POT 4066-0001: Contemporary Political Theory
Department of Political Science
College of Sciences, University of Central Florida

COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor:	Instructor: Dr. Daniel Marien	Term:	Fall 2012
Office:	Office Room: PH 313	Class Meeting Days:	T/R
Phone:	Phone for Office: 407-823-0113	Class Meeting Hours:	1:30-2:45 p.m.
E-Mail:	Instructor's Email: danielmarien@yahoo.com	Class Location:	COMM-0110

OFFICE HOURS	OFFICE LOCATION	OFFICE PHONE NUMBER
Mondays 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.	UCF Cocoa; BCC bldg 3, room 223	321-433-7912
Tuesdays 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.	UCF Orlando; Philips Hall, room. 313	407-823-0113
Wednesdays 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.	UCF Cocoa; BCC bldg 3, room 223	321-433-7912
Thursdays 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.	UCF Orlando; Philips Hall, room. 313	407-823-0113

I. Welcome!

Political discourse is saturated with claims and counter-claims about "paying a fair share," "fair tax,"building a "just society," "overturning unjust policies," affording "justice for all," etc. Fairness and justice stand at the center of everyday political judgments made by citizens, lobbyists, journalists, legislative representatives and executive leaders.

But what, exactly, is fairness? What is justice? Addressing this seemingly simple question opens up layers of unsuspected complexities and subtleties usually overlooked

in everyday political debates. The purpose of this course is precisely to unpack these complexities and reflect together about what justice and fairness can and should mean.

We explore three broad approaches to justice. One approach is based on the promotion of individual freedom. Another focuses on the maximization of pleasure or utility. A third is shaped by the pursuit of “virtue”, i.e. the good life. Each broad approach spawns different versions.

This course provides an exciting opportunity to enlarge and enrich how we make judgments about what is just and unjust, fair and unfair in policy, society, and economy. You should think of this course a form of training in improving your ability to make educated political judgments.

Readings, class discussions, essay writing and structured in-class debates will be utilized to advance our thinking on this central issue.

II. University Course Catalog Description

POT 4066 COS-POLS 3(3,0)
Contemporary Political Theory: PR: Junior standing or C.I.
Study of the contemporary debate about the status of rights, utilitarianism, and liberalism, and communitarian, Marxist, libertarian, and feminist critiques of liberalism.

III. Course Overview

This course develops the participants’ ability to evaluate social practices, economic institutions and government policies in a manner informed by key ideas in normative political theory or philosophy. We are particularly interested in reflecting on the nature and implications of various theories of justice, rights and obligations.

The course will partly rely on group work. It will culminate in two papers and a series of student-led in-class debates on controversial propositions. See the tentative list of debate propositions circulated at the end of this course outline. (This list is subject to adjustment after consultation with students.)

IV. Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. To explain and describe the themes, assumptions, ideas, and practical conclusions of three approaches to the concept of justice: utility, liberty and virtue.
2. To apply the three foregoing approaches to concrete issues.
3. To demonstrate skills in critical thinking, effective communication, attentive listening, responsibility toward the group, and debating abilities.

V. Course Credits

3 credits

VI. Required Texts and Materials

One textbook:
Michael Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009. ISBN: 9780374180652

One reader:
Michael Sandel (editor), *Justice: A Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-19-533512-5.

VII. Supplementary Texts and Materials

As the course progresses, the instructor will suggest additional materials for the entire class or for specific students. While familiarity with the suggested material is not compulsory, it would help students build better arguments for their mid-term and final papers.

VIII. Basis for Final Grade

Assessment	Percent of Final Grade
RAT Quizzes	20%
Graded Group Discussions	20%
Mid-term paper (for debate) 2,500 words minimum.	30%
Final paper (for debate) 2,500 words minimum	30%
	100%

Extra-Credit: 2 points for winning a debate; 2 points for being nominated a "debating star" by the instructor **if** a member of the loosing team.

Penalties: 1 point per excessive absences (more than two); 1 point per observed usage of electronic devices in class when not permitted.

Grading Scale (%)	
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
0 - 59	F

IX. Schedule

1st Week: Introduction

Note: chapters in the textbook are noted in Arabic (regular) numerals (ex,: 1, 2, 3, etc.); chapters in the reader are noted in Roman numerals (ex.: I, II, III, etc.).

Tuesday, 8/21: Introduction

- Presentation of course goals and means.

Thursday, 8/23: Introduction

- Discussion of Reader chapter I, The Queen v. Dudley and Stephens.

2nd Week: Doing the Right Thing

Tuesday 8/28: Sandel, chapter 1

- RAT Quiz on Michael Sandel, Textbook, chapter 1.
- Students joins one of three areas of controversies:
    - **Price Gouging**
        - *The Florida law banning price gouging should be abandoned.*
    - **Prostitution**
        - *Bans on prostitution should be lifted.*
    - **Public Subsidies for Cultural Activities and Programs**
        - *Arts and culture should never receive government subsidies derived from tax revenues.*

- Group discussion on ch. 1.

Thursday 8/30: Sandel, chapter 1

- Class wide discussion of Sandel, Textbook, chapter 1.

3rd Week: Utilitarianism

Tuesday 9/4: Sandel, chapters 2 and II

- RAT Quiz on Michael Sandel, chapters 2 and II.
- Group discussion on same.

Thursday 9/6: Sandel, chapters 2 and II: Utilitarianism

- Class wide discussion of Sandel, chapters 2 and II.

4th Week: Libertarianism

Tuesday 9/11: Sandel, chapters 3 and III

- RAT Quiz on Michael Sandel, chapters 3 and III.
- Group discussion on same.

Thursday 9/13: Sandel, chapters 3 and III

- Class wide discussion of Sandel, chapters 3 and III.

5th Week: Markets and Morals

Tuesday 9/18: Sandel, chapters 4 and IV and V

- RAT Quiz
- Group discussion

Thursday 9/20: Sandel, chapters 4 and IV and V

- Class wide discussion
- Teamwork planning mid-term debate.

6th Week: What Matters is the Motive

Tuesday 9/25: Sandel, chapters 5 and VI

- RAT Quiz
- Group discussion

Thursday 9/27: Sandel, chapters 5 and VI

- Class wide discussion
- Teamwork planning mid-term debate.

7th and 8th Week: Mid-term Debates

- Note: the supporting paper must be submitted at the time of *your* debate.

Tuesday 10/2: **Debate on price gouging**

Thursday 10/:4 **NO CLASS (football game)**

Tuesday 10/9: **Debate on prostitution bans**

Thursday 10/11: **Debate on public support for cultural activities and programs**

9th Week: Rawls and Liberal Equality

Tuesday 10/16: Sandel, chapters 6 and VII and VIII

- RAT Quiz
- Group discussion
- Class wide discussion

Thursday 10/18: Sandel, chapters 6 and VII and VIII

- Class wide discussion
- Teamwork planning mid-term debate.

10th Week: Affirmative Action

Tuesday 10/23: Sandel, chapters 7 and IX

- RAT Quiz
- Group discussion

Thursday 10/25: Sandel, chapters 7 and IX

- Class wide discussion

11th Week: Who Deserves What?

Tuesday 10/30: Sandel, chapters 8 and X and XI

- RAT Quiz
- Group discussion

Thursday 11/1: Sandel, chapters 8 and X and XI

- Class wide discussion

12th Week: Obligations to Others

Tuesday 11/6: Sandel, chapters 9 and XII

- RAT Quiz
- Group discussion

Thursday 11/8: Sandel, chapters 9 and XII

- Class wide discussion
- Teamwork planning final debate.

13th Week: Justice and the Common Good

Tuesday 11/13: Sandel, chapters 10 and XIV

- RAT Quiz
- Group discussion

Thursday11/15: Sandel, chapters 10 and XIV

- Class wide discussion
- Teamwork planning final debate.

14th Week: Debate Preparation

Tuesday 11/20: Debate Prep.

Thursday 11/22: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

15th and 16th Week: Final Debates

- Note: the supporting paper must be submitted at the time of *your* debate.

Tuesday 11/27:	**Debate Prep**
Thursday 11/29:	**Debate Prep**
Tuesday 12/4:	**Debate on economic inequality**
Monday 12/10, 1:00 to 3:50 PM:	**Debate on affirmative action**
	Debate on same-sex marriage

X. Grade Dissemination

Grades will be posted on Webcourses@UCF.

XI. Course Policies

Late Work Policy:
There are no make-ups for missing RAT quizzes or class graded group discussion. Two justified absences from these exercises will be excused. A penalty of one course point for each absence will be applied.

Grades of Incomplete

The current university policy concerning incomplete grades will be followed in this course. Incomplete grades are given only in situations where unexpected emergencies prevent a student from completing the course and the remaining work can be completed the next semester. Your instructor is the final authority on whether you qualify for an incomplete. Incomplete work must be finished by the end of the subsequent semester or the "I" will automatically be recorded as an "F" on your transcript.

XII. Grading Policy

Graded Group Discussions receive a collective grade, i.e the grade applies to all members of the group. Only a random sample of such discussions will be graded by the instructor. Group members are entitled to two absences without penalty from these discussions **if** the absence is for reason beyond their control **and if** sufficient documentation is provided. Otherwise point deductions will be made.

RAT Quizzes are graded individually. These short quizzes are meant to evaluate the student's readiness to engage in group discussion. Students are entitled to two absences on RAT quizzes without penalty **if** the absence is for reason beyond their control **and if** sufficient documentation is provided. Otherwise point deductions will be made.

Papers are graded individually (unless a pair of students elects to write a common paper).

XIII. Course Policies: Technology and Media

Email: Use my email to communicate with me: danielmarien@yahoo.com. Allow up to 48 hours for a response. Repeat message if you haven't received a response within 48 hours.

Laptop Usage: All laptops and other electronic devices must be closed during lectures and discussions. Laptop usage by the group note taker is welcome during graded group

discussions only. Students observed using an unauthorized electronic device in class will be punished by the subtraction of one course point per observation. Students should consult the written and audio documents available at these URL for rationale justifying this policy:

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/07/technology/07brain.html?ref=homepage&src=me&pagewanted=all

http://www.npr.org/player/v2/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=129384107&m=129398822

XIV. Course Policies: Student Expectations

Disability Access:

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Academic Conduct Policy:

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. If you are uncertain as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, please consult The Golden Rule, the University of Central Florida's Student Handbook (http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/) for further details. As in all University courses, The Golden Rule Rules of Conduct will be applied. Violations of these rules will result in a failing grade for the entire course and can also result in expulsion from the University.

Turinitin.com:

In this course we will utilize turnitin.com, an automated system which instructors can use to quickly and easily compare each student's assignment with billions of web sites, as well as an enormous database of student papers that grows with each submission. Accordingly, you will be expected to submit all assignments in both hard copy and electronic format. After the assignment is processed, as instructor I receive a report from turnitin.com that states if and how another author's work was used in the assignment. For a more detailed look at this process, visit http://www.turnitin.com. Essays are due at turnitin.com the same day as in class.