Prerequisite: One course in economics.

Content Warning: In this course, we may discuss controversial topics which affect you or your peers personally. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns about any element of the course.

Course Objectives

- Understand and evaluate important ideas in philosophy, politics, and economics (PPE)
 - Understand and evaluate views on specific topics in PPE
- Understand and critically engage classical and contemporary texts discussing topics in PPE
 - Reconstruct, offer objections to, and defend arguments discussed in such texts
- Construct arguments for views on topics in PPE and defend them against objections

Course Requirements

Participation	10%	
Pop Reading Quizzes	15%	
First Essay (1200-1800 words ≈ 4-6 pp.)	12.5%	Due Sun., September 15, 11:59 PM
In-class Game Theory Quiz	12.5%	Tues., October 15
Second Essay (1800-2400 words ≈ 6-8 pp.)	25%	Due Sun., November 24, 11:59 PM
Final Exam	25%	Tues., December 10, 8:00-11:00 AM

Pop Reading Quizzes: Twelve times throughout the semester, class will begin with a short open-notes pop reading quiz. The purpose of these quizzes is to make sure that you are carefully and thoroughly completing reading assignments. The two lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

Essays: The purpose of the essays is to test your ability to write clear, original, well-written, well-organized, and well-argued papers on topics in PPE.

Essays will be graded anonymously. For this reason, **they should be submitted in a PDF format with your PID as the file name.** (No identifying information should show up either in file names or in the PDF's themselves.) They should also be double-spaced and written in 12-point Times New Roman with 1-inch margins. **Essays which are not formatted and submitted correctly will be docked half a letter grade.**

Essays which exceed or fail to reach the specified word limits will be docked one letter grade.

Late essays will be docked one letter grade per day late submitted. I am happy to grant extension requests for pretty much any reason.

Final Exam: The final exam will be a cumulative three-hour in-class exam which will test you on what you have learned over the course of the full semester.

Participation and Respect

Attendance: You are permitted two unexcused absences. Unexcused absences beyond the first two will result in a lower participation grade. **I reserve the right to count tardy students as absent.**

Reading: Before each class session, you should actively, carefully, and critically read the required materials for that session so that you can come to class ready to discuss those materials.

Discussion: Most of our class sessions should be much more like conversations than lectures. You are expected to participate in that conversation by offering comments, asking questions, and so on. (In general, the less I talk, the more rewarding and less boring our class sessions will be.) There may also be opportunities for extra credit for students who volunteer for in-class presentations. Unless otherwise specified, **the use of electronics is prohibited during class.** Discussion of course materials outside of class (for instance, with me during office hours) is not required but is strongly encouraged, especially if you are uncomfortable contributing to in-class discussion.

Respect: You are expected to treat all your fellow students with respect regardless of the opinions they express in class or of their religion, sex, ethnicity, and so on. One important philosophical skill which we will train in this course is that of taking views seriously which we think are incorrect—or even abhorrent—whether they are expressed in course materials or by other members of the class. (I myself will sometimes play devil’s advocate in class and temporarily defend views which I think are incorrect.) Taking a view seriously means “steelmanning” it rather than “strawmanning” it: considering and evaluating the strongest version of it rather than the weakest version. It also means fostering an environment of curiosity and respect so that all members of the class can freely express their views.

Extra Credit: You may receive extra credit for attending events organized by [UNC’s PPE Program](#) (or other appropriate events approved by me). You will need to “prove” your attendance in some way (e.g., by taking a picture of yourself at the event). I am also willing to discuss other possible opportunities for extra credit. I reserve the right to cap extra credit at a certain point.

Course Materials

No textbook is required for this course. Course materials may all be found on Sakai.

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
94+	90-93	87-89	84-86	80-83	77-79	74-76	70-73	67-69	60-66	59-

Honor Code

As always, you are expected to abide by [the Honor Code](#) and to refrain from academic dishonesty, including plagiarism. Among other things, plagiarism includes the *intentional or unintentional* representation of someone else’s work or ideas as your own, improper citation of sources, close paraphrase of someone else’s work or ideas without proper citation, and copying of your own previously submitted work. If you are unsure whether something counts as plagiarism, please ask me. (Consider also reviewing [UNC’s plagiarism tutorial](#).) Remember that it is your responsibility to make sure that you understand the Honor Code so that you may abide by it.

Office Hours and Accessibility

I am happy to meet with you during my scheduled office hours or by appointment to talk about course materials and assignments, philosophy in general, or anything else. No appointment is necessary to meet with me during office hours. I am also happy to arrange accommodations for students with accessibility issues. Please contact the Accessibility Office (or me) if you need special accommodations.

Course Schedule

NOTE: Reading assignments are all subject to change.

Unit 1: Core Topics in PPE

Tuesday, August 20: Introduction

Syllabus

[**“The Economic Approach”**](#) (pp. 4-16)

[**James Burnham, *The Machiavellians*, Part I, Chapter 2 \(“Machiavelli’s Method”;**](#) pp. 40-48)

[**Scott Alexander, “Beware the Man of One Study”**](#)

Optional: [Henry Hazlitt, *Economics in One Lesson*, Chapter I](#) (pp. 3-8)

Optional: [Mario Villareal-Diaz, “Thinking on the Margin”](#)

Optional: [Scott Alexander, “I Can Tolerate Anything Except the Outgroup”](#)

Thursday, August 22: Introduction

[**John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapter 2**](#) (through “the whole sentient creation”)

[**Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, “The Experience Machine”**](#) (pp. 42-45)

John Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 9 (“Of the Ends of Political Society and Government”), Sections 124 and 131 [available online through Past Masters at UNC Libraries]

[**Declaration of Independence**](#) (first two paragraphs)

[**Amitai Etzioni, “Common Good”**](#)

Optional: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapter 2 (remainder of chapter)

Tuesday, August 27: Property

David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Section 3 (“Of Justice”) [available online through Past Masters at UNC Libraries]

John Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapter 5 (“On Property”), Sections 26-32 [available online through Past Masters at UNC Libraries]

Optional: [“Is the EU taking its over-fishing habits to west African waters?”](#)

Thursday, August 29: Property

[**“The Secret Document That Transformed China”**](#) (text and/or podcast)

[**Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, “Locke’s Theory of Acquisition” and “The Proviso”**](#) (pp. 174-182)

[**Karl Marx, *Capital*, Part VIII, Chapter 26**](#)

[**David Schmidtz, “The Institution of Property”**](#)

Optional: [Jordan Weissman, “The Case for Abandoning Patents \(Yes, All of Them\)”](#)

Tuesday, September 3: Market Success

Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book I, Chapters I-III [available online through Past Masters at UNC Libraries]

[Leonard Read, “I, Pencil”](#) (pp. 4-10)

[Ortiz-Ospina, Beltekian, and Roser, “Trade and Globalization”](#) (skim)

[“The Flow of International Trade”](#)

Optional: [“Explore how much the world has changed since you were born”](#)

Thursday, September 5: Market Success

Friedrich Hayek, “The Use of Knowledge in Society” [abridged]

[Henry Hazlitt, *Economics in One Lesson*](#), Chapters IV and XXI (pp. 19-26, 168-172)

[Bryan Caplan, “Optimality versus Fire”](#)

Tuesday, September 10: Market Failure

[Tyler Cowen, “Public Goods”](#)

[David Friedman, “Market Failures”](#)

Thursday, September 12: Market Failure

[Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The Communist Manifesto.”](#) Parts I, II, and IV (pp. 14-27, 34)

[Friedrich Engels, *Principles of Communism*](#) (pp. 42-54)

[FIRST ESSAY DUE SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 AT 11:59 PM](#)

Tuesday, September 17: Public Choice

[James Buchanan, “Public Choice: Politics Without Romance”](#)

[Anthony Downs, “An Economic Theory of Political Action in Democracy”](#)

Thursday, September 19: Public Choice

[Michael Huemer, “Why People Are Irrational About Politics”](#)

[Michael Munger, “Rent-Seek And You Will Find”](#)

[Paul Gil, “Why Uber Is So Controversial.”](#) Numbers 1-3

Optional: [Diana Thomas, “Why Do Politicians All Sound the Same?”](#)

Tuesday, September 24: Distributive Justice

[John Rawls, *Theory of Justice*](#), Sections 3-4, 11, and 24 (pp. 10-19, 52-56, 118-123)

Thursday, September 26: Distributive Justice

[Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*](#), pp. 149-164, 167-174, 198-204, 213-216, 228-231

Tuesday, October 1: Distributive Justice

Amartya Sen, “Equality of What?”

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, “Equality of Opportunity” (pp. 235-238)

Kurt Vonnegut, “Harrison Bergeron”

Optional: [Four Videos on Equality](#)

Thursday, October 3: Game Theory

Gary Watson, *Strategy*, Chapter 1 (“Introduction”)

José Luis Ferreira, *Game Theory: An Applied Introduction*, Chapter 1 (“The Most Famous Games”)

Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons” (excerpt)

Optional: [Four Videos on Game Theory](#)

Tuesday, October 8: Game Theory

Exercises 1.1-2, 4-5, 7, 9-10, 12 from the Ferreira reading

“The Evolution of Trust”

“Parable of the Polygons”

Optional: The remaining exercises from the Ferreira reading

Optional: [Thomas Schelling, “Dynamic Models of Segregation”](#)

Optional: [WAV Clark, “Residential Preferences and Neighborhood Racial Segregation: A Test of the Schelling Segregation Model”](#)

Thursday, October 10: Game Theory and General Review

Game Theory Problem Set

*Tuesday, October 15: **IN-CLASS GAME THEORY QUIZ***

[Thursday, October 17: No Class]

Tuesday, October 22: Paternalism

John Stuart Mill, Selections from *On Liberty*

Gerald Dworkin, “Paternalism”

Optional: [Sarah Conly, *Against Autonomy*](#), pp. 1-7

Thursday, October 24: Paternalism

Cass Sunstein, “Nudging: A Very Short Guide”

Jeremy Waldron, “It’s All For Your Own Good”

Unit 2: Applied and Student-selected Topics in PPE

NOTE: For the last few weeks of the semester, we will discuss topics in PPE of your choosing such as gun control, immigration, climate change, poverty, taxation, health care, and voting.

Tuesday, October 29: The War on Drugs

[Nutt, King, and Phillips, “Drug Harms in the UK: A Multicriteria Decision Analysis”](#)

[Michael Huemer, “America’s Unjust Drug War”](#)

Peter de Marneffe, “Against the Legalization of Drugs” [available online in [Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics](#) (pp. 346-357) at UNC Libraries]

Optional: Jeffrey Miron, “The Economics of Drug Prohibition and Drug Legalization” [available online at UNC Libraries]

Thursday, October 31: The Minimum Wage

[Henry Hazlitt, *Economics in One Lesson*, Chapters XXVIII \(pp. 137-142\)](#)

[Don Boudreaux, “Minimum-Wage Proponents Continue to Believe in Free Lunches”](#)

[William Rodgers and Amanda Novello, “Making the Economic Case for a \\$15 Minimum Wage”](#)

[“Minimum Wage—Pros and Cons”](#)

Optional: [Don Boudreaux, “What the Card-Krueger Study Tells Us About the Minimum Wage”](#)

Optional: [Scott Alexander, “Wage Stagnation: Much More Than You Wanted to Know”](#)

Optional: [Daron Acemoglu and Pascual Restrepo, “Robots and Jobs: Evidence from the US”](#)

Optional: [“Four Reasons Not to Raise the Minimum Wage”](#)

Optional: [Ben Burgis, “Yes, We Can Have a \\$20 Minimum Wage — And More”](#)

Tuesday, November 5: Sex, Dating, and Marriage Markets

[David Friedman, “Marriage, Sex, and Babies”](#)

[Bradford Tuckfield, “Attraction Inequality and the Dating Economy”](#)

[Roy Baumeister and Kathleen Vohs, “Sexual Economics, Culture, Men, and Modern Sexual Trends”](#)

[“How Couples Meet” Chart](#)

[“13 months of Tinder usage \[23F\]”](#)

Optional: [Helen Alvaré, “Mapping the New Mating Market: A Review of *Cheap Sex*”](#)

Optional: [Steven Rhoads, “Hookup Culture: The High Costs of a Low ‘Price’ for Sex”](#)

Optional: [Mark Regnerus, “Mating Market Dynamics, Sex-Ratio Imbalances, and Their Consequences”](#)

Optional: [AJA Gabel, “The Marriage Crisis”](#)

Optional: [Yakukon, “The Decline of Marriage”](#)

Optional: [Jonny Anomaly and Brian Boutwell, “If You’re Reading This Essay, You Should Probably Have \(More\) Children”](#)

Thursday, November 7: Poverty, Inc. and Q&A with Barbara Porter

Poverty, Inc.

Optional: [“Giving 101: The Basics”](#)

Optional: [“Introduction to Effective Altruism”](#)

Tuesday, November 12: Gun Control

[Hugh LaFollette, “Gun Control”](#)

[Michael Huemer, “Is There a Right to Own a Gun?”, Parts I-IV](#)

Optional: Michael Huemer, “Is There a Right to Own a Gun?”, Parts V-VII

Optional: [Scott Alexander, “Guns and States”](#)

Optional: [“Should More Gun Control Laws Be Enacted?”](#)

Optional: [Chad McIntosh, “I Value Guns Because I Value Life”](#)

Optional: [“The School Shootings That Weren’t”](#)

Optional: [“The CDC’s Gun Injury Data Is Becoming Even Less Reliable”](#)

Thursday, November 14: Animal Ethics

[Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”](#)

[Chuck Cunningham, “Meat Me Halfway? Health and the Ethics of Animal-based Diets”](#)

Optional: [Alastair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”](#)

Optional: [Marco Springmann et al., “Analysis and Valuation of the Health and Climate Change Cobenefits of Dietary Change”](#)

Optional: [Peter Ballerstedt, “Ruminant Reality: Diet, Human Health and the Environment”](#)

[Tuesday, November 19: NO CLASS]

Thursday, November 21: Organ Markets

[Gabriel Danovitch and Francis Delmonico, “The Prohibition of Kidney Sales and Organ Markets Should Remain”](#)

[Gerald Dworkin, “Markets and Morals: The Case for Organ Sales”](#)

Optional: Barnett, Beard, and Kaserman, “The Medical Community’s Opposition to Organ Markets: Ethics or Economics?”

SECOND ESSAY DUE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24 AT 11:59 PM

Tuesday, November 26: Abortion and Space Exploration

[Alexander Pruss, “I Was Once a Fetus: That is Why Abortion is Wrong”](#)

[Judith Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”](#)

[Matthew Weinzierl, “Space, the Final Economic Frontier”](#)

Optional: [Alberto Giubilini and Francesca Minerva, “After-birth Abortion: Why Should the Baby Live?”](#)

[Thursday, November 28: NO CLASS]

Tuesday, December 3: Review Session and Q&A

*Tuesday, December 10, **8:00 AM-11:00 AM**: Final Exam Session*