

Social Philosophy

Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45am
Flanner 824

Instructor: Liz Jackson

Email: ejackso9@nd.edu

Office: Malloy 300

Office hours: Mondays 2pm-3pm, Tuesdays 11am-12pm, or by appointment

Course Website: <https://sites.google.com/a/nd.edu/lizjackson/teaching/social-philosophy>

Course Description:

Humans are social creatures. Social phenomena, such as gender, race, sports teams, music groups, faith, testimony, charity, refugees, pornography are all around us and are a large part of how we understand the world and each other.

Social philosophy is the systematic study of philosophical questions that bear on social phenomena, such as the above. While these social phenomena are a significant part of our lives and the world around us, philosophers have devoted less attention to them than to other domains that describe the world. But we cannot know what the world is like without also diving into questions about what the social world is like. The aim of this class is to help students do just that.

This class will have three parts. Here are some examples of the questions we will cover in each part.

- 1) **Social Metaphysics:** What is a group? Can groups be responsible for things? What is gender? What is race? Are these social constructed? Are disabilities a bad thing? Can social metaphysics help us understand God, e.g. the Trinity and the Atonement?
- 2) **Social Epistemology:** How should we alter our beliefs in response to those around us? When it is appropriate to trust someone? What does it mean to have faith in another person? How should we respond when people disagree with us?
- 3) **Social Ethics:** How much ought we to give to charity? Is it okay to use pornography? Is abortion permissible? What justifies political authority? Is it a good idea to allow for free immigration/open borders? What policies should we adopt regarding transgender athletes in sports? Is racial profiling ever okay?

Policies:

Technology policy: No screens during class, including phones, laptops, tablets, etc. The reason for this policy is that the main purpose of this class is to *discuss* the philosophical issues at hand. I do not, primarily, want students to memorize facts, but for them to think, converse, and form opinions about the various topics. If you need to use a device during class to aid your learning, feel free to come talk to me.

Late work: Late work will be deducted one-third letter grade for each day late (A to A-, etc.).

Texts: There is no textbook for this class. We will instead be working from a variety of material, including professional philosophy articles, opinion pieces, podcasts, and video. Each topic will have required material. Most topics will have further material that students are encouraged to consume.

Grading scale: I will use the following grading scale.

A 94+ C+ 77-79
A- 90-93 C 73-76
B+ 87-89 C- 70-72
B 83-86 D 60-69
B- 80-82 F 59-

Honor Code: Students are responsible for compliance with the University's honor code at all times. Notre Dame has extensive guidelines on the honor code. Additionally, the philosophy department has a document explaining how Notre Dame's honor code applies to writing philosophy papers. Links to both of these can be found on the course website. I take academic integrity very seriously. Cheating of any kind will be reported, will result in a failing grade on the assignment, and might lead to even stronger penalties. Any particular questions about the honor code should be directed to me.

Accessibility: I am committed to making this course accessible to all students. Students who have (or think they may have) a disability, or who have questions about disability, are invited to talk to me. Students can also contact the Office of Disability Services for a confidential discussion in the Sara Bea Learning Center for Students with Disabilities, or by phone at 574-631-7157. All information given to Disability Services is confidential and is shared only with your consent. We recommend that students who believe they may need an accommodation for this course contact the Office of Disability Services at their earliest opportunity. This is to ensure there is time to complete the process before accommodations are actually needed. Additional information about Disability Services and the process for requesting accommodations can be found at disabilityservices.nd.edu.

Final Exam Meeting: Thursday December 14, 10:30am-12:30pm (We will use this for presentations).

Assignments:

Attendance:

It is impossible for a student to participate if he or she does not attend class. It is also difficult to learn the material without attending and participating. *Students who have more than two unexcused absences will have points deducted from their overall grade.*

Participation: 20%

This class is discussion-based, so participation from the students is especially important. I know not everyone loves talking in front of the class, so participation grades will also include reading responses. For each reading response, students should submit a question about the assigned material the Google Doc by 5pm the day before the class meeting. The question should demonstrate that you read (or watched/consumed/etc.) the material (partially because I am doing these instead of pop quizzes).

Paper 1, Precis: 15% (~1-2 pages)

In this paper, students simply summarize one of the academic articles we read in class. Students can pick which article they would like to summarize. An academic article related to course material that we did not read is also fine, but students must get it pre-approved. No rough draft required.

Paper 2, Objection and Response Paper: 25% (~3-4 pages)

In this paper, students summarize an academic article read in class (a different article than Paper 1), offer an original objection to the author’s argument, and then an original response on behalf of the author. A rough draft is required (and graded as pass/fail).

Paper 3, Paper & Creative Project: 40% (~6 pages)

Part 1- Paper (20%): In this paper, students take their own view on some issue in social philosophy. They offer an argument for their view, then give two objections to their argument, then respond to each objection. A rough draft is required (and graded as pass/fail). I will give ideas for paper topics, but students can write on any topic that is related to course material.

Part 2- Presentation (20%): Students are required to do a creative project that explains or illustrates their argument from paper 3. During our scheduled final exam period, students will present their projects to the class.

Do not include your first or last name on your papers. Instead, merely include your Notre Dame 9-digit student ID number (most begin in 901...).

Note on paper length: While I have provided a suggested length for each paper, there are no minimum word requirements. Quality is much more important than quantity for the papers; I strongly prefer a short, tightly-argued paper to a long, rambling paper without much substance. (Part of the reason we do rough drafts is to teach students how to produce quality philosophical writing). Closer to the due dates, I will provide more detailed instructions for each paper.

Schedule:

| Date | Topic | Required Reading | Recommended Reading | Assignments |
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| Tuesday Aug 22 | Introduction/Syllabus | | | Due at midnight on the day listed via email (ejackso9@nd.ed) unless otherwise specified. Remember: DO NOT include your name |
| Thursday Aug 24 | Introduction to Philosophy/Social Philosophy/Logic | | | |
| UNIT 1: SOCIAL METAPHYSICS | | | | |
| Tuesday Aug 29 | What is a group? | Ritchie, "The Metaphysics of Social Groups" | Mason, "The Metaphysics of Social Kinds" | |
| Thursday Aug 31 | Can groups be responsible for things? | Mellema, "Collective Responsibility and Qualifying Actions" | H.D. Lewis, "Collective Responsibility" | |

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| Tuesday Sep 5 | What does it mean for something to be socially constructed? | "Mallon, "A Field Guide to Social Construction," sections 1 and 4-6 | Haslanger, "Ontology and Social Construction" | |
| Thursday Sep 7 | Are gender and race socially constructed? | Video, Is Gender a Social Construction? Video, Rachel Dolezal and Race as a Social Construct | Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) are they? (What) do we want them to be?" | Paper 1 Topic APPROVED |
| Tuesday Sep 12 | Transgenderism and transracialism | Tuvel, 'In Defense of Transracialism' | Blog, It's Time to Debunk Rachel Dolezal's Big Transgender Lie Blog, Philosophers on Rachel Dolezal Blog, It isn't crazy to compare Rachel Dolezal With Caitlyn Jenner | Paper 1 Final Draft |
| Thursday Sep 14 | Disability | Video, Elizabeth Harman, "Is it wrong to cure deafness?" | Elizabeth Barnes, "Valuing Disability, Causing Disability" Campbell and Stramondo, "The Complicated Relationship between Disability and Well-Being" | |
| Tuesday, Sep 19 | Social Trinitarianism | Rea, "Polytheism and Christian Belief" | Forrest, "Divine Fission: A New Way of Moderating Social Trinitarianism" | |
| Thursday Sep 21 | Atonement/Original Sin | Video, Thurow, "What is Atonement?" Video, Thurow, "Theories of Atonement" Video, Thurow, "A Theory of Collective Atonement" | Thurow, "Communal Substitutionary Atonement" Quinn, "In Adam's Fall, We Sinned All" | |
| UNIT 2: SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY | | | | |
| Tuesday Sep 26 | When can we trust the testimony of others? | Justification Conditions for Testimonial Belief (SEP on Social Epistemology, section 3.1) | Lackey, "Knowing from Testimony" | |
| Thursday Sep 28 | Faith in God and others | Video, Gannsle, Faith and Reason | Locke, "Faith and Reason..." In An | Paper 2 Topic APPROVED |

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| | | | Essay Concerning Human Understanding | |
| Tuesday Oct 3 | How should we respond to disagreement? | Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement" (Sections 1-4) | Christensen, "Disagreement as Evidence" | |
| Thursday Oct 5 | Does disagreement always mean someone is being irrational? (Permissivism) | Christensen, "Epistemology of Disagreement: The Good News" (intro and section 1, p. 187-192) | Weintraub, "Can Steadfast Peer Disagreement be Rational?" | Paper 2 Rough Draft |
| Tuesday Oct 10 | Friendship and Epistemic Partiality (with guest speaker Paul Blashko) | Blashko, Epistemic Partiality and Friendship (an Overview) | Stroud, Epistemic Partiality in Friendship | |
| Thursday Oct 12 | Epistemic Injustice | Fricker, "Testimonial Injustice" (Chapter 1 of Epistemic Injustice) | Fricker, "Prejudice in the Credible Economy" (Chapter 2 of Epistemic Injustice) | |
| Tuesday, Oct 17 | FALL BREAK | | | |
| Thursday, Oct 19 | FALL BREAK | | | |
| UNIT 3: SOCIAL ETHICS | | | | |
| Tuesday Oct 24 | We are obliged to give a lot to charity | Singer, The Life You Can Save, Chapters 1-2 | Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" | |
| Thursday Oct 26 | We are not obliged to give a lot to charity | Pojman, "World Hunger" (Chapter 10) | Hardin, "Living on a Lifeboat" | Paper 2 Final Draft |
| Tuesday, Oct 31 | Abortion is usually permissible | Textbook chapter on Thomson | Thomson, A Defense of Abortion | |
| Thursday Nov 2 | Abortion is usually impermissible | Textbook chapter on Marquis | Marquis, Why Abortion is Immoral | |
| Tuesday, Nov 7 | Justice and Punishment | Video, "What is Justice" (Focus primarily on the last 4 minutes) | Zimmerman, "The Repugnance of Punishment" (Chapter 5) | Paper 3 Topic APPROVED |
| Thursday Nov 9 | The Death Penalty | Pojman, "The Death Penalty" (Chapter 7) | Torbjorn, Capital Punishment (Chapter 3) | |
| Tuesday, Nov 14 | Ethics of Social Media / Technology | Group 1: The Binge Breaker | Black Mirror, Nosedive (Season 3 Episode 1; a better quality version is available on Netflix) | Paper 3 Rough Draft (sent to me and your group) |

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| | | Group 2: What is Technology Doing to Us? Group 3: Is Google Making Us Stupid? Group 4: Tinder and the Dawn of the "Dating Apocalypse" Group 5: Ted Radio Hour, "Manipulation" | Black Mirror, Hated in the Nation (Season 3 Episode 6; a better quality version is available on Netflix) | |
| Thursday Nov 16 | Paper 3 Peer Review | The rough drafts of your group members | | |
| Tuesday, Nov 21 | Transgender Athletes | Group 1: How to Think about Transgender Athletes in Sport Group 2: Are Transgender Athletes Playing Fair? Group 3: Do Transgender Athletes have an Unfair Advantage in Sports? Group 4: The Humiliating Practice of Sex-Testing Female Athletes Group 5: Allowing Transgender Women to Compete is Unfair to Women | Wiesemann, Is there a right not to know one's sex? Bianchi, Transgender women in sport | |
| Thursday Nov 23 | THANKSGIVING | | | |
| Tuesday Nov 28 | Pornography | Group 1: Altman, Pornography, Autonomy, and Equality Group 2: Briston, Pornography and Harm | Documentary, "Hot Girls Wanted" (on Netflix) | |
| Thursday Nov 30 | Immigration | Group 1: Kukathas, The Case for Open Immigration Group 2: Miller, Immigration: A Case for Limits | Huemer, "Is There a Right to Immigrate?" | |
| Tuesday Dec 5 | Political Authority | Huemer, "The Problem of Political Authority" (Chapter | | |

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| | | 1 of The Problem of Political Authority) | | |
| Thursday, Dec 7 | READING DAY | | | |
| Tuesday, Dec 12 | ((Finals week)) | | | Paper 3 Final Draft |
| Thursday, Dec 14 | Presentations (10:30am-12:30pm) | | | |