

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
Undergraduate Course Outline 2021-22**

**Philosophy 3180G: Topics in the History of Political and Legal Philosophy  
The Social Contract from Plato to Rawls**

<b>Winter Term 2022</b> Tuesday 10:30-12:30, Thursday 11:30-12:30 FNB 1240	<b>Instructor: Dennis Klimchuk</b> StvH 4150 Office Hours: TBA 661-2111 x85758 klimchuk@uwo.ca
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**DESCRIPTION**

The dominant approach to political philosophy in the early modern period was social contract theory, according to which the only basis on which coercion can be legitimately exercised is through a set of institutions to which each has consented (or would or could consent), and is limited by the terms that structure such an agreement. We will focus the rise of social contract theory in the seventeenth century, starting with Grotius, to the beginning of its decline in the eighteenth, with Kant. Between the two we will also read Locke and Rousseau and some early modern critics of social contract theory such as Filmer and Hume. We will begin with a dialogue of Plato's that anticipates many ideas in this tradition and, after Kant, read Rawls, who followed it in many ways. We will conclude by considering some contemporary scholarship on the tradition and ask what we can learn from it today.

**TEXTS**

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)  
John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett)  
Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Hackett)

A number of other readings will be made available on the course OWL page..

**OBJECTIVES**

The goal of this course is to acquaint students with the social contract tradition and through it the issues and ideas that were engaged at the foundation of modern political thought. Through written assignments students will have the opportunity to develop skills in the interpretation and analysis of historical texts in philosophy.

**REQUIREMENTS**

**Two short papers** (5pp.), worth 35% each. There will be four topics for you to choose from, each with its own due date. You may instead, **with my approval**, write on topics of your own devising. You may also write a third paper and, if you choose, a fourth, in which case your best

two grades will count toward your final grade.

A **final exam** worth 30%. You will answer three essay-type questions from a list of six, in two hours. I will give one question in advance, in a final review class.

### **AUDIT**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

### **DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES**

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested.

The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

[http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

### **SELF- REPORTED ABSENCE FORM**

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

[http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading\\_322](http://westerncalendar.uwo.ca/PolicyPages.cfm?Command=showCategory&PolicyCategoryID=1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=#SubHeading_322)

### **EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENT**

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

## **ACADEMIC OFFENCES**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## **PLAGIARISM CHECKING**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.