PPE Fall Courses 2016

008 (PHIL 008) The Social Contract Society Sector (Freeman)
LEC: MW 12-1 PM
REC: F 10-11 AM, 11-12 NOON, and 12-1 PM

This is a critical survey of the history of western modern political philosophy, beginning from the Early Modern period and concluding with the 19th or 20th Century. Our study typically begins with Hobbes and ends with Mill or Rawls. The organizing theme of our investigation will be the idea of the Social Contract. We will examine different contract theories as well as criticisms and proposed alternatives to the contract idea, such as utilitarianism. Besides the above, examples of authors we will read are Locke, Rousseau, Hume, Mill and Marx.

036 (ECON 036) Law and Economics (Staff)
Prerequisite(s): ECON 001 or ECON 010. Credit cannot be received for both ECON 036 and 234.
LEC: TR 10:30-12 NOON

The relationship of economic principles to law and the use of economic analysis to study legal problems. Topics will include: property rights and intellectual property; analysis of antitrust and economic analysis of legal decision making.

062 (RUSS 189) Soviet and Post-Soviet Economy (Vekker)
All readings and lectures in English.
LEC: TR 12-1:30 PM

This course will cover the development and operation of the Soviet centrally planned economy--one of the grandest social experiments of the 20th century. We will review the mechanisms of plan creation, the push for the collectivization and further development of Soviet agriculture, the role of the Soviet educational system and the performance of labor markets (including forced labor camps--GULags). We will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet system and the causes of its collapse. Privatization, called by some "piratization," will be one of the central issues in our consideration of the transition from central planning to a market economy in the early 1990s. Even though our main focus will be on the Soviet economy and post-Soviet transition, we will occasionally look back in time to the tsarist era and even further back to find evidence to help explain Soviet/Russian economic development.

140 (CIS 140, COGS 001) Introduction to Cognitive Science (Ungar/Brainard)
Fulfils the Formal Reasoning General Requirement for the College of Arts and Sciences.
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 disciplines ranging from philosophy to neuroscience. The course devotes special attention to the use of simple computational and mathematical models. Topics include perception, learning, memory, decision making, emotion and consciousness.

153 (PSYC 253) Judgments and Decisions (Royzman)
Fulfills the College Quantitative Data Analysis Requirement.
Prerequisite(s): One semester of statistics OR microeconomics

LEC: R 5:20-8:30 PM (SAS Session)
or
LEC: W 6-9 PM (LPS Session)

Thinking, judgment, and personal and societal decision making, with emphasis on fallacies and biases.

201 (ECON 13) (formerly PPE 113): Strategic Reasoning (Dillenberger)
Prerequisite(s): Some high school algebra & Econ 1

LEC: TR 12-1:30 PM

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).

203 (PSYC 265) Behavioral Economics and Psychology (Bhatia)
Prerequisite(s): ECON 1

LEC: TR 4:30-6 PM

This course will introduce you to the study of choice, and will examine in detail what we know about how people make choices, and how we can influence these choices. It will utilize insights from psychology and economics, and will apply these insights to domains including consumer choice, risky decision making, and prosocial decision making.
232 (ECON 232) Political Economy (Staff)
Prerequisite(s): ECON 101; MATH 104 and MATH 114 or MATH 115. ECON 103 is recommended.

LEC: TR 1:30-3 PM

This course examines the political and economic determinants of government policies. The course presents economic arguments for government action in the private economy. How government decides policies via simple majority voting, representative legislatures, and executive veto and agenda-setting politics will be studied. Applications include government spending and redistributive policies.

299 Independent Study 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 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 Economics of Crime and Corruption: An Interdisciplinary Perspective (Dimant)

SEM: MW 2-3:30 PM

This is an undergraduate research seminar tackling the topic of crime and corruption from an interdisciplinary perspective. Our focus will lie on understanding the mechanism and motivation to engage in criminal and corrupt behavior from the viewpoint of, among others, economics, psychology, and criminology. Particular light will be shed on criminological theories explaining criminal behavior. Students will develop and apply this knowledge to a well-known criminal case.

475 Public Choice and Public Policy (Sontuoso)

SEM: W 2-5 PM

This course applies Public Choice theory to the analysis of contemporary policy issues: specifically, it aims to provide an accessible introduction to the analytical tools of economics as applied to the study of the behavior of individual actors in the governmental sector. Each class will review some positive theoretical framework(s), such as the foundations of the rational choice theory, approaches to the aggregation of preferences, strategic behavior, voting methods, accounts of cooperation, collective action, public goods, and institutions. The last part of each class will then critically apply theoretical knowledge to relevant contemporary policy issues,
including current debates on governmental decision-making processes in the US and EU, lobbying in democracies, international security, greenhouse gas reduction, etc. Note: part of the program contains a theoretical (formal) component.

475 Trust and Deception (Hart)

SEM: T 3-6 PM

Social interactions such as coalition formation, negotiation and bargaining, as well as day-to-day interactions between individuals, all involve the ability to mask, and uncover, non-cooperative intentions: Social norms, business etiquette, and common courtesy often compel people to mask selfish intentions. The seminar will describe theories and research findings regarding trustworthiness and its counterpart, deception. We will discuss the nature of trust and distrust; examine signals that may convey cooperative and deceptive intentions and people's ability to detect such signals; and explore the consequences of trust, distrust and deception in different contexts.

475 Modeling of Social Phenomena (Funcke)

SEM: M 2-5 PM

During the 20th century social science, and in particular economics, went through a process of increased formalization. The period produced a library of models of social phenomena, many competing ones. In this course we will briefly browse the library, with the intention to explore classical theoretical perspectives of what is a better model and ponder how increased normalization affects the social sciences. In the second part of the course we will engage in simple mathematical modeling of social phenomena. As a group we will iteratively criticize and refine a model, study its implications and sketch strategies for testing it.

475 (PHIL 359) Social Norms (Bicchieri)

SEM: T 1:30-4:30 PM

This is an undergraduate research seminar covering interdisciplinary research in psychology, philosophy, sociology and behavioral economics related to social norms. Social norms are informal institutions that regulate social life. We will devote particular attention to the following questions:

1. What is a good, operational definition of social norms?
2. Is there a difference between social and moral norms?
3. How can we measure whether a norm exists, and the conditions under which individuals are likely to comply with it?
4. Are behavioral experiments a good tool to answer question 3?
5. How do norms emerge?
6. How are norms abandoned?
7. What is the role of trendsetters in norm dynamics?
Though almost half a century old, Milgram’s 1961-1962 studies of “destructive obedience” continue to puzzle, fascinate, and alarm. The main reason for their continued grip on the field’s attention (other than the boldness of the idea and elegance of execution) may be simply that they leave us with a portrait of human character that is radically different from the one that we personally wish to endorse or that the wider culture teaches us to accept.

In this seminar, we will take an in-depth look at these famous studies (along with the more recent replications) and explore their various psychological, political and philosophical ramifications.

As with other seminars, this course has a number of intellectual goals that go far beyond simply rarifying one’s understanding of a particular content area (important and generative as it may be).

One such a goal is to enable you to think critically (though not disparagingly) about other people’s research and theoretical claims that ensue from it, all with the hope that you can then apply the self-same critical acumen to your own future work.

Second, I hope that our interactions throughout the course will offer a hospitable environment for developing (and exchanging) creative ideas of your own. Your work on your individual reaction papers and on the term paper in particular will be a key element in achieving this goal.

Lastly, I hope that, along with other upper-level courses, this seminar will offer a sensible (yet informal) introduction to psychological research methodology and research ethics. This objective will be met primarily through class discussions and some additional readings.