

MEDAILLE COLLEGE  
AGASSIZ CIRCLE  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK

COURSE OUTLINE

Program: Humanities  
Course Number: PHI 450  
Course Title: Political and Social Philosophy  
Number of Credits: 3  
Prerequisites: Junior standing

A. Catalog Description of Course:

The political and social philosophies of important thinkers representative of distinct schools of thought are developed and used to examine important political, social and legal issues.

B. Goals:

1. To enable students to know what problems political and social philosophy deals with, the historical sources of those problems, and how the leading ideas of important thinkers are used to examine, clarify and evaluate political, social and legal issues.
2. To enable students to engage in their own systematic, reflective and critical appraisal of important political, social and legal issues.
3. To develop skills of critical analysis both verbal and written.

C. Objectives:

The student will be able to:

1. Determine what makes a problem a political, social or legal problem.
2. Define the leading ideas of particular political/social thinkers.
3. Use these leading ideas to clarify and appraise issues involved in important political and social problems.
4. Assess the efficiency of a theory in its role of clarifying and appraising issues involved in political and social problems.

D. Outline of Course Content:

1. Examination of the nature of political and social philosophy, its purposes and origins.
2. Examination of specific political/social perspectives in terms of:
  - a) What problems they are a response to and seek to resolve.
  - b) Specifying their assumptions and leading ideas.
  - c) Application of these perspectives to an important political/social problem and an assessment of their ability to clarify issues and/or their bias and omissions.

E. Suggested Texts:

The text or texts will be determined by the thinkers and specific political/social problems and issues to be considered. Since this is an upper division course the students should be reading selections from the thinkers themselves. Overview texts should be used in a supplementary role. For overview texts see Barker, Benn and Sabine in instructor references below.

F. Suggested Modes, Media, and Techniques of Instruction:

Class discussion of assigned written materials, debates, novels, movies, plays.  
Inductive, deductive and reflective thinking.

G. Instructor References:

Aristotle. The Politics. Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1986.

Barker, Ernest. Principles of Political and Social Theory. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.

Benn, S.I. and Peters. The Principles of Political Thought. New York: Free Press, 1959.

Brown, Robert (ed.) Classical Political Theories. New York: MacMillan, 1990.

Cohen, Carl (ed.) Communism, Fascism and Democracy. New York: Random House, 1973.

Ibid. Democracy. New York: Free Press, 1971.

Dewey, John. Freedom and Culture. New York: Capricorn, 1939.

Ibid. Individualism Old and New. New York: Minton, 1930.

Ibid. Liberalism and Social Action. New York: Capricorn, 1939.

Feinberg, Joel. Social Philosophy. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973.

Hook, Sidney. From Hepel to Marx. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962.

Ibid. Paradoxes of Freedom. Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1987.

Levinson, Ronald B. In Defense of Plato. Mass: Cambridge, 1953.

Mill, John Stuart. On Liberty. Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1986.

Ortega y. Gasset. Revolt of the Masses. New York: W.W. Norton, 1932.

Plato. The Republic. Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1986.

Popper, Karl. The Open Society and its Enemies. New Jersey: Princeton, 1963.

Sabine, George H. History of Political Theory. Third Edition  
New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1961.

Tucker, Robert C. The Marx-Engels Reader. New York: W.W. Norton, 1972.