PPE Fall Courses 2010

008 (PHIL 008) The Social Contract Society Sector (Platz)

SEM: TR 10:30 – 12 NOON

This course examines the history and significance of social contract doctrine for modern social and political thought. In particular, the works of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, J.J. Rousseau, and John Rawls will be studied. We also study the utilitarian critique of social contract doctrine and the utilitarian views of David Hume, Adam Smith, J.S. Mill, and Karl Marx's criticism of liberal-democratic justice. This course is an introduction to many of the major figures in modern political philosophy.

110 Introduction to Decision Theory Formal Reasoning Course, Formal Reasoning & Analysis (Sen)

LEC: T 6 – 9 PM

The course will provide an introduction to models of human decision making. One of the primary purposes of the course is to provide a set of basic tools that will help the student translate qualitative uncertainty into numbers. A substantial amount of the course will deal with the theory of rational choice in the presence of objective and subjective uncertainty. Rational choice under uncertainty is by far the most used theory of decision making, and its applications are widespread in economics, finance, political science, law, managerial decision making, the economics of health care, and artificial intelligence. The course will use examples heavily from each of these fields (and also fun “paradoxes” such as the Monty Hall Puzzle) in providing an introduction to the basic foundations of decision making. We will also look at the shortcomings of the theory: both from intuitive and empirical perspectives. Two alternative theories – Prospect Theory and decision making using the Dempster-Shafer rule will be discussed which address some of these concerns. No mathematical prerequisites are necessary beyond high school algebra and arithmetic.

140 (CIS 140) Intro to Cognitive Science Formal Reasoning Course (Ungar/Brainard)

Prerequisite(s): An introductory course in Computer Science, Linguistics, Neuroscience, Philosophy or Psychology.

LEC: TR 1:30 – 3 PM

How do minds work? This course surveys a wide range of answers to this question from the disciplines ranging from philosophy to neuroscience. The course devotes special attention to the use of simple computational and mathematical models. Topics include perception, action, thought, learning, memory and social interaction.
153 (PSYC 153) Judgments & Decisions *College Quantitative Data Analysis Req.* (Baron)

LEC MWF 11 – 12 NOON

Judgments, decisions under certainty and uncertainty, problem solving, logic, rationality, and moral thinking.

201 (ECON 13) Strategic Reasoning (Dillenberger)

Prerequisite(s): Econ 1

LEC: TR 10:30 – 12 NOON

This course is about strategically interdependent decisions. In such situations, the outcome of your actions depends also on the actions of others. When making your choice, you have to think what the others will choose, who in turn are thinking what you will be choosing, and so on. Game Theory offers several concepts and insights for understanding such situations, and for making better strategic choices. This course will introduce and develop some basic ideas from game theory, using illustrations, applications, and cases drawn from business, economics, politics, sports, and even fiction and movies. Some interactive games will be played in class. There will be little formal theory, and the only pre-requisites are some high-school algebra and having taken Econ 1. However, general numeracy (facility interpreting and doing numerical graphs, tables, and arithmetic calculations) is very important. This course will also be accepted by the Economics department as an Econ course, to be counted toward the Minor in Economics (or as an Econ elective).

244 (Phil 244) Introduction to Philosophy of Mind (Staff)

LEC: MW 1 – 2 PM
REC: F 10 – 11 AM or
     11 – 12 NOON

This course deals with several problems that lie at the interface among philosophy, logic, linguistics, psychology, and computer science.

270 (PSCI 271) Constitutional Law (Smith)

LEC: MW 11 – 12 NOON
REC: W 5 – 6 PM
     R 9 – 10 AM
     R 11 – 12 NOON
     F 11 – 12 NOON or
     F 2 – 3 PM

This course explores the role of the U.S. Supreme Court in political struggles over the distribution and uses of power in the US constitutional system. Issues include the division of powers between the state and national governments, and the branches of the federal government;
economic powers of private actors and governmental regulators; the authority of government to 
enforce or transform racial and gender hierarchies; and the powers of individuals to make basic 
choices, such as a woman's power to have an abortion. We will pay special attention to how the 
tasks of justifying the Supreme Court's own power, and constitutionalism more broadly, 
contribute to logically debatable but politically powerful constitutional arguments. Readings 
include Supreme Court decisions and background materials on their historical and political 
context.

**299 Independent Study (C)** Permission needed from Department.

Student arranges with a faculty member to pursue a program of reading and writing on a suitable topic.

**301 Directed Honors Research (C)** Permission needed from Department. Open only to senior 
majors in PPE.

Student arranges with a faculty member to do an honors thesis on a suitable topic.

**475 Freedom: What is it, how to measure it, how it affects policy making** (Bavetta/Navarra)

Prerequisite(s): ECON 001 and PHIL 008. Some notions of statistics and/or econometrics preferred.

**SEM: W 2 – 5 PM**

This course is about freedom, its measurement and its policy and political implications. There are 
four main objectives of the course. First, offering a systematic and coherent view of the 
competing theoretical and empirical measures of freedom existing in the literature. Second, 
tracking back the conceptual foundations of the above measures of freedom and making 
judgments about their relative solidity and the analytic connection that links each empirical 
measure to its theoretical presuppositions. Third, constructing a theoretical and empirical 
measure of freedom based upon personal autonomy and defending it by describing its 
analytically reliable foundations. Fourth, examining the effects that the alternative measures of 
freedom have on the functioning of the economy and the working of political systems.

**PPE 475 Natural Justice** (Sillari)

**SEM: R 3 – 6 PM**

Why are norms of fairness and justice present in society? In this seminar we shall investigate and 
discuss answers to such questions, focusing on the view according to which norms of justice are 
a specific kind of human social behavior that has evolved over time. The analytic tools of 
evolutionary game theory will be used to support and substantiate such claims, in an 
interdisciplinary spirit aiming at bringing together topics and explanations from philosophy and 
economics. The structure of the seminar will follow Kenneth Binmore's book "Natural Justice", 
combining in each session readings from the book and readings from both philosophers and economists.

**475 Making Sense of Modernity** (Weintraub)

**SEM: MW 2 – 3:30 PM**

This seminar examines some fundamental approaches to understanding modern society and politics (and the interplay between them) that emerged from the seventeenth through the early twentieth centuries and that continue to shape central debates in social and political theory, comparative politics, sociology, political economy, and cultural inquiry--as well as everyday moral and political controversies. This will involve careful, systematic, and critical examination of the work of such thinkers as Hobbes, Adam Smith, Rousseau, Edmund Burke, Tocqueville, Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, along with larger currents of thought such as liberalism, conservatism, and the republican virtue tradition. In the process, we will explore contrasting approaches to issues including capitalism, socialism, bureaucracy, citizenship, sovereignty, domination, authority, freedom, community, democracy, revolution, the logic of history, the ethical dilemmas of political action--and the nature and dynamics of “modern society” itself. This is a synthesizing interdisciplinary course that brings together thinkers, arguments, and problems often treated in separate compartments of "social," "political," and "economic" theory, integrating questions addressed by modern political theory and those arising from the theoretical "discovery" of society and of the market economy in 18th- and 19th-century thought.

**475 Psychology of Societal Problems** (Mercier)

**SEM: M 3:30 – 6:30 PM**

In this class, we will see that many societal problems – from violence to poor performance in school – have their root in the mechanisms of human psychology, but that these very mechanisms can also provide us with ways to solve these problems. While very different themes will be covered, all will follow the same underlying approach: we evolved to be social creatures, this can help us understand how our psychology works, which in turn explains why most problems arise and where the solutions are to be found.

**475 Using Behavioral Insights to Design Better Choices** (Mellers)

**SEM: R 1:30 – 4:30 PM**

Description TBA.