

**Yale Summer Session B****S178: Introduction to Political Philosophy**

June 30 - August 1, 2025

**Instructor:** Professor Paul Franks, [paul.franks@yale.edu](mailto:paul.franks@yale.edu)

**Short Description:** Political philosophy deals with foundational questions about how we humans should organize our collective agency. Should we have hereditary rulers or elected leaders? What, if anything, makes the difference between a legitimate state and a protection racket? When do we have an obligation to obey the state, and when is revolt or revolution permissible or even obligatory? What are the meanings and comparative values of freedom and equality, which often seem to conflict? What is identity politics, and how are biology and political identity related? Readings include selections from the works of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Kant, Marx and Mill, as well as recent and contemporary philosophers such as Rawls, Foucault, Cohen, Scanlon, and Anderson. Students will be introduced to central problems, concepts, and texts of political philosophy, and – most importantly of all – they will be introduced to methods of critical thinking and debate.

**Units:** (readings will be available on Canvas)

1. Ideal Systems and Utopias
2. Non-Ideal Systems and Protection Rackets
3. Freedom
4. Equality
5. Identity and Biology

**Office Hours:** I'm available in the hour after class or by appointment. I am always happy to meet. Please don't hesitate to arrange by email a time to talk.

**Coursework:** Each week you will have a writing assignment, to be submitted by email.

Week 1: reading response, 1-2 pp.	Due Fri, 7/4
Week 2: reading response, 1-2 pp.	Due Fri, 7/11
Week 3: mid-term essay, 3-4 pp.	Due Fri, 7/18
Week 4: reading response, 1-2 pp.	Due Wed, 7/23
Week 5: final essay, 5-6 pp.	Draft due Mon, 7/28
	Final version due, Fri 8/1

I will provide questions for each writing assignment at the beginning of each week.

**Evaluation:** Assignments will be graded as follows:

- Reading Responses: 3 x 10% each = 30%
- Mid-term Essay: 20%
- Final Essay: 30%
- Participation in Class Discussion: 20%

**Attendance:** Since this is a condensed course, attendance is mandatory. Failure to attend every class will impact your participation and thus your final class grade. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

**Participation:** Class participation makes up 20% of your grade. Some of you will be eager to ask questions and discuss your thoughts on issues. Others will be less ready to speak in class. I understand and respect these differences. It is also possible to participate via email or in office hours.

I expect that you come to class having already prepared the readings. If you do not understand everything, that is fine! But you should prepare questions about what you do not understand. I expect that you are attentive in class, that you ask questions both inside and outside of class if you have any, and that you encourage and engage your fellow classmates in discussion. If you have any concerns about participation, please speak to me early on.

**Academic Integrity:** I take any suspected cases of plagiarism seriously, so please remember to cite any and all ideas that are not your own. Consult the Yale policies on academic integrity and ask me if you are unsure about the rules.

**Reading Assignments:** All readings will be available electronically on Canvas and must be read in preparation for class.

## Week 1

Monday 6/30

1. Myths and forms, 376e, 57 “But aren’t there two kinds of stories”-379a, 59 “But they should not themselves make up any poems” (all Plato readings are from Plato, Republic, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett: 2004))
2. Myth of the metals, Book III, 414c, 99 “How then could we devise”-417b, 101 (end of book III)
3. Tripartite soul, Book IV, 434a, 120 “So from that point of view, too”-441e, 130, “Then isn’t it appropriate for the rationally calculative element to rule”
4. Philosopher kings, Book V, 473c, 166 “Until philosophers rule as kings in their cities” to Book VI, 502c, 197, “Yes, that is the conclusion we have reached.”
5. The form of the good, Book VI, 502c, 197 “Now that this conclusion”-521b, 215 “No one else”

Wednesday 7/2

1. David Estlund, “Why Not Epistocracy?” in *Desire, Identity and Existence: Essays in Honor of T. M. Penner* (Kelowna, BC: Academic, 2003)
2. Charles Mills, “Ideal Theory as Ideology”, *Hypatia* vol. 20, no. 3 (Summer 2005)
3. Michael Rosen, *On Voluntary Servitude* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), false consciousness, 29-30
4. David Estlund, “Utopophobia”, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2014)

## Week 2

Monday 7/7

1. Katherine Hirschfeld, *Gangster States: Organized Crime, Kleptocracy, and Political Collapse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), chs. 2-3
2. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994), chs. xiii-xix
3. Suzanne Sreedhar, "Defending the Hobbesian Right of Self-Defense", *Political Theory*, Vol. 36, No. 6 (December 2008), 781-802

Wednesday 7/9

1. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Second Treatise, secs. 87-122
2. Locke, *Two Treatises*, Second Treatise, chs. 18-19
3. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1974), chs. 1-2

### Week 3

Monday 7/14

1. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chs. 1, 4, 5
2. C. L. Ten, "Mill on Self-Regarding Actions", *Philosophy*, vol. 43, no. 163 (Jan. 1968), 29-37
3. Arthur Ripstein, "Beyond the Harm Principle", *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 34, no. 3, (Spring 2006), 215-245
4. Colin Bird, "Harm Versus Sovereignty: A Reply to Ripstein", *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 35, no. 2, (Spring 2007), 179-194

Wednesday 7/16

1. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty", in Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)
2. James Tully, "Berlin's Two Concepts in Context", in *Isaiah Berlin and the Politics of Freedom: 'Two Concepts of Liberty' 50 Years Later*, eds. Bruce Baum and Robert Nichols (London: Routledge, 2013)
3. George Crowder, "In Defence of Berlin: A Response to James Tully", in *Isaiah Berlin and the Politics of Freedom: 'Two Concepts of Liberty' 50 Years Later*, eds. Bruce Baum and Robert Nichols (London: Routledge, 2013)

### Week 4

Monday 7/21

1. Rawls, John, 1971, *A Theory of Justice*, §§ 3-4, 11-17
2. Nozick, 1974, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 189-204
3. Estlund, David, 2015, "G. A. Cohen's Criticism of Rawls' Original Position", in *The Original Position*, ed. Timothy Hinton, 139-158

Wednesday 7/23

1. Dworkin, Ronald, 1981, "What is Equality? Part 2: Equality of Resources", *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 10, no. 4, 283-345
2. Cohen, Gerald J., 1989 "The Currency of Egalitarianism", *Ethics* 99, no. 4, 906-44
3. Anderson, Elizabeth, 1999, "What Is the Point of Equality?", *Ethics* 109, no. 2, 287-337

## Week 5

Monday 7/28

1. Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988), 1-53
2. Carole Pateman, "On Critics and Contract" in Carole Pateman and Charles W. Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2007), 200-229

Wednesday 7/30

1. Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 1-40
2. Charles W. Mills, "The Domination Contract" in Carole Pateman and Charles W. Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2007), 79-105
3. Charles W. Mills, "Contract of Breach: Repairing the Racial Contract" in Carole Pateman and Charles W. Mills, *Contract and Domination* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2007), 106-133