

PHIL 2303 – W/F 11:45am-1:25pm

Professor Candice Delmas

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Pronouns: she/her

Office Hours: Tu 2:30-3:30pm

Th/F 11:15-11:45am

& by appointment

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant:

Veronica Bettio

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Pronouns: she/her

Office Hours: W/F 10:40-11:40am

& by appointment



Social and Political Philosophy

Overview

Justice, liberty, and oppression are the central topics of this class. What does justice require? What is freedom and what are the social, political, and material conditions necessary for everyone to be free? What economic arrangements best promote individual autonomy? What is the role of the state? What forms do racial, gender, and ableist oppression take? How do they affect people's lives? How should we theorize about them and think about their intersections? What principles should guide emancipation movements? Should we abolish prisons? Defund the police? How do systems of power produce and rigidify our social identities? What responsibilities do states have toward displaced populations, especially during the current global health crisis? This course addresses these and other questions of social and political morality, through the lens of some of the major theories of Western philosophy, including those of Karl Marx, W.E.B. Du Bois, and John Rawls. Through formal in-class debates, we explore the ethics surrounding many current policy issues, including universal basic income, civil disobedience, and immigration.

Goals

Upon successful completion of this course, students will sharpen their ability to engage in political philosophical reasoning. Specifically, you will be able to:

- i. Identify, analyze, and critically engage with philosophical concepts, arguments, and theories that are central to modern and contemporary political thought;

- ii. Develop, refine, and think critically about your own views on a variety of social and political issues; and
- iii. Carefully express and defend these views in public and on paper.

The course and the assignments are designed to help you achieve these learning outcomes.

Requirements

Although this is a 2000-level class, this course is heavy on participation and light on lectures. Assessment for the class will be a mixture of written and oral, individual and team, work. It includes 6 components, for a total of 100%:

1. <u>Attendance and participation</u>	5%
2. <u>Muddy Points</u>	5%
3. <u>Socratic Pods</u>	10%
4. <u>Critical Reflections</u>	20%
5. <u>Debates</u>	30%
6. <u>Editorial</u>	30%

Failure to complete one of these assignments will result in an 'F' for the course. You will be able to access your grades on Canvas Gradebook. Grade conversion:

A: 94-100 A-: 90-93.9 B+ 87-89.9 B: 84-86.9 B-: 80-83.9 C+: 77-79.9
 C: 74-76.9 C-: 70-73.9 D+ 67-69.9 D: 64-68.9 F: 0-64

Please refer to the "Debates: Instructions" for detailed instructions concerning the Debates and to the "Handbook" for all the other assignments. Carefully read these documents *today* in order to understand my expectations and your responsibilities as they relate to this central assignment. Then take the Course Quiz to test your knowledge of the syllabus and the two aforementioned documents.

Word submissions: Submit your assignments in Word or PDF, not Pages, Notes, or Google Docs. As a Northeastern student, you can get Word for free: in myNEU, go to "Tech Marketplace for Students" and "Access Office365."

Materials: The materials for this course are available on Canvas. The reading load is often heavy and very often difficult. To stay afloat, plan for a sufficient amount of time to *actively* read the texts (around 3 hours). Don't hesitate to come to my and Veronica's office hours if you have any difficulty.

How to read philosophy? If you have not had any philosophy classes yet, you are likely to find this class very challenging. Reading philosophical texts is not easy; it takes method, practice, and perseverance. The first thing I recommend you do is check out my guide "Philosophy for Beginners" (on Canvas) for detailed advice on how to read philosophy and be an *active learner*. I will always post a set of questions under the day's module. These are meant to guide your active reading of the text. You should read them before delving into the text to know what to pay attention to and what to take notes on. You should, and will always be invited to, ask questions in class. Admitting to not understanding or being confused about something is the first step of philosophical inquiry.

★ **Teaching Assistant:** We are lucky to have Veronica Bettio's help this semester. Veronica is a PPE major at Northeastern University. Please email both of us if you have any questions or concerns (unless you have a good reason not to). Veronica will likely be more quickly available than I am, and she will be able to answer most substantive and logistical questions. You will have a mandatory meeting with Veronica for your Debate presentation and you are welcome to stop by at any time during her virtual office hours or schedule an appointment with her to talk about the material, your papers, or anything else.

Class format: I will teach remotely on Zoom. Some students who are on campus can go to our assigned classroom to follow the course with the [Hybrid NUflex](#) learning modality.

- Remember that on your scheduled days in the classroom, you will need to practice healthy physical distancing and wear a face mask.
- Every student attending class remotely is required to have their **camera on** during class.
- There will be opportunities for face-to-face meetings: not only through group projects, but also with me as soon as I deem the health situation sufficiently safe to return to campus. I envision going to the classroom for the last half hour of our class meeting for in-person small-group discussion and hope to begin doing so in March.

Emails: Please prefer direct emails to Canvas messages, which I/m unlikely to see in a timely fashion. **Always indicate the course number in the email subject** (ex: "PHIL 2303 question about the Debate"). Write in a polite and professional manner:

- Start your email with a salutation ("Dear Professor Delmas" is better than "Hi!").
- Sign your full name (Sincerely, First Name Last Name).

I will respond to your queries within **2** business days. If I haven't done so, please send me another email. Remember that Veronica will be able to help you as well.

Absences: See the handbook for the course policy. But here's something you should know: it's a bad idea to ask your professors, after you missed class, whether you missed anything. Just read the syllabus and ask your classmates for their notes. To "Did I miss anything?" queries, my answer is [this poem](#) by Tom Wayman.

Appealing grades: Any student who feels that their assigned grade does not reflect their performance on an assignment can appeal the grade. All appeals must be submitted to the instructor in writing, in the form of a one-page document that clearly explains why you believe that the assigned grade does not reflect your performance. Petitioners must wait at least twenty-four hours after the grade is announced before submitting their appeals. All appeals must be submitted no later than one week after the grade is announced.

Classroom climate: One aim of studying social and political philosophy—and philosophy in general—is to unsettle our received convictions and upset our unexamined beliefs. Because of the controversial and provocative nature of some of the materials we will be studying this semester, I ask that all students exercise respect and

generosity towards one another in the face of your inevitable disagreements. It is always welcome to criticize an idea, but never to attack the person who holds it. If at any point in the semester a student feels uncomfortable with the class climate or disrespected in any way, please do not hesitate to come speak with me directly.

Recording: You may not record and share our meetings. This prohibition is to create a learning environment where students and faculty can feel comfortable expressing their opinions in class without the possibility of their contribution to class being reproduced and replayed without their consent. I will always let you know if I want to record meetings for future classroom use.

Gender inclusivity: Language is gender-inclusive when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Please let me know your preferred pronouns and names. I—we—will honor students' gender identities and gender expressions.

Title IX: Northeastern is committed to providing equal opportunity to its students and employees, and to eliminating discrimination when it occurs. In furtherance of this commitment, the University strictly prohibits discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, religious creed, genetic information, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, national origin, ancestry, veteran, or disability status. The Northeastern University [Title IX policy](#) articulates how the University will respond to reported allegations of sexual harassment involving students, including sexual assault, and provides a consolidated statement of the rights and responsibilities under University policies and Title IX, as amended by the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013.¹ Please know that Title IX mandates me to report sexual assault if you share your experience with me.

Accessibility needs: Northeastern is fully committed to creating a community characterized by inclusion and diversity. As part of this commitment, it upholds the American with Disabilities Act as Amended of 2008 and the American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act, referred to collectively as the ADA. The ADA requires Northeastern to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities unless doing so would create an undue hardship, compromise the health and safety of members of the university community, or fundamentally alter the nature of the university's employment mission. Students seeking information regarding ADA accommodations should review the University's ADA Information and Resources Procedure available [here](#).²

Academic integrity: The Department of Political Science takes very seriously the issue of academic honesty, and as set forth in Northeastern University's principles on Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy (the complete text can be found at [NEU's Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#)).³ Any student who appears to violate these principles will fail the course and will be put on academic probation. Individual faculty,

¹ http://www.northeastern.edu/policies/pdfs/Title_IX_Policy.pdf

² <http://www.northeastern.edu/oidi/compliance/americans-disabilities-act-ada/>

³ <http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academic-integrity-policy/>


with the support of the Department, can impose harsher penalties and as they deem necessary. *Cheating* is one example of academic dishonesty, and which is defined as using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. When completing any academic assignment, a student shall rely on his or her own mastery of the subject. Cheating includes *plagiarism*, which is defined as using as one's own the words, ideas, data, code, or other original academic material of another without providing proper citation or attribution. Plagiarism can apply to any assignment, either final or drafted copies, and it can occur either accidentally or deliberately. Claiming that one has "forgotten" to document ideas or material taken from another source does not exempt one from plagiarizing.

FACT (Faculty Advisor Communication Tool): I will be using this tool to alert advisors of any students who are having difficulty meeting the expectations for the course as described in the syllabus. This is intended to help students who may benefit from additional support. A FACT report is not punitive in any way. It does not affect your grade and does not go on your transcript. It only alerts you and your advisor that you might need some additional support. If you think you might need extra help, please talk to me and your college advisor.






Other concerns: Life at college can be very challenging, especially during these difficult times. Students can feel isolated, overwhelmed, lost, anxious, or depressed. Sometimes they experience relationship difficulties and low self-esteem. I care about your success in this course, and I care even more about your success in life. University Health and Counseling Services is staffed by experienced, professional psychologists and counselors, who are attuned to the needs of college students. Their services are free and confidential. Find out more [here](#).⁴ Please let me know if you encounter challenges that impede your progress in the course, so we can find ways together to mitigate those.



Class Schedule

It may change, perhaps more than once: make sure you always refer to the latest draft and up-to-date Canvas modules. Keeping up to date with the class schedule and assignments due is your responsibility.




W 1/20	Hello	Introduction(s)
F 1/22	Marxism	Karl Marx, <i>Theses on Feuerbach</i> (1845); <i>The German Ideology</i> , selections (1846); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, <i>Communist Manifesto</i> (1848)  Guy Standing's TEDx Talk, What is the Precariat? (2017)
W 1/27	Liberalism	John Stuart Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , selections (1859)
F 1/29	Abolition	W.E.B. Du Bois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> , chap. 1-3 (1903);

⁴ <https://www.northeastern.edu/uahcs/counseling-services/>

	Democracy	<i>Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil</i> , chap. 6 (1920) Sign up for your Debate
W 2/3	Pragmatism	John Dewey, <i>The Public and its Problems</i> , selections (1927)  Guest Talk: ALEXANDER LIVINGSTON (Associate Professor of Politics, Cornell University)
F 2/5	Sex & Gender	Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> , “Introduction” and “Conclusion” (1949)
W 2/10	Distributive Justice	John Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> , chap. 1-5, 11 (1971); <i>Justice as Fairness: A Restatement</i> , § 1-4 (2001)
F 2/12	Libertarianism	John Hospers, “What Libertarianism Is” (1974) Robert Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State and Utopia</i> , pp. 149-74, 262-5 (1974)
W 2/17	Reparations	 Guest Talk: JOSEPH FRIGAULT (PhD, Boston University)  Watch Angela Davis’s and Ta-Nehisi Coates’s remarks (2 nd video, first 20 min) at the <i>Lynching: Reparations as Restorative Justice</i> Conference held November 2020 (Northeastern School of Law, Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project)
F 2/19	Conservatism(s)	Leo Strauss, “On Classical Political Philosophy” (1945) William F. Buckley Jr., “ National Review: Our Mission Statement ” aka. “Standing Athwart History” (1955) Michael Oakeshott, “On Being Conservative” (1956) Samuel Francis, “ The Paleo Persuasion ” (2002) Roger Scruton, “Why I Became a Conservative” (2003) Irving Kristol, “The Neoconservative Persuasion” (2003)
W 2/24		DEBATE #1: UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME
F 2/26	Democracy	 Watch Astra Taylor, <i>What is Democracy?</i> (2018) on Kanopy

		Readings TBD Critical Reflection #1 due
W 3/3	Lies and Politics	Michael P. Lynch, “Power, Bald-Faced Lies and Contempt for Truth” (2020)
F 3/5	Intersectional Feminism	bell hooks, <i>Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center</i> , chap. 1 “Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory” (1984) Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” (1991) ⁵
W 3/10		DEBATE #2: PLURAL MARRIAGE
F 3/12		Watch <i>Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution</i> (2020) on Netflix No class meeting
W 3/17	Disability	No reading ★ Guest appearance by MARY BARROWS (Senior Director, Disability Resource Center Northeastern University)
F 3/19	Disability and Community	★ Guest talk by ALISON REIHELD (Associate Professor of Philosophy and Women’s Studies, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville) Read: Lorraine Krall McCrary, “The politics of community: care and agency in people with intellectual disabilities at L’Arche” (2020)
W 3/24	Prison & Police Abolition	Readings TBD
F 3/26		DEBATE # 3: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
W 3/31	Criminal Justice	★ Guest Talk: SARAH LUSTBADER, ESQ. (Bronx Public

⁵ Trigger warning: this text includes graphic descriptions of sexual violence.

		Defender, Senior Policy Adviser) Readings TBD Editorial step 1: Pitch due
F 4/2	Biopolitics	Michel Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i> (pp. 170-206 of <i>Foucault Reader</i> and “Panopticism”)
W 4/7	Necropolitics	Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics” Critical Reflection #2 due
F 4/9		DEBATE # 4: IMMIGRATION Th: Editorial step 2: Pair up with Opponent
W 4/14	Refugees	Serena Parekh, “Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Closed Borders: How the Covid-19 Pandemic is Impacting Displaced People” Northeastern Pandemic Teaching Initiative (2020) Peer review of CritRef #2 due
F 4/16		COVID-19 TASKFORCE Editorial step 3: Post-Opportunity Reflection due
W 4/21		Editorial step 4: Workshop Last day of class!
W 4/28	Editorial step 5:	Upload Final Editorial to Canvas