PHIL 5300 Social and Political Philosophy
UNT, Spring 2020

Adam Briggle
Office: ENV 225G
Phone: 940-369-5136
Email: adam.briggle@unt.edu

Class Location: ENV 225A
Class Time: M/W 2:00-3:20
Office Hours: By appointment

“Imagine there’s no countries. It isn’t hard to do. Nothing to kill or die for. And no religion too. Imagine all the people living life in peace.” – John Lennon, 1971

Course Description
Humans have an elaborate “second nature” that we might call social and political life. The 200,000 year story of the human species has given rise to an abundance of such second natures. There are hunter-gatherers, agriculturalists, and urbanites; caste systems, monarchies, and liberal democracies; communists, religious fundamentalists, and capitalists... Each way of life is guided by beliefs and ideals about human nature, human flourishing, and what constitutes a just order of things. This diversity poses questions: What are the different ways of life? Are some better than others? By what standards?

This course is a very selective mining of the history of Western thought about these and related questions. We will use Hannah Arendt’s 1958 The Human Condition as our main text. We’ll complement her book with a selection of readings about key figures in the history of Western political thought. For this purpose, we will use the anthology collected by Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey.

Our focus will be on the origins and nature of the modern world, characterized by individualism, democracy, techno-scientific progress, and economic growth as well as massive, growing, and accelerating impacts on planet Earth. The terrain we’ll explore deals with perennial questions about freedom, power, justice, community, labor, work, and action.

We will also develop some meta-reflections on philosophy as itself a social and political activity. As part of this, we’ll discuss the relationship between philosophy and the polis and how this has evolved over time and where it should go in the future. Furthermore, in the spirit of doing philosophy as a social and political activity, students will be assigned a research paper that requires them to bring the history of social and political philosophy to bear on a contemporary issue of significant importance.

I will probably have plenty to say and may even (gasp!) lecture here and there in hopes of providing some context and analyses for you. But in the main, this will be a seminar based on discussion. I am mostly a conversation facilitator. So, please come prepared to get involved and to be passionate about ideas.

Learning Objectives
1. To develop a basic orientation in the history of Western social and political thought.
2. To understand and critically evaluate the political teachings of Arendt as developed in The Human Condition as well as the teachings of a selection of other key thinkers.
3. To use ideas explored in class to describe, interpret, and critically evaluate a contemporary social issue.
Mission
This course is offered in service of the noble goal of higher education to develop the intellectual and moral virtues. As stated by the UNT College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences: “Our mission is to kindle the thirst for truth, justice, and beauty; to foster cultural literacy and scientific investigation; and to cultivate thinking, speaking, and writing abilities characterized by clear expression and logically coherent, evidence-based arguments. We see these as the values, forms of knowledge, and skills most needed by citizens of a democracy and by productive members of the global workforce.”

Course Norms
Though we will pursue knowledge, it is more important to be good than smart. We will seek liberation – from prejudice, fear, laziness, arrogance, stupidity, and other weaknesses. Our task is to follow thinking where it leads us with respect, integrity, civility, and profundity. Classroom behaviors shall be regulated by these norms. My job is not to tell anyone what to think or believe. My job is to help students think with greater clarity, care, and depth. This will involve making arguments from many perspectives (some that may be unpopular), posing difficult ideas, and challenging cherished beliefs.

The Idea and Practice of a Safe Space
The college classroom is a gymnasium for self-improvement. A safe space encourages dangerous thinking. Like a good gym, we need to push ourselves. We need to critically examine our own beliefs and broaden our horizons. This may be painful. That is good as long as it is productive pain like that involved in developing stronger muscles. Like a good gym, we need to avoid destructive pain. To do so, we must be mindful of certain limits. Like any good workout, proper form is crucial. We need to learn the difference between good and bad pain. And when someone causes a bad kind of pain, we need to call it out and practice the arts of apology and forgiveness.

Evaluation of Learning Objectives

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment/Activity</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly protocols</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Required Texts

Recommended Texts

*Other readings can be found on the course Canvas site

**Description of Assignments**

1. **Weekly Protocols:** I will divide the class into Monday and Wednesday groups. On their day, students will come to class with a c. 450 word protocol printed out on a single sheet of paper. Protocols should: a. summarize the main points of the assigned reading for that day (ca. 200 words); b. offer a critical analysis of it (ca. 200 words); and c. pose an insightful question about the reading that relates to broader themes of the course (ca. 25 words). Students should be prepared to lead the class discussion on the basis of these protocols.

2. **Research Paper:** Students will write a research paper due on May 6 at 11:59 pm as a word document attachment to adam.briggle@unt.edu. Papers should use materials/ideas/themes addressed in class in order to describe, interpret, and critically evaluate a contemporary social issue of significant importance. Students must use Times New Roman 12 point font, single-spacing, 1-inch margins. They can choose whatever bibliographic style they like, as long as they use it consistently. Students must include at least one reference to a reading (Arendt or other) covered in class. In addition, students must include at least ten other references from peer-reviewed literature or reputable, edited popular media. Papers must have a title, four or five keywords, and an abstract of ca. 150 words. Papers must be between 4,000 and 5,000 words in length, excluding bibliography. We will devote class time as needed to discussing this assignment. Students are responsible for speaking up when they are in need of guidance.

**Course Schedule**

M. Jan. 13. Introductions, Overview of the Course


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M. Jan. 20. No Class, MLK, Jr. Day


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M. Jan. 27. Arendt, Introduction and Prologue

W. Jan. 29. Arendt, Chapters 1-3

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M. Feb. 3 Arendt, Chapters 4-6
W. Feb. 5 Arendt, Chapters 7-10
*
M. Feb. 10. Aristotle, first half
W. Feb. 12. Aristotle, second half
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M. Feb. 17. Arendt, Chapters 11-13
W. Feb. 19. Arendt, Chapters 14-17
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*
M. March 2. Locke, first half
W. March 4. Locke, second half
*
SPRING BREAK, March 9-13
*
M. March 16. Arendt, Chapters 24-26
W. March 18. Arendt, Chapters 27-29
*
M. March 23. Arendt, Chapters 30-32
W. March 25. Arendt, Chapters 33 and 34
*
M. March 30. Federalist, first half
W. April 1. Federalist, second half
M. April 6. Arendt, Chapters 35-37
W. April 8. Arendt, Chapters 38-40
*

M. April 13. Arendt, Chapters 41-43
W. April 15. Arendt, Chapters 44 and 45
*

M. April 20. Mill, first half
W. April 22. Mill, second half
*

M. April 27. Marx, first half
W. April 29. Marx, second half
*

W. May 6. FINAL PAPERS DUE TO ADAM.BRIGGLE@UNT.EDU BY 11:59 PM
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Levels</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong> – skimming without understanding or being able to summarize.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong> – grasping isolated points here and there.</td>
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<td><strong>Level 3</strong> – having a systemic understanding that grasps the basic order of the piece so that you can give a good summary.</td>
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<td><strong>Level 4</strong> – understanding not just the logic and structure of the argument, but also penetrating beneath it to see the assumptions that guide and frame it.</td>
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<td><strong>Level 5</strong> – seeing the piece in larger contexts; integrating it into your life and using it in the world; seeing the world anew as a result of being transformed by the reading.</td>
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<th>Writing Elements</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1. Grammar, syntax, diction, spelling</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Well-formulated sentences, paragraphs, and sections</td>
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<td>2. Thoughtful, appropriate, and precise word choice</td>
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<td>3. Words spelled correctly, no basic grammatical errors</td>
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<td><strong>2. Organization/structure:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Clear statement of purpose/thesis</td>
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<td>2. Informs reader of what essay will accomplish</td>
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<td>3. Logically organized, good transitions, coheres as a whole</td>
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<td><strong>3. Scholarship</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Adequate research of relevant resources (appropriate content included)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Follows stated format guidelines</td>
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<td>3. Appropriate tone and style for intended audience, clean presentation</td>
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<td><strong>4. Reasoning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Comprehension of material, demonstrated grasp of key concepts</td>
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<td>2. Well-reasoned and supported arguments and interpretations</td>
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<td>3. Analysis stays focused and builds on itself, does not wander or fade</td>
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<td>4. Original and/or fruitful insights developed in clear ways</td>
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UNT Policy Statements

Statement Regarding Academic Integrity: The content of the UNT Academic Integrity Policy applies to this course, and I refer all cases of cheating and plagiarism to the Office of Academic Integrity. If you do choose to cheat or plagiarize on a paper or exam you will fail the course.

Disability Statement: The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at http://www.unt.edu/oda. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.