Philosophical Foundations of Public Policy

Spring, 2020

Instructor Scott Ashworth

Class meetings Mon. and Wed., 2:00–3:20 in TK

Reading

All readings will be available on the course website. You should bring a copy of the relevant reading to class each day—we will be referring to the texts during class discussions.

Schedule

March 30:

Introductory meeting—no reading

Normative Foundations

April 2: Consequences and Rights

Peter Singer, excerpt from *Practical Ethics*

Jason Brennan, "The Problem of Justice and the Nature of Rights", chapter 2 of *Political Philosophy: An Introduction*

April 6: Structure

Marilyn Frye, "Oppression", in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*

April 8: Theories of Welfare

Tim Mulgan, "Well-Being and Value", chapter 8 of *Ethics for a Broken World*

Costs and Benefits in Policy Analysis

April 13: From Welfarism to Cost-Benefit Analysis

Joe Bakija, "Social Welfare, Distributive Justice, the Tradeoff between Equity and Efficiency, and the Marginal Efficiency Cost of Funds"

April 15: Redistribution

Peter Diamond and Emmnuel Saez, "The Case for Progressive Tax: From Basic Research to Policy Recommendations"

N. Gregory Mankiw, "Defending the One Percent"

April 20: Climate Change

Paul Kelleher, selection from *The Social Cost of Carbon: Economic Theory, Moral Philosophy, and U.S. Public Policy*

April 22: Climate Change, II

Paul Kelleher, selection from *The Social Cost of Carbon: Economic Theory, Moral Philosophy, and U.S. Public Policy*

April 27: Climate Change, III

Paul Kelleher, selection from *The Social Cost of Carbon: Economic Theory, Moral Philosophy, and U.S. Public Policy*

Gender and Discrimination

April 29: Labor Market Discrimination

Richard A. Posner, "An Economic Analysis of Sex Discrimination Laws"

Claudia Goldin, "A Grand Gender Convergence: Its Last Chapter"

May 4: Structure, II

Iris Marion Young, "Political Responsibility and Structural Injustice"

Fact and Value

May 6: The Entanglement of Facts and Values

Heather Douglas, "Facts, Values, and Objectivity"

May 11: Resisting the Entanglement

Liam Kofi Bright, "Du Bois' Democratic Defense of the Value Free Ideal"

May 13: Genetics

Charles Manski, "Genes, Eyeglasses, and Social Policy"

May 18: Should Everything be up for Discussion?

Philip Kitcher "An Argument About Free Inquiry"

Testimony and Advice

May 20: Learning from Experts

Alvin I. Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?"

May 25: Incentives for Experts

Glenn C. Loury, "Self-Censorship in Public Discourse: A Theory of 'Political Correctness' and Related Phenomena"

May 27: Testimonial Injustice

Elizabeth Barnes, "Taking Their Word for It," ch. 4 in *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability*

June 1: Climate Change, IV

Stephen John, "From Social Values to p-Values: The Social Epistemology of the Intergovenmental Panel on Climate Change"

June 3:

Concluding discussion—no reading

Course Work and Evaluation

Component	Weight
Reading Responses	20%
Problem Sets	80%

Student Responsibilities

Attendance. Each course meeting will involve a mix of lecture, small-group exercises, and discussion. As such, regular attendance is crucial, as is active participation in exercises and discussions. More than three unexcused absences will affect your grade.

We'll be discussing many controversial issues in this course, and challenging our beliefs throughout. Be polite, respectful, and charitable in discussion with your classmates and teachers.

Reading responses. At least 10 times, you will submit a 150–250 word reading response. These should not be summaries; instead, ask a question, raise an objection, make up your own example to illustrate one of the points, etc.

Weekly reading responses are designed to help all of us start thinking about the material for discussion before class starts. As such, late responses will not be accepted. Reading responses are due at 8:00 AM on the day the reading is to be discussed in class.

You can choose which readings to write about, subject to two constraints: you must do at least 10, and you may not do more than 1 in a single week. You can do more than 10 responses—your grade for this component will be based on your 10 best attempts.

Problem Sets There will be 5 problem sets. Each will include a mix of analytical problems and short essays. The grade will be based on the 4 highest grades across the 5 attempts.

I encourage you to talk to each other about the problems, and work together to solve them. But each student must write up their solutions independently.

Sometimes unexpected events make it difficult to submit a problem on time. For this reason, you will have a pool of 2 late days to be used for any of the problem sets. That is 2 days total for the quarter, not 4 days per problem set. Weekend days are counted in the same way as weekdays (e.g., if the deadline is Friday and you turn it in Sunday, that's two days late). Note that you are responsible for tracking your own late days.

Other than the late days, there are no exceptions to the deadlines for any assignment, except in case of a serious emergency. If such an emergency does arise, you should contact the office of the Dean of Students.

Helpful resources. Jim Pryor has prepared several useful guides for students taking philosophy courses. I particularly urge you to read "Guidelines on Reading Philosophy" and "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper".

Course Policies

Technology in the Classroom Turn off your cell phone and store it during lecture. If you might need to receive a call during class for some reason, put your phone on vibrate and step out quietly as needed.

The laptop policy will be discussed in the first meeting.

Academic Honesty

Mandatory Reporting As instructors, one of our responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment. The professor and teaching assistants are also Individuals with Title IX Reporting Responsibilities. That means we are required to report all incidents of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking to the Title IX Coordinator for the University.