

Course Syllabus
PPE 101: Morality, Markets, and Government
Spring 2021
MWF 1:25 - 2:15 PM

Instructor: Dr. Ryan Doody

Office hours: MWF 12-1

Course Website: <http://ole.sandiego.edu> [Blackboard]

Email: rdoody@sandiego.edu

Zoom Link: <https://sandiego.zoom.us/j/92057117299>

Required Readings:

Reading will be posted online on Blackboard

Core Requirements: This course fulfills the Core Curriculum requirement for Ethics.

Course Description: This interdisciplinary course provides an overview of some of the core conceptual tools used to analyze issues at the intersection of philosophy, politics, and economics (PPE). A range of theoretical topics are covered, including: game theory, property, markets, distributive justice, public choice theory, voting, and more. We will read classical and contemporary sources on these topics as well as explore their applications to contemporary social problems (including: climate change, healthcare rationing, price gouging, universal basic income, pharmaceutical regulations, and others).

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students should be able to ...

- Describe and analyze key ethical and theoretical concepts related to philosophy, politics, and economics, including: property rights, justice, (pareto-)efficiency, market prices, externalities, paternalism
- Demonstrate an understanding of key game-theoretic concepts (including: strategies, dominance, equilibria, etc.) and to identify and analyze classic game structures (including: Prisoners' Dilemmas, collective action problems, and coordination problems).
- Apply theoretical concepts to central issues of public policy, including: climate change, regulation, healthcare rationing, social assistance programs, voting, taxation, poverty.
- Develop, articulate, and critically assess arguments pertaining to the topics and concepts mentioned above. Students should be able to demonstrate an

understanding of the difference between validity, soundness, and potential convincingness of arguments.

Grading Policy:

- *Reading Responses* [20%]. Each week (with a couple exceptions) you will be asked to respond to a prompt related to that week's readings. You are to post your responses under the corresponding thread on the discussion forum (found on Blackboard). They needn't (and shouldn't) be long. The purpose is to demonstrate thoughtful engagement with that week's material, which can be accomplished in various ways (including by asking thoughtful questions).

Reading responses that are turned in on time (before class begins on Friday) and that demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the material will be given full credit. Those that do not, will not.

- *Homework & Quizzes* [10%]. Throughout the semester, you will be assigned short homework assignments and quizzes. Some of these assignments might ask you to reconstruct and critically assess an argument from one of the readings. Some might test your understanding of some of the key concepts discussed in the material previously covered. These assignments will be turned in on Blackboard.
- *Midterm Exam* [25%]. There will be a midterm exam, which will be administered around (as you might imagine) the midway point of the semester. The exam will cover the material covered up to that point. We can talk about holding a review session. It'll be on Blackboard.
- *Final Exam* [35%]. There will be a final exam, which will be administered (you guessed it!) at the end of the semester. The exam will cover *all* of the material covered in the class, but it will focus somewhat more heavily on the material from the second-half. The test will be administered over Blackboard.
- *Participation* [10%]. Ideally, this would be a discussion-heavy course---with lots of spirited debate during class. Our current circumstances make it difficult to conduct class in a way that will make this both fair and effective. Participating in class over Zoom---either by speaking up at appropriate times, or by using the chat function to make comments or ask questions, or during "break-out room" sessions, etc.---is one way of satisfying this course's participation requirement. But it is not the only. As mentioned before (see: "Reading Responses"), we will also make use of Blackboard's discussion forums for asynchronous participation.

One way to earn participation credit is to read and respond to each others' reading response assignments. You are also free to take the initiative to use the discussion forum for other class-related discussions as well.

Grading Breakdown

Reading Responses	...	20%
Homework & Quizzes	...	10%
Midterm Exam	...	25%
Final Exam	...	35%
Participation	...	10%

Honor Code: All students are expected to follow the guidelines set out in USD's [Honor Code](#). In particular, please refrain from cheating and plagiarism. It's fine to do outside research, just be sure to cite it. Furthermore, admitting that you don't know something is one of the primary philosophical virtues (e.g., Socrates: "All I know is that I know nothing), so---even setting ethics and integrity aside---it's always better to shrug than to cheat.

Availability and Communication: I encourage you to meet with me (over Zoom) during office hours to talk about *anything* related to the course. Don't hesitate to meet even if you don't have a specific question. If you can't meet during my office hours, we can make an appointment for a time that works better for you.

Exciting Extra Credit Opportunities!

Throughout the semester there will be an exciting assortment of PPE-related events that nicely complement the course. You are hereby strongly encouraged to attend these events. Because my encouragement might not be enough, I will offer the following incentive: for each PPE event you attend this semester, if you post a short (200-300 word) reflection about it, I will raise your final grade. For the first event, I will raise your grade one percentage point; for every event after that, you will earn half the number of points as you did on the previous occasion. (See [Zeno's Paradox](#).)

Modifications to Syllabus: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus---including due dates and test dates---when unforeseen circumstances occur. These changes will be announced as early as possible. These are difficult times, so I ask for your patience and flexibility.

Schedule for PPE 101: Morality, Markets, and Government
Spring 2021
Professor Ryan Doody

Week 1 (January 25-29): Introductions, Prisoners' Dilemmas, and the State of Nature

January 25 - Introductions

No reading

January 27 - Hobbes and the State of Nature

Excerpts from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (posted on Blackboard)

January 29 - An Introduction to the Prisoners' Dilemma

No reading

Watch [The White Helmets](#) before class on Monday. [Warning: the film contains graphic depictions of the Syrian Civil War.]

Week 2 (February 1-5): A Brief Primer on Game Theory

February 1 - Thinking Strategically I: Dominance and Common Knowledge

Osborne, "Introduction to Game Theory"

February 3 - Thinking Strategically II: Nash Equilibria

Osborne, *An Introduction to Game Theory*, 2.1-2.7

February 5 - Game Theory, con't.

No readings

Reading Response #1 Due

Week 3 (February 8-12): Property I

February 8 - Property in the State of Nature

Excerpts from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*

February 10 - Property as Convention

David Hume's "Of Justice and Property"

February 12 - Property as Natural Right

John Locke's "Of Property"

Reading Response #2 Due

Week 4 (February 15-19): Property II

February 15 - Property as a Problem

Karl Marx's "Primitive Accumulation", "The Communist Manifesto"

February 17 - The Tragedy of the Commons

Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons"

February 19 - Property as Institution

David Schmidtz, "Institution of Property"

Reading Response #3 Due

Week 5 (February 22-16): Markets I: Division of Labor & Alienation

February 22 - Division of Labor

Adam Smith's "Of the Division of Labor" (from *The Wealth of Nations*)

February 24 - Alienation

Excerpts from Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)

February 26 - Bullshit Jobs

David Graeber's "On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs: A Work Rant"

Reading Response #4 Due

Week 6 (March 1-5): Markets II: Prices, Incentives, and Trade

March 1 - Price as a signal

Friedrich Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society"

March 3 - The Invisible Hand

[The Parable of the Polygons](#)

OPTIONAL: Edna Ullman-Margalit, "Invisible-Hand Explanations"

March 5 - The Ethics of Price Gouging

Matt Zwolinski, "The Ethics of Price Gouging"

Reading Response #5 Due

Midterm Exam is released

Week 7 (March 8-12): Markets III: Free Exchange

March 8 - Exchange & Efficiency

Hausman et al., "Efficiency"

Midterm Exam is due

March 10 - Noxious Markets

Debra Satz, "Market and Nonmarket Allocation"

OPTIONAL: Debra Satz, chapter 4, *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale: The Moral Limits of the Market*

March 12 - Markets Without Limits

Jason Brennan and Peter Jaworski, chapters 1-2, *Markets Without Limits*

Reading Response #6 Due

Week 8 (March 15-19): Market Failures

March 15 - Public Goods

Tyler Cowen, "Public Goods"

Tyler Cowen 2013 *NYT* op-ed, "To Fight Pandemics, Reward Research"

March 17 - Market Failures, continued

David Friedman, "Market Failures"

March 19 - Healthcare Economics

Kenneth Arrow, *Uncertainty and the Welfare Economics of Medical Care* (948-54, 961-2)

Reading Response #7 Due

Week 9 (March 22-26): Distributive Justice I

March 22 - Piketty and Economic Inequality

Watch [Capital in the Twenty-First Century](#) - a film by Justin Pemberton

OPTIONAL: Thomas Piketty, "Introduction" from *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*

March 24 - Rawls on Justice as Fairness

Excerpts from John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*

Swift, "Rawls: justice as fairness"

March 26 - Rawls and Equality of Opportunity

Excerpts from John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*

Swift, "Equality of Opportunity"

Reading Response #8 Due

SPRING BREAK (March 29 - April 5) - NO CLASS

Week 10 (April 7-9): Distributive Justice II

April 7 - Nozick's Entitlement Theory of Justice

Excerpts from Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

April 9 - Nozick, Cohen, and Wilt Chamberlain

Excerpts from Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

G.A. Cohen, "Robert Nozick and Wilt Chamberlain: How Patterns Preserve Liberty"

Reading Response #9 Due

Week 11 (April 12-16): Distributive Justice III

April 12 - Utilitarianism

Excerpt from Jeremy Bentham's *Principles of Morals and Legislation*

April 14 - Utilitarianism II

Excerpt from J.S. Mill's *Utilitarianism*

April 16 - Triage

Emanuel et al., "Fair Allocation of Scarce Medical Resources in the Time of COVID-19"

OPTIONAL: Ben Bramble, Chapter 7 ("Triage"), *Pandemic Ethics*

Reading Response #10 Due

Week 12 (April 19-23): Public Choice & Politics

April 19 - Introduction to Public Choice Theory

Excerpts from Anthony Downs *An Economic Theory of Democracy*

April 21 - The (ir)Rationality of Politics

Michael Huemer, "Why People Are Irrational about Politics"

April 23 - Echo Chambers & Social Media

C. Thi Nguyen, "[Escape the Echo Chamber](#)"

Reading Response #11 Due

Week 13 (April 26-30): Social Media & Democracy

April 26 - Fake News, Social Media, and Social Epistemology

Regina Rini, "Fake News and Partisan Epistemology"

Alex Worsnip, "The Obligation to Diversify One's Sources"

April 28 - Deepfakes

Regina Rini, "Deepfakes and the Epistemic Backstop"

April 30 - Should You Vote?

Geoffrey Brennan and Loren Lomasky, "Is There a Duty to Vote?"

Reading Response #12 Due

Week 14 (May 3-7): Paternalism

May 3 - Universal Basic Income

Freakonomics "Is the World Ready for a Guaranteed Basic Income?" podcast
PPE in a Time of Pandemic: Universal Basic Income video

May 5 - Paternalism and Global Poverty

Esther Duflo, "Human Values and the Fight Against Poverty"

May 7 - Should Medicine Be Regulated?

Jessica Flanigan, interview on her book *Pharmaceutical Freedom: Why Patients Have a Right to Self Medicate*

Week 15 (May 10): Review

May 10 - Final Exam Review

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM:

Due 11:59pm on Wednesday, May 19