Philosophy 2307.5501 Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy 3 credit hours
Fall, 2012 Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:30-6:50p
El Centro College A752
Mark Thames, Ph.D., Instructor mthames@dcccd.edu

Contact me via email, or: office C352, phone 214 860 2697. Office hours: M 3:30-5:00p, 7:00-7:30p; T 9:00-10:00a, 3:30-4:30p; W 9:00-10:00a, 3:30-4:30p. Other times by appointment.

Catalogue Course Description
Critical examination of the major theories concerning the organization of societies and government. The relationships of philosophical ideas to the community are presented. Emphasis is on concepts of natural rights, justice, education, freedom, and responsibility.

This Course: What You Want
You want credit for the course. Okay.
(1) Show up. If you aren’t here, you aren’t part of the course.
(2) Participate. Figure out how to listen, speak, and ask and answer questions.
(3) Take the midterm and final exam.
(4) Write the paper. Learning to express yourself well is necessary.

Do these four things, perform them adequately, and you will pass and get credit.

You want me to give you good value for your time and money. I will. I will be on time and prepared. I’ll follow the syllabus. I won’t waste time. I assign or recommend books worth reading. I love discussion, and will put myself into it.

You may want to enlist this course in your other life interests. Tell me what your interests are, and I will work to see to it that, as much as possible, you get what you want.

You may want an Honors Option. Okay.
(1) Meet with the honors group twice outside of class for in-depth discussion.
(2) Your paper will be longer, and on a more advanced topic of your choice.
(3) Make a B- or above in the course, and file the necessary paperwork.

This Course: What I Want
I want you to get the gist of three ideas, and make two efforts.

First is the idea that everyone in the world has a group identity, and already belongs to some group(s). So you already have a concept of society even if you’ve never thought about it. Moreover, it already seems to you that some ways of making decisions are fair and appropriate, and others aren’t; that is, you already have a basic political philosophy, even if you couldn’t say what it is. Finally, you observe your life and the world around you, thinking about who you are, and how to make the decisions you have to make daily. That is, you already have the ability to think critically about your identity and your decision-making. What you need is tools for the job and time to do the work.

The second point to get across is that you have to do this yourself; but that you cannot do it by yourself. No one makes your decisions except you, but none of your decisions are made in a vacuum. Other people are stakeholders in your life,
but you make the call. When you choose, other people are affected by you, no matter how isolated you may feel or how private you think your opinions may be. We are in this together whether we like it or not, but each of us has to take our stand and do our part. What you need is to learn about individual and group identity, and individual and group decision-making. It helps if you have time to think about this and a group setting to discuss it.

➢ Third, I want you to see that, since you’re the same person in all the different things you do and relationships you have, integrating your life so that you act consistently with your values will make you more reliable and trustworthy to others, and less tense and stressed yourself. Good questions can help you integrate your deepest beliefs with your choices and actions.

As for efforts I want you to make,

➢ The first effort I want you to make is to try to see what sort of identities other people have, and how they decide to do what they do. You do this by reading and listening, and I check on your progress via class discussion and tests.

➢ Also, I want you to begin to tease out where you actually stand and what you think and what you want to think about the major issues in your life and in our world. You do this by writing and speaking, and I check on this via class and papers.

Philosophy as Part of an El Centro Education

El Centro exists to serve our diverse community from its city center setting by providing an accessible, quality education in the core curriculum and in arts and humanities degree programs: to working adults; to students in occupational training who need a broad base of knowledge; and to anyone who wishes to enhance their successful living and responsible citizenship. To do so in part means offering courses such as social and political philosophy.

Courses in philosophy at El Centro, such as Ethics, help the College meet its own goals.

➢ Goal 1B is to help students who wish to prepare themselves to transfer to baccalaureate programs for their junior and senior years.

➢ Goal 2 calls for continuing adult education that provides enrichment; and

➢ Goal 7 is to develop people’s intellectual skills and foster their personal growth so they can function well in a rapidly changing local, national, and world community.

Social and political philosophy is both theoretical and practical. We have learned again in these last years that our major local and national problems are also global problems. Moreover, despite our modern talent for technical solutions, it seems that there are no neutral, value-free, purely technical ways to solve social problems, not even technical problems. Positively speaking, all solutions, and all methods intended to effect solutions, imply a vision of the good society; negatively, every one of them has a bias. Political philosophy talks about how we decide what to do, and how we decide how to decide, especially in such a fraught situation.

This implies, however, that the suggested solutions to social problems upon which we have to decide depend on another decision: whom we decide “we” is. Who is the relevant public? What is the appropriate decision-making community? This decision directly impacts what sort of other decisions get made. Society needs our private and public enterprises to be the kind of entities we can wholeheartedly support, and we need to feel that they are ours in order for us to support them. But this requires deciding who “we” are—exactly the point of social philosophy.
Courses in social and political philosophy thus meet the needs of local, national, and global citizens. As it happens, this means that such courses also meet the requirements and can exceed the expectations of the mission, the core curriculum, and the goals of El Centro College.

**This Course: Contributing to the El Centro College 2012-2017 Quality Enhancement Plan, “Critical Thinking”**

**Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)**
El Centro College’s QEP theme is critical thinking in the context of student readiness at each level of learning. Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy introduces students to the notion that all views, values, and practices may be appreciated critically, and that explicit attention to one’s thoughts and beliefs, and those of others, is necessary in a diverse, complex global society.

**Associate’s of Arts Degree with Emphasis in Philosophy and Religion**
Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy is a required course for the Associate of Arts with Emphasis in Philosophy and Religion degree. This degree is closed to students who enroll after spring, 2012.

**This Course: How It Fits in the Division of Arts and Sciences**
The El Centro Division of Arts and Sciences seeks to promote excellence in a diverse community by providing quality academic and technical education in the Arts and Sciences. Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy

- as a course in philosophy, is a part of academic education in the Arts;
- Diversity is inescapable at El Centro, whether of the trivial, visible kind, the significant, invisible kind, or in course content. The content, social context, and assignments of the course will provide plenty of all three kinds.
- As for excellence and quality…

**This Course: What the Dallas County Community College District Wants**
The *mission* of the DCCCD is to equip students for successful living and responsible citizenship in a rapidly changing local, national and world community. Courses in philosophy, such as logic, contribute to several of the District’s current *goals*, viz.:

- Students who transfer to a baccalaureate degree granting institution will be prepared to attain their educational goals. Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy introduces students to analysis of concepts, alerts them to unexamined presuppositions, and provides them with a history of the ideas both routine and contested in society today. All of these skills play into educational and life success.
- Students will have opportunities to participate in extra- and co-curricular programs and services that support accomplishment of their learning, educational, employment, and career goals. In Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy, we learn to appreciatively and critically evaluate sources of information and opinion available to world citizens.
• DCCCD will collaborate with private, public, and community partners to identify and respond to recruitment, training, and educational needs. Critical thinking, for which Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy sets the context, is routinely mentioned by external stakeholders as a primary desideratum from the College.

**Dallas County Community College District Core2009**

In addition, Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy is, like all Philosophy courses, a Tier Two course in the Core Domain of Humanity, Creativity, and the Aesthetic Experience. This domain enables students

• *to critically analyze and form artistic judgments about the arts and humanities.*

Logic explains and articulates what critical analysis is, for any discipline.

**This Course: What the State Wants**

**Competencies and Educational Objectives**

El Centro wants this course to improve some of your *intellectual competencies.* In this course you will at least:

- READ *Social and Political Philosophy* and other material.
- WRITE a five-page paper.
- SPEAK your mind and LISTEN to others speak theirs.
- CRITICALLY THINK about the views discussed in the class, including your own.

El Centro also wants this course to attain some *exemplary educational objectives.* So the College wants you to come out of this course:

I. able to demonstrate an awareness of the scope and variety of the humanities;
II. understanding the humanities in their breadth and depth as an expression of historically-situated, cultural human values;
III. able to respond to these values critically;
IV. able to demonstrate a knowledge of the influence of philosophy;
V. and to be able to articulate an informed personal reaction to it.

My intention is that the readings, class lecture, and class discussion will expose you to the humane vision afforded by philosophical ideas about social identity and decision-making, and will begin to convince you that every group identity and every decision is that of human beings who have beliefs, a shared history, and culture; they reflect our values and our worldview. The midterm and final exam will test this. I hope the class discussions and papers will enable you to respond to the values expressed in various ethical beliefs and theories, indicate its influence in your own areas of interest, and begin to articulate your own position.

**Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Core Curriculum 2014**

Introduction to Philosophy not only meets the criteria for any course in higher education in Texas, but specifically meets the criteria for courses which are part of the statewide Core Curriculum.

The state of Texas defines its Core2014 area relevant to Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy as:

(i) Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience.

(ii) Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.

(iii) The following four Core Objectives must be addressed in each course approved to fulfill this category requirement: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility.

This area has the following student Core objectives:

4.B.28.(2) Core Objectives. Through the Texas Core Curriculum, students will prepare for contemporary challenges by developing and demonstrating the following core objectives:

(A) Critical Thinking Skills: to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information;

(B) Communication Skills: to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication;

(E) Personal Responsibility: to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making; and

(F) Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy does in fact enable students to achieve these Core objectives, viz.:

- 4.B.28.2.A: Philosophy in general is the home of critical thinking.
- 4.B.28.2.E: By enabling people to free their minds from the inevitability of inheritance and the overwhelming nature of contemporary culture, it requires personal responsibility.
- 4.B.28.2.F: Introduction to Philosophy shows how to find common ground with even enemies, and how to make careful distinctions even with friends, and in so doing, inculcates social responsibility.

Course Objectives

A number of objectives related to the course may be in the mind of the instructor which are not included here: for example, instructor’s learning objectives. And students may have many objectives, some related to learning, some not. However, there are several categories of objectives in this section of this course as taught by this instructor which are very much in mind:

- Student Adult Competencies, such as time management, self-control in the midst of disagreement, and successful socialization into the community of inquirers which the section aspires to become.
Course Design Effectiveness, such as the suitability and utility of texts, assignments, and pedagogical techniques to lead students to succeed at defined student learning objectives.

Student Learning Objectives of the instructor.

Only those student learning objectives of the instructor relevant to student assessment and grading will be defined here.

Course-Level Learning Objectives

Specifically, the baseline for course success is mastery of the following learning objectives which are tied to the competencies and educational objectives.

I. You should be able to tell what you need to know about any organization, including but not limited to governments, in order to be able to use Aristotle’s typology of governments to categorize that organization accordingly;

II. You should be able to give plausible rationales for why given ideas about social organization have arisen and had influence where they did;

III. You should be able to give a reasoned critique of any political or social system;

IV. You should be able to relate one political philosophy to the philosophical system of which it is a part, as a paradigm for being able to do so generally.

VI. You should be able to articulate your own views on at least one topic in the field.

Assessment: The Context Requires Competence and Accountability

Assessment involves the student, the instructor, the course, the Program, and the College, all of which engage in assessment, and are in turn assessed by various stakeholders in various ways for various reasons.

In the humanities in general and in philosophy in particular, assessment fundamentally rests in the professional judgment of the instructor. This means that assessment is simultaneously objective and subjective, and the instructor’s judgment is final for the purpose of the course.

Moreover, there are many varieties of assessment for a variety of purposes, just as there are many different kinds of objectives operative, or potentially operative, in any given course or section. This course is assessed as a sophomore, undergraduate, tertiary educational (i.e., collegiate) effort which introduces and emphasizes certain concepts, practices, and skills.

- Concepts include that of a worldview and its basic components (metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, politics), the notion that ideas have histories, and the notion of worldview diversity (only one world, but several different, sometimes incompatible, ways of making sense of it).

- Practices inculcated include basic tools of philosophical thinking, and the art of faithful listening and expressing oneself with integrity on substantive, often controversial issues.

- Skills in which students are trained include an introduction to academic research and discriminating use of information resources, and an introduction to serious persuasive / explanatory writing in the humanities.

Since the El Centro College Program in Philosophy and Religion attempts to

- explicitly introduce students to the historical range of important Western philosophical
texts and schools;
- *emphasize explicitly* many different worldviews;
- *explicitly introduce* these worldviews, and the many different styles and techniques in philosophy;
- *explicitly introduce* the very concept of worldviews, and of the sociology of knowledge; and
- *explicitly introduces* information on the historical influence of philosophy on societies,

this course
- uses a historically-structured primary and secondary text;
- draws explicit attention to differences in indigenous, classical, medieval, and modern worldviews;
- uses a secondary text with primary readings from widely diverging points of view;
- provides students with conceptual frameworks for organizing a comparative understanding of the common features of their own and others’ views; and
- relates philosophies of life to life as it has been lived throughout.

**Assessment: The Practice—Assignments**

Although in any course there are many other goals and objectives than the ones listed above, these mentioned are the ones I will attempt to assess in a way accessible to stakeholders.

- Objective I will be assessed in class participation and the final.
- Objective II will be assessed on the midterm and the final.
- Objective III will be assessed in class participation, the midterm, the paper, and the final.
- Objective IV will be assessed on the midterm and the final.
- Objective V will be assessed via the paper.

**Assessment: The Practice: Rubrics—Qualitative Descriptions of Achievement Standards.**

The American Association of Colleges and Universities understands education to be the formation of intellectual and social virtues in citizens. The basic educational values, as identified by the AAC&U, which are developed here include participation in learning, critical thinking (including inquiry and analysis), communication, personal responsibility, and social responsibility. Since this course uses the AAC&U rubrics as its own, the following correlations pertain:

- Participation is judged solely by the instructor.

Otherwise, rubrics are available online:

- Critical thinking: [http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/CriticalThinking.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/CriticalThinking.cfm)
- Communication: [http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/WrittenCommunication.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/WrittenCommunication.cfm)
- Personal & social responsibility: [http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/civicengagement.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/civicengagement.cfm)

Linked with permission from *Assessing Outcomes and Improving Achievement: Tips and tools for Using Rubrics*, edited by Terrel L. Rhodes. Copyright 2010 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

**Assignments**
Grading
While each graded student action requires **Critical Thinking**, and the midterm and final both require the ability to **Read** and **Write**, grading focus will be as follows:

- **Class participation** 15% **Speak, Listen**: Objectives I and III.
- **Session introduction** 15% **Speak, Write, Read**: Objective IV.
- **Midterm** 20% **Read**: Objectives II, III, and IV.
- **5-page Paper** 25% **Write**: Objectives III and V.
- **Final** 25% **Critical Thinking**: Objectives I, II, III, and IV.

Details

Involvement
Roll will be taken every class period. If there is a problem with your attendance, let me know about it as soon as you find out about it. Excuses require documentation. Also, I will ask for a list of your religious observances, if any, on the first day of class, which might require you to miss a class session. In general, College absence policies will be followed.

Prerequisites
Students are required to have demonstrated college-level "reading, writing, and/or math skills" prior to enrolling in academic transfer core courses. In philosophy you read and write. If you are weak in this area, get help. El Centro has many reading and writing resources.

Style Guide
I encourage everyone to get the QuickStudy Academic "Essays and Term Papers" Academic Outline. Use the "T" format (i.e., Chicago/Turabian), unless you get my permission to use another format.

Academic and Personal Integrity

*Plagiarism is not tolerated*: anything from one letter grade to course failure will be the consequence, at the discretion of the instructor, as per College policy.

Also: social and political philosophy often involves discussing challenging issues, some aspects of which may be offensive to some people. By enrolling in the course, you are committing to handling course materials and class participation in an adult and appropriate manner. This includes but is not limited to no cell phone usage, texting, twittering, IM-ing, or leaving class to take calls. It includes not eating or being a distraction to the instructor or fellow students, handling debate and conflict maturely and appropriately, and using a laptop, notebook, or pda only for taking notes, not surfing. Grievances not settled between adults, or with my assistance, including grievances regarding me, can be directed to the College ombudsperson.

Recording Class Sessions
Please do not record me on any device without my expressed, written consent.

Make-Ups
No makeups without a documented medical or legal excuse. All testing materials return to me. Makeups are done orally or in the testing center. No rescheduling or makeup of the final.

Turning In Papers
Papers turned in late lose 2/3 of a letter grade for each weekday late up to five such days. Papers must be stapled; unstapled papers will not be accepted. No email submissions.

Stationery for Quizzes, Papers, and Final
The midterm and final will be answered on blue books. Term papers should be typed or
machine-printed on (one side only of) letter-size (8 1/2 x 11") white paper. I encourage the use of recycled paper. Midterm and final may be in #2 pencil or blue or black ink only.

Amendments to the Syllabus
If I make any changes to the syllabus, I will do so in writing, distributed in class to you.

This Course: What You Need

Text

Writing Guide
## Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Welcome. The Course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Midterm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## I. The Ideal Society with the Ideal Government: Plato


## II. The Best Society with the Best Government


## III. Actual Society and Actual Government


## IV. Necessary Society and Necessary Government

- 3 Midterm.
V. Government Failing Society, and What to Do about It

22 Paper Proposal Due.


VI. Social Failures and Governmental Remedies


VII. Problem: Are We Too Divided on Who We Are to Agree—Even on How to Disagree? (Readings subject to substitution.)

November


7 Jurgen Habermas. “The Public Sphere.”

12 Jurgen Habermas, “Three Normative Models of Democracy.”

14 Michael Walzer. *Spheres of Justice.*

VIII. Solution: Consensus on a Diverse Identity Which Is United in Dissensus about the Content of That Identity. (Substitutions may occur.)

19 Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family.*

21 Susan Moller Okin, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?”


December


5 Review.

12 Final exam 6:00-8:00pm.
VI. Social Failures and Governmental Remedies


VI. Problem: Are We Too Divided on Who We Are to Agree—Even on How to Disagree? Or Can We Find a Solution: Agreeing to Be Different Together? Identity, Community, and the Processes of Common Life

30  *The Solution is in the Process.*
    John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness.”

April 1  Rawls, continued.

6  *The Problem is in Identity.*
    Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations.”

8  Huntington, continued.

13  Huntington, continued.

15  *Both Problem and Solution have to do with Identity.*
    Cornel West, “On Black Nationalism.”

    Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, “Democracy and Disagreement.”

23  Gutmann and Thompson, continued.

27  Gutmann and Thompson, continued.

29  *A Common Life Yields an Identity and Defines a Process.*
    Alasdair MacIntyre, “The Political and Social Structures of the Common Good.”

May 4  **Paper Due.** MacIntyre, continued.

6  Who are we, and how do we decide?

13  **Final exam** 1:30-3:30pm.