

Individual Freedom vs. Authority
GOVT 105-006
School of Public Affairs
American University
Spring 2019

Mondays and Thursdays: 12:55 – 2:10 PM

Classroom: Kerwin 6

Professor Danielle Higgins

Email: dh6087a@american.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:45 – 5:15 pm or by appointment.

Office Location: Hurst 206g (Located in the SPA office suite on the second floor)

Course Information

What We Will Cover in This Course:

Does the state constrain our individual freedom, or does it give us a means to pursue it? What is the role of the state in governing our lives and protecting its more vulnerable citizens? What is the proper balance between freedom and equality in society? Is full political, social, and economic equality achievable or even desirable? And perhaps the largest question of all, undergirding our intellectual endeavor throughout the duration of the course is this: what is justice?

To (begin to) answer these questions, this course surveys a broad spectrum of political thought, from the Ancient Greeks to contemporary theorists. Although the writers we will study are separated by centuries, many of the fundamental questions surrounding the relationship between the individual and authority, freedom, (in)equality, justice and morality are the same. We will begin by thinking about what makes laws just or unjust, before diving into a debate is very pertinent to our era: that of social justice versus libertarianism. We will then travel back in time to Plato's *Republic* to explore ancient questions about justice and the proper organization of society and apply these debates to our own "modern" conceptions. After tracing the development of the social contract and classical liberalism, we will engage in conversations with critics, particularly feminist theorists. Political, social, and economic (in)equality will inform our discussions, and we will seek to determine the role of the individual and/or the state (if any) in bringing about solutions (if necessary) to achieve justice. To conclude, we will discuss capitalism and Marxism, the emergence of totalitarianism, nationalism, populism, and the forms that dissent may take in even the most unlikely contexts.

You may find that some of what we read aligns wholeheartedly with your values while other writers and philosophies will make you want to scream. This is to be expected. However, you should strive to untether yourself from your own ideology as much as possible as you read to give the argument its due, understanding it as fully as possible before bringing in your own critiques, which may be rhetorical, moral, or (ideally) both. This is a course where there could never possibly be a "right" answer. I cannot possibly (and would not) attempt to grade your political philosophy, values or morality, but you are expected to convey clear, well-argued positions on what you have read, both in class and in your written assignments.

What You Will Learn:

I realize that a lot of the material we cover may be new to you. All you need is a willingness to push beyond the boundaries of your own thinking and to engage with the material in a critical, analytical, and reflective way.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- 1) Demonstrate familiarity with some major questions, themes and issues in political theory by identifying key debates and synthesizing the arguments of concepts in your exams and papers.
- 2) Apply historical debates to modern-day political conflicts, discussing the implications of particular perspectives in your papers and in in-class discussions.
- 3) Locate and employ the appropriate evidence from authors' arguments to evaluate claims and draw conclusions in your written assignments.
- 4) Convey coherent analytical arguments about political theory in writing and in speech.

This course fulfills a GenEd requirement in Foundational Area 2: Traditions that Shape the Western World also and develops the following General Education learning outcomes:

- 1) **Innovative thinking:** Venturing beyond established patterns of thought in imaginative and creative ways. Particularly in your in-class writing assignments, you will reflect on your own beliefs and explore the implications of the writings we encounter in this course on your own ideas.
- 2) **Ethical reasoning:** Assessing and weighing of moral and political beliefs and practices, and their applications to ethical dilemmas. Again, although you will not be assessed on the basis of your own ethical beliefs, your grades will reflect your ability to craft sound arguments and apply what are sometimes abstract concepts to "real-world" conflicts.
- 3) **Critical Inquiry:** Systematic questioning and analysis of problems, issues, and claims. Both in-class discussions and your written assignments will assess your critical inquiry skills.

What to Do When You are Confused:

This material is not easy, and although you are responsible for reviewing the material on your own and preparing for each class, we will go through it together. I strive to answer questions via email as quickly as possible, but I very much prefer speaking with students in office hours, especially if your questions are substantive in nature. Please reach out if you have questions, want to discuss concepts further or for any other reason. There are no bad questions! It is important for me to know when you are lost and what you might be struggling with.

Course Requirements, Assignments and Grading

Required Books (please bring your books to class!)

The Republic of Plato, Translated by Allan Bloom, Second Edition (1991)

Princeton Readings in Political Thought, edited by Mitchell Cohen, Second Edition (2018)

Assignments

Your assignments for this course include a series of short reflection papers (40%), an in-class midterm exam (20%), and a final 5-7 pp. paper (25%) along with class participation (15%).

Reflection papers (40%) Over the course of the semester, you will write a total of five reflections, of increasing length and difficulty. You will submit these reflection papers on Blackboard prior to our class meeting, on the dates listed below in the syllabus. These papers are generally meant to help you organize your thoughts about what you have read prior to coming to class to discuss the text(s). You should raise thoughtful, interesting questions and points for discussion.

- The first reflection paper should be 250 words (approximately one page, double-spaced). The first reflection paper, due January 24th, is worth 5% of your final grade.
- The next two reflection papers should be 500 words (approximately two pages, double spaced). The first reflection paper is on our first module on distributive justice and is due January 31st. For the reflection papers due during our module on Plato, there will be four options to choose from, but you need only write one (due dates for each of the four options below). Please adhere to the respective deadline for each response (i.e., if you choose to write a response for Option 1, you must submit it by Thursday 2/7 at noon). Each of these papers are worth 7.5% of your grade.
- The final two reflection papers should be 750 words (approximately three pages, double spaced). More so than the previous reflection papers, these will require you to **synthesize** the perspectives of several theorists, putting them in conversation with one another. You will outline their arguments and draw attention to the debates between them as well as the tensions that emerge. These reflection papers are meant to help prepare you to write your final paper require that you have a clear argument that is your own. The first is due on 3/28 and the second is due on 4/11. These are worth 10% of your grade each.

The midterm examination (20%) will take place **in class**, on THURSDAY, March 7th. The purpose of having an in-class exam is for me to assess your understanding of the concepts we have covered, without the aid of notes.

The final paper (25%). By the time of the final paper, you will have honed your ability to analyze and synthesize the arguments of authors, and this is the skill that you will demonstrate through your original arguments about the material we have covered and raise new and interesting questions of your own. The final paper is due on the date that the registrar schedules the final exam for this class (TBD).

Finally, **participation (15%)** is an important element of this course. The more engaged you are, the more interesting the class will be. I define participation in a broad way, because I know that students have various levels of comfort when it comes to participating in and outside of class. Class participation includes contributing to classroom discussion, sending me your notes on the lectures and/or readings, in-class writing assignments, meeting with me during office hours, and emailing me about current events that pertain to topics we are covering in class. Any of these activities can contribute to your participation grade. Excessive absenteeism may adversely affect your participation grade. Please let me know if you know you are going to be missing class. I will send you a mid-semester update on where you stand regarding class participation. Your participation grade will also include your own self-reflection/assessment.

Grading Policy:

Here are the grade cutoffs that I will use when calculating your final grade:

Exemplary		Good		Acceptable		Unacceptable	
A	93%-100%	B+	87%-89%	C+	77%-79%	D	65%-69%
A-	90%-92%	B	84%-86%	C	74%-76%	F	Under 65%
		B-	80%-83%	C-	70%-73%		

How to Submit Assignments:

You will submit your assignments via Blackboard. It is much easier for me if you post your assignment as a Word Document so I can provide in-text comments. Microsoft Office is available for students to download free of charge, via the technology tab in the AU Portal.

Please do not submit assignments via email. I will only provide feedback and grades on once they are submitted on Blackboard. The SafeAssign plagiarism detection tool, which is integrated into Blackboard, compares your work against other student papers, as well as academic articles and internet resources, to generate an "Originality Report" that identifies areas of potential overlap. See the Academic Integrity Code policy at the end of this syllabus.

Course Policies

What Happens If I Submit an Assignment Late?

Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade each day it is late (in other words, a B+ becomes a B, a B- becomes a C+, etc.)

Because I must submit final course grades 72 hours after the scheduled final exam time, you cannot hand in late final exams or final papers if you have not been granted an incomplete for the course.

What About Extensions?

I understand that you have many other classes and responsibilities outside of this course. I may be willing to grant extensions, **but only if you communicate with me at least 24 hours *prior* to the due date.** Otherwise, the assignment grade will be penalized in accordance with the above late work policy.

If you experience an unexpected emergency or other personal crises that prevents you from turning in an assignment on time, please contact me as soon as possible.

What If I Need Accommodations?

In this class, I aim to provide the most inclusive environment possible and equal access to the curriculum for all students. If, at any point during the semester, you find yourself struggling to fully access the content of this course for any reason, you are welcome (but not required) to send me an email, talk with me after class or come by my office hours to discuss your specific needs. If you need an accommodation, I'll try to make it happen. It is especially helpful if folks with non-visible disabilities or who pass or mask speak with me so I can address your needs. Likewise, if English is not your first language and reading and/or writing in English presents difficulties for you, it helps me to know that.

You may also contact the Academic Support and Access Center (ASAC) at asac@american.edu which can assist you in obtaining documentation to receive the accommodations you need for all your courses. For certain accommodations, such as extra time for exams, you need to obtain this documentation. I encourage to contact ASAC so you can ensure that your instructors in all your courses can meet your needs.

I understand that personal circumstances may also arise, often unexpectedly, that affect your ability to engage with the course. Again, you are welcome (but not required) to contact me to discuss what would help you to complete coursework. You may also contact the Dean of Students (DOS) at dos@american.edu.

Both the ASAC and the DOS handle your information in a confidential way. They will ask your instructors to provide the accommodations that you need, but they do not disclose the reason.

A full list of services available to students at AU is provided at the end of this syllabus.

Our Classroom Environment:

When interacting with your classmates I expect you to always respect others' ideas, opinions, and comments. While tolerance toward the opinions of others does not preclude expressions of disagreement, which are, indeed, encouraged, it does require that these expressions be based on the content of the ideas expressed.

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Please also inform me of your preferred gender pronoun (or if you do not utilize gender pronouns) at any point during this course.

Laptop Policy:

The use of laptops in class is highly discouraged. Often, laptops wind up being detrimental to learning and affect your engagement with the class. Because this class is largely discussion-based and centered on the texts at hand, it is important to be fully present. If you bring a laptop to class, it is to be used exclusively for note-taking purposes. If you are using a laptop, I reserve the right to ask you to email me your notes at the end of any class. I also reserve the right to change this policy if it is being abused.

Course Schedule

As the course progresses or we need to adjust, I may make updates to the required readings or due dates listed below. I will email you if I make any changes to this syllabus and will update the syllabus on Blackboard accordingly. Occasionally we may have additional readings, related to current events or recent developments, and I will send out links to these—noting whether these readings are required or supplemental—in advance of the class in which we will be discussing them.

The readings are of various lengths. Some are quite short, and some are much longer, so I encourage you to skim the syllabus and plan your reading schedule accordingly.

Key dates:

Response paper 1: 1/24 by noon on BB

Response paper 2: 1/31 by noon on BB

Response paper 3: Depending on the option you choose, 2/7, 2/14, 2/21 OR 2/28 by noon on BB.

In-class midterm exam: 3/7

Response paper 4: 3/28 by noon on BB

Response paper 5: 4/11 by noon on BB

Final Paper: Date TBD

Week 1: 1/14 & 1/17

Introduction to the course and Just vs. Unjust Laws

Monday, 1/14: Introduction to the Course

Thursday, 1/17:

Martin Luther King Jr.: Letter from Birmingham Jail

https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Letter_Birmingham_Jail.pdf

Week 2: 1/21 & 1/24

Debates over Social Justice, Libertarianism, and Distributive Justice

Monday, 1/21: NO CLASS (MLK Day)

Thursday, 1/24: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (excerpts) in Cohen, pp 685-708

***250-word** reflection on just versus unjust laws, due on Thursday 1/24 by noon on BB*

Week 3: 1/28 & 1/31

Debates over Social Justice, Libertarianism, and Distributive Justice (cont.)

Monday, 1/28: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (excerpts) in Cohen, pp 709-717

Thursday, 1/31: Michael Walzer, *In Defense of Equality* (excerpts) in Cohen, pp 718-728

Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (excerpt) in Cohen, pp 729-737

***500-word** reflection on distributive justice, due on Thursday 1/31 by noon on BB*

Week 4: 2/4 & 2/7

Introduction to Plato's Republic and Definitions of Justice

Monday, 2/4: *The Republic*, Book I, 327 a through 336 b (Bloom pp. 3-13)

Thursday, 2/7: Plato, *The Republic*, Book I, (cont.) 336 b – Book II 367 e (Bloom pp. 13-44)

*Option 1: **500-word** reflection on definitions of justice, due on Thursday 2/7 by noon, on BB*

Week 5: 2/11 & 2/14

The Noble Lie

Monday, 2/11: Plato, *The Republic*, Book II, 368 a – Book II 377 a (Bloom pp. 44 - 54).

Thursday, 2/14: Plato, *The Republic*, Book II 377 a through end of Book III, (Bloom pp. 54-96). Pay special attention to 386a—391e, 412a—417b.

*Option 2: **500-word** reflection on the noble lie, due on Thursday 2/14 by noon on BB*

Week 6: 2/18 & 2/21

Gender and the Republic

Monday, 2/18: Plato, *The Republic*, Book IV (Bloom pp. 97 – 125). Pay special attention to 427d—435a, 441c—444a.

Thursday, 2/21: Plato, *The Republic*, Book V (Bloom pp. 127 – 161). Pay special attention to 449a—474c.

*Option 3: **500-word** reflection on gender in Plato's *Republic*, due Thursday 2/21 by noon on BB*

Week 7: 2/25 & 2/28
The Allegory of the Cave

Monday, 2/25: Plato, *The Republic*, Book VI (Bloom pp. 163 – 192)

Thursday, 2/21: Plato, *The Republic*, Republic, Book VII (Bloom pp. 193 – 220)

*Option 4: **500-word** reflection on the allegory of the cave, due Thursday 2/28 by noon on BB*

Week 8: 3/4 & 3/7
Midterm Review & Examination

Monday, 3/4: In-class discussion of the implications of Plato, Plato's critics & midterm review

Thursday, 3/7: In-class midterm examination

Week 9: NO CLASS--Spring Break 3/10 – 3/17

*Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morality, which we will be reading next after break, is a bit difficult if this is the first time you've come across his writings. I would recommend spending some time over break going through the first and second essays slowly, writing down any questions that come to mind. I've uploaded an introductory essay on the Genealogy to Blackboard, under "Reference Materials," which may be useful to guide your reading.

Week 10: 3/18 & 3/21
The Origins of Morality and Critiques of the State and the Social Contract

Monday, 3/18: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, First Essay (on Blackboard)

Thursday, 3/21: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Second Essay (on Blackboard)

Week 11: 3/25 & 3/28
The State of Nature, the Social Contract and the Emergence of Classical Liberalism

Monday, 3/25: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in Cohen pp. 176-207

Thursday, 3/28: John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, in Cohen pp. 213 –243

***750-word** reflection on Hobbes, Locke, and Nietzsche, due Thursday, 3/28 at noon on BB*

Week 12: 4/1 & 4/4
The General Will and Liberty of Thought and Discussion

Monday, 4/1: Rousseau, *On the Social Contract* (excerpts), in Cohen pp. 270-280

Mill, *On Liberty* (excerpts) in Cohen, pp. 369-380

Thursday, 4/4: NO CLASS.

Week 13: 4/8 & 4/11
The Subjugation of Women and the Patriarchy of Classical Liberal Theory

Monday, 4/8: J.S. Mill, *On the subjugation of women* in Cohen pp. 380-387

Marie-Olympe de Gouges, "Declaration of the Rights of Women and Citizens" in Cohen pp 342-346

Thursday, 4/11: Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women* (excerpts on Blackboard)

***750-word** reflection on feminism and classical liberalism, due Thursday 4/11 at noon on BB*

Week 14: 4/15 & 4/18
Inequality and Marxism

Monday, 4/22: Jean Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* (excerpts) in Cohen pp. 280-297

Thursday, 4/25: Karl Marx, various excerpts from multiple sources in Cohen pp. 428-454

F.A. Hayek, "The Road to Serfdom" in Cohen pp 558-562

Week 15: 4/22 & 4/25
Totalitarianism and Resistance

Monday, 4/22: Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (excerpts) in Cohen pp. 544 - 555

Thursday, 4/25: Vaclav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (excerpts) in Cohen pp. 637-644

Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (excerpts) in Cohen pp. 614-620

Week 16: 4/29
Transformations and Contemporary Issues

Monday, 4/29: Martha Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" in Cohen pp. 738-745

Jan-Werner Muller, "What is Populism?" in Cohen, pp. 758-761

Final Paper Due by Date Scheduled for our Final Examination (TBD) on BB

Academic Integrity Code:

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the university's [Academic Integrity Code](#). By registering for this course, students have acknowledged their awareness of the Academic Integrity Code and they are obliged to become familiar with their rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary action will be taken should violations occur. This includes cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's words, ideas, or work as one's own without attribution. Plagiarism may involve using someone else's wording without using quotation marks—a distinctive name, a phrase, a sentence, or an entire passage or essay. Misrepresenting sources is another form of plagiarism. The issue of plagiarism applies to any type of work, including exams, papers, or other writing, computer programs, art, music, photography, video, and other media.

Student Code of Conduct

The central commitment of American University is the development of thoughtful, responsible human beings in the context of a challenging yet supportive academic community. The [Student Code of Conduct](#) is designed to benefit the American University community and to assist in forming the highest standards of ethics and morals among its members. By registering for this course, students have acknowledged their awareness of the Student Code of Conduct and they are obliged to become familiar with their rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code.

Emergency Preparedness:

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (american.edu/emergency) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/college-specific information.

Student Support and Services:

As I have said, please do not hesitate to contact me if you are experiencing difficulties, but in addition to the resources within your department, a wide range of services is available to support you in your efforts to meet course requirements.

Academic Support & Access Center MGC 243, 202-885-3360 supports the academic development and educational goals of all AU students while also providing support to students with disabilities. We offer workshops on topics of interest to all students such as managing the college workload, stress management, time management note taking, critical thinking, memory skills, and test taking. Additional support includes free private and group tutoring in many subjects, supplemental instruction, The Math Lab and [The Writing Lab](#) are also available.

Counseling Center MGC 214, 202-885-3500 is here to help students make the most of your university experience, both personally and academically. We offer individual and group counseling, urgent care, self-help resources, referrals to private care, as well as programming to help you gain the skills and insights needed to overcome adversity and thrive while you are in college. Contact the Counseling Center to make an appointment in person or by telephone or visit the Counseling Center page on the AU website for additional information.

Center for Diversity & Inclusion MGC 201 and 202, 202-885-3651 is dedicated to enhancing LGBTQ, Multicultural, First Generation, and Women's experiences on campus and to advance AU's commitment to respecting & valuing diversity by serving as a resource and liaison to students, staff, and faculty on issues of equity through education, outreach, and advocacy.

OASIS: The Office of Advocacy Services for Interpersonal and Sexual Violence, The Wellness Center, Hughes Hall Room 105, 202-885-3276, provides free and confidential advocacy services for anyone in the campus community who is impacted by sexual violence (sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, and stalking).

American University expressly prohibits any form of discriminatory harassment including sexual harassment, dating and domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The university is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution that operates in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including pregnancy), age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, personal appearance, gender identity and expression, family responsibilities, political affiliation, source of income, veteran status, an individual's genetic information or any other bases under federal or local laws in its programs and activities. If you experience any of the above, you have the option of filing a report with the AU Department of Public Safety (202-885-2527) or the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) 202-885-3300 dos@american.edu. Please keep in mind that all faculty and staff – with the exception of counselors in the Counseling Center, victim advocates in the Wellness Center, medical providers in the Student Health Center, and ordained clergy in the Kay Spiritual Life Center – who are aware of or witness this conduct are required to report this information to the university, regardless of the location of the incident.

The Writing Center First floor of Bender Library, offers free, individual coaching sessions to all AU students. In your 45-minute session, a student writing consultant can help you address your assignments, understand the conventions of academic writing, and learn how to revise and edit your own work. Hours: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday. Call 202-885-2991 to arrange a session. Meanwhile find handouts, information, and a weekly writer's blog at the Writing Center website and on Facebook.

[International Student & Scholar Services](#), Batelle 4th Butler Pavilion, Rm. 410. Resources to support academic success and participation in campus life including academic counseling, support for second language learners, response to questions about visas, immigration status and employment and intercultural programs, clubs and resources.

Technical Support

Blackboard Support: Please let me know about any technical problems with access to Blackboard as soon as possible and also contact the Blackboard Support Center at blackboard@american.edu or call (202) 885-3904 for 24/7 support. Students can also log on to [Blackboard Help](#) for support.

- **AU Help Desk (focuses on all other IT issues):** Answers to your technology questions are just an e-mail, instant message, or phone call away. Contact the IT Help Desk at 202-885-2550, helpdesk@american.edu, or [AskAmericanUHelp](#) to reach one of our professional staff who can answer your questions and provide general troubleshooting assistance. Students can also log on to the [Need Help Now?](#) portal for support.