

PPE Spring Courses 2009

008 (PHIL008) The Social Contract *Gen Req I: May be counted towards the General Requirement in Society* (Freeman)

LEC: MW 10-11 AM

REC: F 10-11 AM, F 11-12 NOON, or F 12-1 PM

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 and J.S. Mill.

036 (ECON 36) Law and Economics *Dist Crs Society - Cl of 09 and prior.*

Prerequisite(s): ECON 001 and 002. Credit cannot be received for both ECON 036 and 234. (Shachmurove)

LEC: MWF 11-12 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.

110 Introduction to Decision Theory (Sen)

LEC: TR 3-4:30 PM

LEC: TR 6:30-8:00 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.

180 (MATH 180) Analytical Methods in Economics, Law, and Medicine *Formal Reasoning Course – All Classes, Gen Req IV: Formal Reasoning & Analysis* (Bandlow)

LEC: TR 1:30-3 PM

Elementary applications of decision analysis, game theory, probability and statistics to issues in accounting, contracting, finance, law, and medicine, amongst others.

225 (Phil 226) Philosophy of Biology (Weisberg)

SEM: TR 3-4:30 PM

Is there a science of psychology distinct from physiology? If there is, what is its subject matter? What is the relationship between scientific psychology and traditional philosophical investigation of the mental? Examination of these questions is followed by analysis of some concepts employed in cognitive psychology and cognitive science, particularly in the fields of perception and cognition.

228 (Phil 228) Philosophy of Social Science (Weisberg)

SEM: TR 12-1:30 PM

This course is about the foundations of contemporary social science. It focuses on the nature of social systems, the similarities and differences between social and natural sciences, the construction, analysis, and confirmation of social theories, and the nature of social explanations. Specific topics may include structuralism and functional explanation, methodological individualism, qualitative vs. quantitative social theorizing, positivist and radical critiques of the social sciences, rational choice, game theory, evolutionary modeling, and agent-based modeling. In addition, the course will examine questions about objectivity in the social sciences. As part of this course, students will be expected to construct and analyze simple computational models of social phenomena.

232 (ECON 232) Political Economy *Prerequisite(s): ECON 101; MATH 104 and MATH 114 or MATH 115. ECON 103 is recommended.* (Merlo)

LEC: TR 9-10:30 AM

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.

244 (Phil 244) Introduction to Philosophy of Mind *Dist Crs Hist/Trad – Cl of 09 and prior* (Horowitz)

SEM: MW 3:30-5 PM

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

299 Independent Study *Permission needed from department.* (Staff)

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.* (Staff)

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

475 History of Economic Thought (Weintraub)

SEM: T 1:30-4:30 PM

This seminar will explore the development of economic thought, its controversies, its implications, and its consequences from the theoretical "discovery" of the market economy (and its distinctive "laws") in the 18th century through the present. In the process, we will read and engage such thinkers as Adam Smith, David Hume, David Ricardo, Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill, Alfred Marshall, John Maynard Keynes, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Karl Polanyi, Albert Hirschman, and others. A major organizing theme will be the conflicts and controversies between economic liberalism (i.e., the orientation focused analytically and normatively on the self-regulating market and, at the level of individual action and motivation, on the so-called "rational" pursuit of individual self-interest) and various critiques of economic liberalism--with an emphasis on the fact that these critiques and alternatives come from a range of different directions, both analytically and ideologically. Such controversies have never been purely or strictly "economic"; they have had, and continue to have, profound theoretical and practical implications for a wide range of important social, political, moral, and philosophical issues. As we consider these issues, we will also pay attention to the historically shifting, and still contested, meanings of "economic" and the "economy" themselves.

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 Game Theory and Philosophy (Sillari)

SEM: R 3-6 PM

Game theory is a discipline of great importance. Besides its many applications in economics, it is widely and successfully used in a large variety of scientific fields. In political science, in biology, in the law and even in sports, game-theoretic analysis has a profound impact and significance. Game theory has also many natural applications in philosophy. Why does game theory matter for philosophy? We shall look at the central concepts in the theory of games and at a wide range of philosophical topics. While learning the basic notions of game theory, we shall use them to illuminate several philosophical questions and problems. Discussion in this seminar will include topics as the following: social norms and conventions, historical and contemporary accounts of the social contract, the evolution of justice and morality, as well as topics in philosophy of language and epistemology. The approach will emphasize various game-theoretic elements, depending on the philosophical topic under considerations. Equilibrium analysis, incomplete information, experimental and evolutionary analysis will be among the tools used for discussing the answer to questions as: why do we abide by social norms and conventions in our everyday life? What is needed to enforce a social contract? Why did justice and morality evolve?

475 Reasoning and Decision Making as Social Activities (Mercier)

SEM: R 1:30-4:30 PM

We can't deny that the social context has an influence on our behavior. The seminar will explore the idea that it has a larger impact that we usually care to admit. More specifically, we will see that abilities that are generally thought of as being very personal, such as reasoning and decision making, are in fact heavily influenced by the social context. To that end, this seminar will review some research in the fields of reasoning and decision making, as well as social psychology. This seminar should give students a broad understanding of the function of our reasoning and decision making abilities, of their strengths and weaknesses, and of their social nature.

475 The Political Economy of Mass Media (Gasper)

SEM: T 1:30-4:30 PM

There is a vast amount of literature pointing to a complicated, yet potentially very broad, influence of mass media in elections. These studies, however, rarely investigate the incentives for the news organization. This seminar will draw on themes in found in Political Science, Psychology and Economics to give an interdisciplinary picture of the political-economy of mass media, highlighting the tensions between market incentives and quality coverage of politically relevant news. Throughout the seminar, we will be drawing on foundational Communications literature as well and current research in Political Science and Economics.

475 Topics in Economics and Psychology: Fairness (Dana/Dillenberger)

SEM: W 5-8 PM

Do people exhibit true concern for the welfare of others, without the promise of personal gain? Is economics lacking because it treats people as purely self-motivated? Can insight from psychology help to fill the void? Co-taught by members of both the economics and psychology departments, this seminar discusses whether fairness perceptions clash with economic principles. The discussion relies heavily on experimental and empirical evidence. Based on the interests of participants, topics may include attitudes about wealth redistribution, the tradeoff between equality and efficiency, claims that goods such as the environment are "incommensurable," repugnance in markets, fairness as a constraint on profits, and antimarket bias.