

PHIL/POLI/ECON 698.003 PPE Capstone

Spring 2023

Course Information

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| Credit Hours | 3 |
| Pre-Requisites | PHIL/POLI/ECON 384 |
| Target Audience | Graduating senior PPE minors |
| Meeting Pattern | M/W, 3:35-4:50pm |
| Instructional Format | In Person |
| Classroom | DE 303A |
| Final Exam | Tuesday, May 2, 4:00pm |

Instructor Information

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| Name | Gerard Rothfus |
| Office Location | 11 Caldwell Hall |
| Office Hours | T/Th, 10:30am-12pm, or by appointment |
| Email | girothfu@unc.edu |

Course Description

This course serves as the capstone of the PPE sequence and aims to apply ideas and tools taken from all three branches of PPE to investigate various matters of contemporary and perennial interest. The course will be structured as a Great Ideas in PPE seminar, focused on exploring three central topics: Justice (philosophy), Markets (economics), and Democracy (political science). Topics to be covered include major theories of justice, moral limits on markets, and the paradoxes of voting. Assessment will take into account participation, homeworks, and a final PPE Capstone project/presentation.

Course Materials

There are two required texts for the course, both available at the UNC students stores and online:

- *The Ethics of Capitalism: An Introduction* by Daniel Halliday and John Thrasher, 2020, OUP
- *Liberalism Against Populism: A Confrontation Between the Theory of Democracy and the Theory of Social Choice* by William Riker, 1982, Waveland.

Learning Objectives

This course will equip students to:

- Grasp an array of historically prominent philosophical approaches to understanding justice.
- Understand major ethical debates regarding the virtues and vices of capitalism and socialism as economic systems.
- Appreciate both the moral merits and limits of markets.
- Recognize the virtues and vices of a wide array of commonly used voting methods.
- Understand the content and significance of the central results of axiomatic voting theory, especially Arrow's Impossibility Theorem.
- Reflect thoughtfully about both the meaning of widely shared democratic ideals and how to best realize them in our electoral procedures.

Broader Course Goals and Learning Objectives

All our philosophy courses aim at the acquisition and nurturing of basic philosophical skills. One of the main goals of our philosophy curriculum is to instill and enable the development of skills that are distinct to philosophy, but which are foundational to all forms of knowledge. These basic philosophical skills involve being able to:

- Think critically
- Deploy philosophical concepts and terminology correctly, in either a historical or contemporary setting
- Represent clearly and accurately the views or argument of particular philosophers, in either a historical or contemporary setting

- Identify the premises and conclusion(s) of a philosophical argument and assess both its validity and soundness
- Apply a philosophical theory or argument to a new topic, and being able to draw and defend reasonable conclusions about that topic
- Develop an argument for a particular solution to a philosophical problem in either a historical or contemporary setting
- Write clearly, precisely, and persuasively in defense of a philosophical thesis
- Participate in respectful, critical, and reflexive dialogues about difficult philosophical positions
- Read, interpret, and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different philosophical texts and the philosophical positions presented them

IDEAs in Action Gen Ed

This course is part of the IDEAs in Action General Education curriculum, satisfying the focus capacity, **Ethical and Civic Values**.

In courses satisfying this capacity, students learn how different perspectives can influence our idea of what is ethical and how to think critically about how we make and justify private and public decisions and evaluate the actions of public leaders.

Learning Outcomes

1. Explain the contexts in which questions of justification arise.
2. Assess ethical values in terms of reasons offered
3. Recognize different ethical perspectives and the distinctive approaches these perspectives bring to questions of value, evaluating ethical justifications for different ways of organizing civic and political communities.
4. Analyze the differences between personal ethical decisions and those bearing on the public and civic spheres.

Questions for Students

1. How can people think fruitfully, individually and together, about how they should live their lives?
2. What is required to judge a standard or value as worthy of support?

3. How should we distinguish between prejudices and reasonable grounds for value judgments?
4. What considerations – stories, reasons, testimony, documents, data, etc. – can justify our values and commitments, whether personal or social?

Recurring Capacities

1. Writing, totaling at least 10 pages in length or the intellectual equivalent.
2. Presenting material to the class, smaller groups, or the public through oral presentations, webpages, or other means.
3. Collaborating in pairs or groups to learn, design, solve, create, build, or research.
4. These elements – referred to as “recurring capacities” – will help you repeatedly practice crucial skills for future study, life, and career success.

Course Structure

The course will be organized around two weekly seminar-style discussion periods, where various topics in decision theory will be explored and discussed in person. You are expected to finish the course readings before each lecture in order to be better prepared to engage, ask questions, make suggestions in discussion, etc. **Note:** This is **not** a lecture-style course and class participation is key to success. Periodically, I may release short, pre-recorded videos to the class site (as well as YouTube), summarizing different ideas covered in the course. You may view these videos to help with understanding particular readings or just to get a better grip on key ideas in the course.

I will also hold office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:30am to 12pm. Feel free to come to these office hours and ask any questions you may have about the course! If you are unable to make these times any week and would like to discuss the course, you are very much encouraged to set up an appointment for another time. In these office hours, I am happy to go over past readings or discuss questions about upcoming assignments, new material, homework strategies, etc. Whether in or out of office hours, please feel free to reach out to me any time!

Expected Time Dedicated to the Class

On average, students should expect to spend about 12 hours per week on seminar discussions and course assignments.

Course Assignments

Your grade will be determined according to the table below. (Note: All assignment due dates are recorded in the Course Outline.)

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| Homework | 25% |
| Final Paper | 30% |
| Peer Review Exercise (Collaboartion/Presentation Exercise) | 10% |
| Final Presentation | 20% |
| Participation | 15% |

Homework

Homework will be due every Monday and Wednesday before class at 3pm. Late homework will not be accepted without an appropriate excuse, but your three lowest homework scores will be dropped. We will discuss this aspect of the course more in class, but feel free to reach out to me with any questions about the homeworks!

Final Paper

Your final paper will require you to write a philosophical essay arguing for or against a significant position in contemporary PPE. There will be three stages to producing this paper: (i) writing an outline, (ii) writing a draft, and (iii) writing the final product. Each of these stages will contribute to your final paper grade in the following proportions: 10% for the outline, 20% for the rough draft, and 70% for the final version. The final paper must be **10 to 12 pages** long and will be assessed according to this general rubric: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/grades.html>. Late papers will be penalized 10% for every day past the deadline. We will discuss good philosophical writing practices and tips for handling the final paper as the course goes on.

Peer Review Exercise

After completing the rough draft stage of the final paper, we will engage in a peer review exercise. Students will be randomly partitioned into groups of 3 or 4 and will exchange paper drafts with their group members. Your task is to offer charitable and constructive feedback to each of your group members with the aim of helping them improve their final paper. After having had the opportunity to read your peers' papers, you will submit roughly **1 page** of thoughtful written comments on each reviewed paper. We will go over further details of this process as the assignment draws nearer.

Final Presentation

The last two class periods together with the final exam period will be devoted to final presentations. Students will each give a 15 minute power point presentation conveying the argument of their final research paper to their peers. Presentations will be graded on both delivery and content. As the semester advances, we will discuss tips for delivering an effective PPE talk.

Participation

Participation credit can be earned by (i) attending lectures, (ii) thoughtfully participating in class discussions, and (iii) attending office hours. Students are expected to attend lectures, though two classes may be missed without penalty to a student's participation score. Students are expected to participate actively in course discussions by asking questions, raising objections, or presenting their own ideas. It is very natural to feel apprehensive or intimidated about speaking during class. (I often felt this way in my philosophy classes!) If you have any concerns about classroom participation, please feel free to come talk with me about it during office hours, both because this is an additional way to earn participation credit outside the classroom and because maybe we can find ways to make classroom discussion seem less formidable.

Every voice is welcome in our classroom and students should feel free to raise any questions or thoughts they may have regarding course material during our class discussions. However, every student is expected to respect the bounds of kindness and respect for their peers during these discussions. (Avoid interrupting, rude language, insults, etc.) Conducting oneself with honesty and compassion is essential to good participation in the discussion and debate of controversial philosophical and political topics.

Grade Scale

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|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| A: 94-100 | A-: 90-93 | B+: 87-89 | B: 83-86 | B-: 80-82 |
| C+: 77-79 | C: 73-76 | C-: 70-72 | D+: 67-69 | D: 60-66 |
| F: <60 | | | | |

Late Policy

Late papers (including drafts and outlines) will be downgraded by five points for every 24 hours past their due dates. (This excludes papers that are late due to university-approved or otherwise serious reasons brought to my attention in a timely manner.)

Attendance Policy

University Policy: As stated in the University's Class Attendance Policy, no right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Class Policy: Aside from the exceptions referenced above, attendance is expected of all students and will contribute toward your grade via your participation score. Note, however, that as mentioned above, two classes may be missed for any reason without penalty to a student's participation score.

Grade Appeal Process

If you feel you have been awarded an incorrect grade, please discuss with me. If we cannot resolve the issue, you may talk to our departmental director of undergraduate studies or appeal the grade through a formal university process based on arithmetic/clerical error, arbitrariness, discrimination, harassment, or personal malice. To learn more, go to the Academic Advising Program website.

Honor Code

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC Honor Code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from "lying, cheating, or stealing" in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate the Honor Code, please see me or consult studentconduct.unc.edu.

Acceptable Use Policy

By attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. The Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) sets the expectation that you will use the University's technology resources responsibly, consistent with the University's mission. In the context of a class, it's quite likely you will participate in online activities that could include personal information about you or your peers, and the AUP addresses your obligations to

protect the privacy of class participants. In addition, the AUP addresses matters of others' intellectual property, including copyright. These are only a couple of typical examples, so you should consult the full Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy, which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property. Additionally, consult the Safe Computing at UNC website for information about data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

Syllabus Changes

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

Accessibility Resources and Services

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, including mental health disorders, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

Counseling and Psychological Services

UNC-Chapel Hill is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body. The Heels Care Network website is a place to access the many mental resources at Carolina. CAPS is the primary mental health provider for students, offering timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services. Go to their website <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health building for an initial evaluation to learn more. Students can also call CAPS 24/7 at 919-966-3658 for immediate assistance.

Title IX Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online

to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Course Outline

| Week: | Topic: |
|--------|--|
| Jan 9 | Introduction |
| Jan 11 | Justice I: Utilitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 2, <i>Justice</i> by Michael Sandel (available via Sakai). • Optional: Ch. 5, <i>Utilitarianism</i> by John Stuart Mill (available via Sakai). • Homework 1 Due |
| Jan 16 | No Class: MLK Day |
| Jan 18 | Justice II: Rawls <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 6, <i>Justice</i> by Michael Sandel (available via Sakai). • Optional: “Justice as Fairness” by John Rawls (available via Sakai). • Homework 2 Due |
| Jan 23 | Justice III: Aristotle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 8, <i>Justice</i> by Michael Sandel (available via Sakai). • Optional: Bk 5, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> by Aristotle (available via Sakai). • Homework 3 Due |
| Jan 25 | Markets I: Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 4 Due |
| Jan 30 | Markets II: Political Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 2, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 5 Due |
| Feb 1 | Markets III: Feudalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 3, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 6 Due |
| Feb 6 | Markets IV: Order and Failure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 4, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 7 Due |

| Week: | Topic: |
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| Feb 8 | Markets V: Socialism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 5, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 8 Due |
| Feb 13 | No Class: Well-Being Day |
| Feb 15 | Markets VI: Jobs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 6, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 9 Due |
| Feb 20 | Markets VII: Welfare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 7, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 10 Due |
| Feb 22 | Markets VIII: Trade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 8, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. |
| Feb 27 | Markets IX: Positional Goods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 9, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 11 Due |
| Mar 1 | Markets X: Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 10, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 12 Due |
| Mar 6 | Markets XI: Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 11, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 13 Due |
| Mar 8 | Markets XII: Commodification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 12, <i>The Ethics of Capitalism</i> by Halliday and Thrasher. • Homework 14 Due Final Paper Topic Due @ 3:35pm |
| Mar 13 | No Class: Spring Break |
| Mar 15 | No Class: Spring Break |

| Week: | Topic: |
|--------|--|
| Mar 20 | <p>Democracy I: Liberalism vs Populism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1, <i>Liberalism Against Populism</i> by Riker. • Homework 15 Due |
| Mar 22 | <p>Democracy II: Some Voting Puzzles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 2, <i>Liberalism Against Populism</i> by Riker. • Homework 16 Due |
| Mar 27 | <p>Democracy III: Simple Majority Decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 3, <i>Liberalism Against Populism</i> by Riker. • Homework 17 Due |
| Mar 29 | <p>Democracy IV: Voting Methods I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 4, p. 66-95, <i>Liberalism Against Populism</i> by Riker. • Homework 18 Due |
| Apr 3 | <p>Democracy V: Voting Methods II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 4, p. 95-137, <i>Liberalism Against Populism</i> by Riker. <p>Final Paper Outline Due @ 3:35pm</p> |
| Apr 5 | <p>Democracy VI: Arrow's Theorem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 5, <i>Liberalism Against Populism</i> by Riker. • Homework 19 Due |
| Apr 10 | <p>Democracy VII: Strategic Voting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 6, <i>Liberalism Against Populism</i> by Riker. <p>Final Paper Rough Draft Due @ 3:35pm</p> |
| Apr 12 | <p>Democracy VIII: Agenda Control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 7, <i>Liberalism Against Populism</i> by Riker. • Homework 20 Due |

| Week: | Topic: |
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| Apr 17 | <p>Democracy IX: Political Disequilibrium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 8, <i>Liberalism Against Populism</i> by Riker. <p>Peer Review Reports Due @ 3:35pm</p> |
| Apr 19 | <p>Democracy X: Liberalism vs Populism Revisited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ch. 10, <i>Liberalism Against Populism</i> by Riker. <li>• Homework 21 Due |
| Apr 24 | <p>In Class Presentations</p> <p>Final Paper Due @ 3:35pm</p> |
| Apr 26 | <p>In Class Presentations</p> |
| May 2 | <p>Final Exam: 4PM</p> |