

Social and Political Philosophy

Pavel Kuchař, Fall 2015

pavel.kuchar@ugto.mx

Mondays 9:00 am - 12:00 am

Room B- 103, DCEA, University of Guanajuato

Students of this course will reflect on and discuss original texts dealing with problems of social and political philosophy and relate them to the economic way of thinking. We will ponder various questions: How should we live together? How does social cooperation come about and how is it sustained? What should I be praised for having done? Why should inequality concern us? Most importantly, we will explain why does Batman not kill the Joker!

The course provides grounds for understanding the normative foundations of the most prominent social and political institutions: the market and the government. The institutional order embedding markets and governments emerge by way of human actions and interactions under the conditions of scarcity and uncertainty. To anchor the economic analysis of social and political institutions it is crucial to understand the moral philosophical foundations of social cooperation.

Students will have a chance to gain extra credit by attending the [Workshop in Philosophy, Politics and Economics at the University of Guanajuato](#). There are several national and international speakers scheduled for this semester.

Before entering this course students will have passed the Área I courses and level IV English language exam or have reached the corresponding TOEFL score.

Literature

Bicchieri, Cristina. *The Grammar of Society: The Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Hazlitt, Henry. *The Foundations of Morality*. Irvington-on-Hudson: Foundation for Economic Education, 1994.

White, Mark D., and Robert Arp. *Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul*. Vol. 2. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

Topics

1) Introduction. How to argue about social and political philosophy?

Yeager, Leland B. Ethics and economics in *Ethics as Social Science the Moral Philosophy of Social Cooperation*. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar, 2001.

Booth, Wayne C, Gregory G Colomb, and Joseph M Williams. Making Good Arguments (ch. 7), Making Claims (ch. 8), Assembling Reasons and Evidence (ch. 9) in *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Cowen, Tyler. The Postcard Test, The Grandma Test and The Aha Principle (p. 7) in *Discover Your Inner Economist: Use Incentives to Fall in Love, Survive Your Next Meeting, and Motivate Your Dentist*. 1st ed. Plume, 2008.

McCloskey, D. N. *Economical Writing, Second Edition*. 2nd ed. Waveland Pr Inc, 1999.

[Rom Harré on What is Social Science?](#), 2013. [Social Science Bites](#).

2) To obey or not to obey? How should we live together?

Socrates has been imprisoned and sentenced to death by an Athenian Jury for not believing in the gods of the state. One day his friend Crito comes to visit and informs Socrates that he has arranged for Socrates' escape. Among other things Crito tells Socrates it is not a great deal of money, his own reputation is at stake and that Socrates' children would be let down by his leaving them. Socrates should remain alive to raise his children in a virtuous manner. Is it right for Socrates to leave the prison if he is innocent and if the jury (but not the Law) wronged Socrates? What kind of obligation does a citizen have to obey the government? Where does political authority come from?

[Crito, by Plato; Translated with an Introduction by Benjamin Jowett](#). [R]

Brownlee, Kimberley. "[Civil Disobedience](#)." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2013.

Huemer, Michael. [The Problem of Political Authority: An Examination of the Right to Coerce and the Duty to Obey](#). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

3) Is a society with a state better off?

Would life in a society without government be bad? For all I know, the next person I encounter could be a dominator. For all I know, the next person I encounter might kill me violently. Therefore, I suspect anyone I encounter of being a dominator; i.e. I am in 'continual fear of violent death'. How could a political society ensure that our lives are not bad in this way?

Hobbes Thomas, Of the Natural Condition of Mankind; Of the first and second Naturall Laws, Of other Laws of Nature, Of Persons, Of Commonwealth in *Leviathan*, 1651 ([Jonathan Bennet's translation](#)). [R]

Locke John, Chapter 1; Of the state of nature; Of the state of war; Of political or civil society in *Second Treatise of Government*, 1689 ([Jonathan Bennet's translation](#)). [R]

David Hume, [Of the original contract](#) and [Of passive obedience](#) in *Essays Moral, Political, Literary*, edited and with a Foreword, Notes, and Glossary by Eugene F. Miller, with an appendix of variant readings from the 1889 edition by T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, revised edition (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 1987). [R]

Patterson, Brett Chandler. No man's land: Social order in Gotham City and New Orleans (ch. 4) In *Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul* (edited by William Irwin, Mark D. White, and Robert Arp). Wiley, 2009.

Leeson, Peter T. "[Anarchy Unbound, or: Why Self-Governance Works Better than You Think.](#)" Text. *Cato Unbound*. (2007)

Friedman, David D. "[Private Creation and Enforcement of Law: A Historical Case.](#)" (1979).

Cowen, Tyler. "Rejoinder to David Friedman on the Economics of Anarchy." *Anarchy and the Law: The Political Economy of Choice* 1 (2011): 292.

[Noel Malcolm on Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan in Context](#), 2013. | [Quentin Skinner on Hobbes on the State](#), 2007. [PhilosophyBites](#).

"[Barry Weingast on Law](#)" | EconTalk | Library of Economics and Liberty.

4) **The competitive market: The travels of a t-shirt.**

What is the relationship between competition and cooperation? Are they antagonistic or complementary? Is the competitive market just? What if the market is not competitive? Should we have anti-gouging laws? We will see that allowing market exchange always improves the lot of the least well of participants in the exchange. Furthermore, we will understand how prices can act to coordinate the separate actions of different people. The price system can be described as a kind of machinery for registering change.

Hayek, Friedrich A. "The Use of Knowledge in Society." *The American Economic Review* 35, no. 4 (September 1945): 519-30. [R]

Munger, Michael C. "Evoluntary or Not, Exchange Is Just." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 28, no. 02 (July 2011): 192-211 [R]

Barry, Norman. "[The Tradition of Spontaneous Order | Library of Economics and Liberty.](#)"

[The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy](#), 2008. Rivoli, P. | [I, Smartphone](#), 2012. [FaithWorkEcon](#).

[What Do Prices "Know" That You Don't?](#) Learn Liberty.

[Is Price Gouging Immoral? Should It Be Illegal?](#) Learn Liberty.

5) **The coordination problem: How social cooperation happens?**

In cooperative social orders, individuals obtain mutual benefits because they can generally count on each other to refrain from opportunistic cheating. How could rational individuals develop an independent "preference" or reason to follow a norm or a rule? What is the deliberational route to behavior, and what is a heuristic route? How are they different in terms of norm compliance? How can civilization rest on the fact that we all benefit from knowledge which we do not possess? (Hayek 1982, p. 40)

Bicchieri, Cristina. *The Rules We Live By in The Grammar of Society: The Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. [R]

Hazlitt, Henry. *The Moral Criterion and Social Cooperation in The Foundations of Morality*. Irvington-on-Hudson: Foundation for Economic Education, 1994. [R]

Ostrom, Elinor. *Reflections on the Commons in Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Spakanos, Tony. *Governing Gotham* (ch. 5) In *Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul* (edited by William Irwin, Mark D. White, and Robert Arp). Wiley, 2009.

Hayek, Friedrich A. Rules and Order (vol. 1, ch. 1-6) in *Law, Legislation and Liberty: A New Statement of the Liberal Principles of Justice and Political Economy*. Routledge, 1982.

Poole, Steven. "[We are more rational than those who nudge us | Aeon](#)" *Social Cooperation: Why Thieves Hate Free Markets*, 2012. Learn Liberty.
[Stewart Sutherland on Hume on Design](#), 2007. [PhilosophyBites](#).

6) What should I be praised for having done?

Is the motive for moral behavior utility or spectator approval? We will see that the general rules of morality are the unintended outcome of a multitude of individual instances of natural moral evaluation, praise of blame. Once they are in existence they are quite capable of directing our moral evaluations. Men feel obliged by them and if they break the rules without an overriding moral reason, or a higher rule, they will feel that they are incurring the disapproval of the impartial spectator; and once this is internalized, a sense of duty has been created.

Smith, Adam. Four sources of moral approval ([VII.III.32](#)); Justices paragraph ([VII.II.13-14](#)); Of Justice and Beneficence ([Part II, Section II](#)); Man of system ([VI. II. 42](#)) in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. 1st Edition in this form. Series: The Glasgow edition of the works and correspondence of Adam Smith ; 1. Oxford University Press, USA, 1759. [R]

McCloskey, D. N. "Adam Smith, the Last of the Former Virtue Ethicists." *History of Political Economy* 40, no. 1 (2008): 43.

Raphael, D. D. Spectator Theory (ch. 4) and The Impartial Spectator (ch. 5) in *The Impartial Spectator: Adam Smith's Moral Philosophy*. Oxford; Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 2007.

Haakonssen, Knud. Smith's moral theory (ch. 3) in *The Science of a Legislator: The Natural Jurisprudence of David Hume and Adam Smith*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

"[Russ Roberts and Mike Munger on How Adam Smith Can Change Your Life](#)" | EconTalk | Library of Economics and Liberty.

7) Consequentialism: Is Batman a utilitarian or a deontologist?

How did Bentham define the principle of utility? What did John Stuart Mill think about the principle formulated by his teacher? Should conduct be judged by its "utility", that is, by its consequences, by its tendency to promote happiness and well-being? And should specific acts be so judged or rather general rules of action and their probable long-run consequences?

White, Mark. Why does not Batman kill the Joker? (ch. 1) In *Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul* (edited by William Irwin, Mark D. White, and Robert Arp). Wiley, 2009. [R]

Hazlitt, Henry. The need for general rules (ch. 8) in *The Foundations of Morality*. Irvington-on-Hudson: Foundation for Economic Education, 1994.

Bentham, Jeremy. [Of the principle of utility](#) in in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 1789 (Jonathan Bennett's translation)

Mill, John Stuart, What utilitarianism is in *Utilitarianism*, 1861 ([Jonathan Bennett's translation](#))

Philip Pettit. The Consequentialist Perspective in *Three Methods of Ethics: A Debate* (edited by Baron, Pettit and Slote), 1997.

Coase, Ronald. "The Problem of Social Cost." *Journal of Law and Economics* 3 (October 1960): 1-44.

McCloskey, Deirdre N. "[The Good Old Coase Theorem and the Good Old Chicago School: A Comment on Zerbe and Medema.](#)" In *Coasean Economics Law and Economics and the New Institutional Economics*, 239–48. Springer, 1998.

[Philip Pettit on Consequentialism](#), 2011 | [Brad Hooker on Consequentialism](#), 2007 | [Philip Schofield on Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism](#), 2012 | [Roger Crisp on Utilitarianism](#), 2007. [PhilosophyBites](#).

8) Deontology: What is the right thing to do?

Might not a lie be justified to save an invalid from death or prevent a war? Deontology is the doctrine that tells us that we ought to perform our "duty" simply because it is our "duty" – the doctrine, in other words, that morality has no other end beyond itself.

Hazlitt, Henry. Ends and Means (ch. 15) and Duty for Duty's Sake (ch. 16) in *The Foundations of Morality*. Irvington-on-Hudson: Foundation for Economic Education, 1994. [R]

Baron, Marcia W. Kantian Ethics in *Three Methods of Ethics: A Debate* (edited by Baron, Pettit and Slote), 1997.

Rawls, John. The Original Position and Justification (I. 5) and Some Remarks about Moral Theory (I. 9) in *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press, 1971.

Kant, Immanuel, Preface, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 in *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*, 1785 ([Jonathan Bennett's translation](#))

9) Virtue ethics: Where does the inner strength come from?

Virtue ethics was the pre-eminent form of ethical theorizing in the ancient world, it has largely been inspired by the Aristotelian model of ethics. Modern moral philosophy has emphasized moral obligation and moral law at the expense of the sources of morality in the inner life and character of the individual. Can what is admirable and right in human action be captured in general rules or principles?

Nussbaum, Martha C. "Virtue Ethics: A Misleading Category?" *The Journal of Ethics* 3, no. 3 (September 1, 1999) [R]

Michael Slote. Virtue Ethics *Three Methods of Ethics: A Debate* (edited by Baron, Pettit and Slote), 1997

Lipka, D. "[The Max U Approach: Prudence Only, or Not Even Prudence? A Smithian Perspective](#)" *Econ Journal Watch* 10 (1), January 2013. ([audio](#))

Van Staveren, I. "Beyond Utilitarianism and Deontology: Ethics in Economics." *Review of Political Economy* 19, no. 1 (2007): 21.

DiGiovanna, James. Is it right to make a Robin? (ch. 2) In *Batman and Philosophy: The Dark Knight of the Soul* (edited by William Irwin, Mark D. White, and Robert Arp). Wiley, 2009.

[Julia Annas on What is Virtue Ethics For?](#), 2014. [PhilosophyBites](#).

10) Justice and freedom

What is the ultimate yardstick of justice? Justice and freedom are the great means to the promotion of Social Cooperation. Social Cooperation in turn is the great means to the realization of each individual's ends and therefore to the realization of the ends of society". Social cooperation is the great means of maximizing the happiness and well being of each and therefore of all. Justice is the name we give to the set of rules,

relationships, and arrangements that do most to promote voluntary Social Cooperation.

Hazlitt, Henry. Justice (ch. 24) and Freedom (ch. 25) in *The Foundations of Morality*. Irvington-on-Hudson: Foundation for Economic Education, 1994. [R]

Mill, John Stuart. 1859. *On liberty* (ch. V) ([Jonathan Bennett's translation](#)) [R]

Brink, David. [Mill's Liberalism](#) in "Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2008. [R]

Haberman, Clyde. "[Baby M and the Question of Surrogate Motherhood](#)." *The New York Times*, March 23, 2014.

[Michael Sandel on What Shouldn't Be Sold](#), 2011 | [John Tomasi on Free Market Fairness](#). [PhilosophyBites](#).

11) Justice and property: Who should ensure we enjoy property?

Locke John, Of property in *Second Treatise of Government*, 1689 ([Jonathan Bennet's translation](#)). [R]

De Soto, Hernando. *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*, pp. 39-40, and 49-62. Basic Books, 2000. [R]

Demsetz, Harold. "Toward a Theory of Property Rights." *Law and Economics* (1967): 341-53.

[The Mystery of Capital Among the Indigenous People of the Amazon](#), 2015. Institute for Liberty and Democracy.

12) Why should inequality concern us?

Rawls, John. Who are the least advantaged? (ch. 17) and The difference principle: It's meaning (ch. 18) in *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*. Harvard University Press, 2001. [R]

Nozick, Robert. Distributive justice: Section 1, The entitlement theory in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Basic Books, 1974. [R]

Hazlitt, Henry. Equality and Inequality (ch. 25) in *The Foundations of Morality*. Irvington-on-Hudson: Foundation for Economic Education, 1994.

Munger, Michael C. "[Euvoluntary Exchange and the Difference Principle](#)." *Exchange and the Difference Principle* (August 2, 2011), 2011.

Hayek, Friedrich A. 'Social' or Distributive Justice (ch. 9, vol. 2.) in *Law, Legislation and Liberty: A New Statement of the Liberal Principles of Justice and Political Economy*. Routledge, 1982.

[Jonathan Wolff on John Rawls' A Theory of Justice](#), 2010. [PhilosophyBites](#).

Evaluation

Class participation makes up for 15% of the final grade. Students are expected to be *present and prepared* with two possible exceptions. Short reflections on the assigned texts will be required. One **3000 words essay** will count for 30% of the grade. The quality of the argument (a valid claim and a persuasive reasoning supporting the claim) along with formal language aspects will be considered. Students will be required to participate in peer review. **Short answer midterm exam** will count for 25% of the grade and an **essay format final exam** for 30% of the grade. The working language of the course is English.

The literature marked [R] is required for each particular class. You are not obliged to read the non-[R] marked readings although these will generally constitute the material

referenced in the classroom and are thus useful for those who wish to extend their understanding of the subject matter.

The evaluation ranges from 0 to 10 through increments of 0.5. Only an evaluation equal or greater than 7 counts as a pass. Students will have a chance to gain extra credit participating in a PPE workshop series (the schedule will be announced).

Policies

Unless you have an official leave of absence confirmed by the university, there is no way of making up for scheduled exams in case you cannot take them. If you do not take the exam or fail to submit an assignment in time you will receive an evaluation of zero for this exam or assignment. If you have an official leave of absence, please talk to me immediately. Even if you do not have an official leave of absence, it is generally recommended you turn in the assignment anyway. In such a case your evaluation will be discounted by 20% for each day you are late. In case you had a conflict with another exam, please approach me as soon as possible.

If you have any questions or doubts about the subject matter or about any organizational issues please consult the official social media group of this class (will be announced), ask your classmates, approach me during the class or set up an appointment with me (in this particular order!).

- Come to class on time
- Turn off any electronic device that might possibly make a sound during the class
- Do not eat, drink, read newspapers, magazines or similar. Do not maintain conversations irrelevant to our work in the class.

Disability assistance

If you need any special disability assistance please let me know during the first week of the semester so that I can arrange for the required help.

Academic integrity

In this class we follow the Academic Integrity Code:

„No student will lie or cheat or plagiarize or tolerate those who do so.“

At the moment of entering the University, every student assumes an obligation to maintain the code, accept the responsibility to learn and to follow the philosophy of professional ethics. It is required that students apply the code while taking exams, submitting assignments or working on their research. Ignoring the rules does not excuse any person from being subject to a corresponding punishment.

In case there is an evidence of a conduct breaching the Academic Integrity Code, the student will be assigned an evaluation of zero in the corresponding exam or assignment. Furthermore, the student will be subject to an administrative process carried out by the Committee of Honor and Justice of the DCEA which has the power to suspend or expel the student that has been found guilty.

Please do not plagiarize. Realize that if you found it online, I can do so too! What is appreciated is your effort in learning, not the possession of a solution. If you are not sure what plagiarism is, consult [this source](#).

Codex of behavior in my classroom

As a student you will

- Contribute to a constructive conversation, be concise.
- Tackle the argument not the person, no insults.
- Remember that raising your voice does not make you any more persuasive

As your lecturer I will

- Guide you through the subject matter in a more interesting way
- Consider your ideas with full attention
- Attend to your needs so that you benefit from our time together as much as possible