University of Central Florida

POT 4066 Contemporary Political Theory

Summer D 2014

Dr. Daniel Marien

Course Information

Office	UCF COCOA: Building 3, rm. 223
Office Hours:	Tuesdays, UCF Cocoa, 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm
	Online consultation nearly 24/7 at: Daniel.Marien@ucf.edu
Phone:	321-433-7952
Email Address:	Daniel.Marien@ucf.edu

Course Contents

This course in political philosophy focuses on the concept of justice. We explore three broad approaches to answering this central question in politics: "What is fair?"

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. a notion of the good life. Each broad approach can spawn different versions.

This course provides an exciting opportunity to enlarge and enrich how we make judgments about the central questions of what is just and unjust, fair and unfair in policy, society, and economy. You may see it as education for better citizenship.

Course Goals and Objectives

- ### Course Goals

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 broad 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 and writing, attentive reading, and responsibility toward the group.

Course Materials

You will need to have access to the following:

A Textbook:

(1) Michael Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009, ISBN: 978-0-374-5350-5.

A Reader:

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

Other required or suggested materials (if any) will be made available in electronic form.

Detailed Assessment Description

Weekly Quizzes: 40 points

Each quiz will count from 10 to 20 multiple choice questions. You will be allotted one minute per question. The quiz opens on Friday morning around 9:00 A.M. and closes on Monday morning at 11:00 A.M.

Answers to Discussion Questions: 40 points

Each week every student must post their own answers to discussion questions in their respective Group Discussion Board in Webcourses. The Boards open on Friday morning and close on Monday morning at 11:00 A.M. This sequence repeats from Week 1 to Week 8 inclusively.

You will be assigned to a group at random. Group Issue Management Boards will be created to discuss any issues that might arise within the group, members are listed in the banner of these Group Discussion Boards.

Discussion questions will be of three kinds: reading comprehension; application, evaluation.

Reading comprehension questions tests your understanding of the assigned readings.

Application question challenges you to apply a concept defined in the readings in a different context or to a different example than the one referred to in the readings.

Evaluation questions solicit your thoughtful opinion about an issue, idea or concept.

Each weekly posting by an individual student must be written in good academic English (avoid imprecise or familiar language) and add up to a minimum of 800 original words.

Each student starts the semester with 40 points “in the bank” for this exercise. Points are subtracted from this amount if and when the student fails to post answers for a given week (-5 points) or post an inadequate answer (the penalty can vary from -1 to -5, depending on the degree of inadequacy).

Posting a Weekly Summary (penalty for non-submission)

Group members take turn to post a summary of their respective group’s answers to weekly questions in a SUMMARIES discussion board.

See the document *Weekly Summary: How and Why?* in Webcourses under Files for explanation and justification.

Students are assigned to compose their group summary by alphabetical order of last name. Normally, every student will have to post two weekly summaries during the semester. Some students might have to compose a third one if their respective group has less than four members.

Failure to submit a weekly summary when it is your turn will be penalized by point subtraction (-4). Submission of inadequate summary will also be penalized by point

subtraction (by a varying amount from -1 to -4). The penalty is recorded in the Grade Book column recording your posting of Discussion Questions.

Other group members are NOT penalized if and when a given member failed to post a summary when it is his or her turn. The course is designed to foster personal accountability in collaborative endeavors. Free loaders will be penalized. Collective punishment is ruled out by design.

Engaging Class Participants: Extra Credit Opportunity

This is an optional exercise that can earn you extra-credit. See the related document in Webcourses under Files for details about how to do this.

Recapitulating Essay: 20 Points

Each student will write an essay of a least 1,500 original words addressing **one** of the following questions:

(1) Are there legitimate limits to markets? Discuss this issue in the context of the debate about legalizing prostitution.
(2) Are there legitimate limits to markets? Discuss this issue in the context of the debate about commercial surrogate motherhood.
(3) Distributive justice: Should publicly funded access to higher education be a right of all academically qualified individuals? Or can access to higher education be legitimately constrained by family fortune?
(4) Distributive justice: Are the sharpening inequalities of income and wealth recently observed in the United States morally neutral and acceptable or not?
(5) Individualist morality or an “embedded self”: Can persons acquire obligations they have not individually consented to merely by virtue of the social context in which they live? If, so what are the limits of these obligations? Discuss this issue in the context of reparations for racial slavery or Indian land and cultural dispossession.

It is suggested that you start early in the semester collecting your ideas about one of these questions. The early start will facilitate the composition of a stronger essay at the end of the semester.

The essay must be submitted electronically to the instructor as an attachment in a Word file written in 12 points Arial font. It must use a standard reference system. It must have a minimum of 1,500 of your own words. Label your file with your last name.

The Essay must be submitted during Week 9, at the latest on the morning of Sunday July 13.

The essay will be graded for clarity, logical consistency, cogency, coherence of structure, the accurate and effective mobilization of course concepts and ideas, and the use of proper academic language.

Summary Assessment Table

WHAT	WHEN	WORTH
Weekly Quizzes to be taken by all Participants	Weeks #1-8. All participants by Monday Mornings 11:00 A.M.	40%
Weekly Posting of Answers to Discussion Questions by all Participants	Weeks #1-8. All Participants by Monday Mornings 11:00 A.M.	40%
Weekly Posting of Summary (by the Group Summary Composer of the Week) **All participants must do this at least twice during the semester.**	Weeks #2-9. Selected Participants (i.e. when it is your turn) by Wednesday evenings 11:59 P.M.	Penalty (-4 pts) for non-performance or inadequate performance (-2 pts)
Engage your class mates and/or the instructor with respectful and well thought out criticism.	Weeks 1-8. In the **Engaging Class Participants** Discussion Board in Webcourses	**Extra Credit** One point for each contribution. A maximum of 5 bonus points for contributions meeting the standards. See the *Engaging Standards* document under Webcourses → Files.
Essay Minimum of 1,500 original words.	All Participants by July 13, morning at 11:00 A.M.	20%

Course Schedule

Week #1, May 12-19: Introduction and Utilitarianism

- **On Monday, May 12 students read the Course Outline to familiarize themselves with the course's goals, content and structure.**

- **You will observe that Monday morning May 12 starts or "opens" Week 1.**
- **You will also observe that Monday morning May 19 ends or "closes" Week 1 and starts or "opens" Week 2. This sequence is repeated throughout the semester.**

- **The instructor will assign you to a discussion group at random.** Four members per group. Groups are identified by numbers. Group members' names are listed in the banners to the Group Issue Management Discussion Boards.

- You must **take the quiz** for Week 1 no later than **Monday, May 19** at 11:00 A.M.
    - A similar schedule is repeated throughout the semester.

- You must **post your individual answers** to the discussion questions in the Individual Answers Group Discussion Box in Canvas appropriate to your group no later than **Monday, May 19** at 11:00 A.M.
    - A similar schedule is repeated throughout the semester.
    - **The questions** you must answer **are posted** a week ahead of the posting deadline **in Webcourses under Modules.**

- The **group's summary** composer of the week (a rotating position assigned by the alphabetical order of last name) will compose a summary of the group's answers and post it **by Wednesday evening** (11: 59 P.M.) following the closing Monday in the Group SUMMARIES Discussion Box.
    - This process is repeated throughout the semester.
    - Example of summary order composition for a fictitious group:
        - Week 1 Summary: Jane **D**oe
        - Week 2 Summary: John **H**artling
        - Week 3 Summary: Jeremy **M**alinowski
        - Week 4 Summary: Adam **S**mith

        - Week 5 Summary: Jane **D**oe
        - Week 6 Summary: John **H**artling
        - Week 7 Summary: Jeremy **M**alinowski
        - Week 8 Summary: Adam **S**mith

        - Note that the Week 1 Summary is due on the Wednesday of Week 2; the Week 2 Summary is due on the Wednesday of Week 3, etc.
    - **Take care in composing the group summary. The instructor provides feedback to your group on the basis of these summaries.**
    - Failure to compose a group summary when it is your turn will be sanctioned by the subtraction of 4 course points (also a varying number of points for inadequate summary).
    - Every student must normally compose at least two group summaries during the semester.
    - How and why you must compose a group summary is explained in the document titled *Group Summaries: the How and Why* in Webcourses under Files.

Week 1 Assignments

- **Read Sandel, Textbook (the smaller book), chapters 1-2.**
- **Read Sandel, Reader, chapter I ("The Queens v. Dudley and Stevens").**

- **Take the Quiz** (before Monday morning, May 19 at 11:00 A.M.) covering the materials assigned for the week.

- **Participate** in your Group's Discussion Board (before Monday Morning, May 19 at 11:00 A.M.) by answering the instructor's questions for this week. The instructor announces the discussion questions a week ahead of the submission deadline in the Module function of Webcourses.

- **The Group's Weekly Summary Composer** (a rotating position) synthesize the group's answers and posts his/her text **in the relevant SUMMARIES Discussion Board** by Wednesday evenings under this title:
    - Group Number_Summary: **EX.: "Group 1 Summary."**
    - See *Group Summary: The How and the Why* in Webcourses under Files for guidance on this task.
    - **Do this carefully: groups received feedback on these summaries and you may lose points for non-performance or inadequate performance.**

Week #2, May 19-26: Libertarianism

- **Read Sandel, Textbook (the smaller book), chapter 3.**
- **Read Sandel, Reader, chapter III (whole chapter)**

- **Take the Quiz.**
- **Post your answers to discussion questions in your group's discussion board.**
- **Compose the Weekly Group Summary (if it is your turn).**

Week #3, May 26 – June 2: Markets and Morals

- **Read Sandel, Textbook (the smaller book), chapter 4.**
- **Read Sandel, Reader, chapter V, pp. 138-156 only.**

- **Take the Quiz.**
- **Post your answers to discussion questions in your group's discussion board.**
- **Compose the Weekly Group Summary (if it is your turn).**

Week #4, June 2-9: The Case for Liberal Equality

- **Read Sandel, Textbook (the smaller book), chapters 5-6.**
- **Read Sandel, Reader, chapter V, pp. 138-156 only.**

- **Take the Quiz.**
- **Post your answers to discussion questions in your group's discussion board.**
- **Compose the Weekly Group Summary (if it is your turn).**

Week #5, June 9-16: Liberal Egalitarianism versus Libertarianism

- **Read Sandel, Reader, chapters VII and VIII.**

- **Take the Quiz.**
- **Post your answers to discussion questions in your group's discussion board.**
- **Compose the Weekly Group Summary (if it is your turn).**

Week #6, June 16-23: Who Deserves What?

- **Read Sandel, Textbook (the smaller book), chapters 7-8.**

- **Take the Quiz.**
- **Post your answers to discussion questions in your group's discussion board.**
- **Compose the Weekly Group Summary (if it is your turn).**

Week #7, June 23-30: Justice and the Common Good

- **Read Sandel, Textbook (the smaller book), chapters 9-10.**

- **Take the Quiz.**
- **Post your answers to discussion questions in your group's discussion board.**
- **Compose the Weekly Group Summary (if it is your turn).**

Week #8, June 30-July7: Moral Individualism v. the Embedded Self

- **Read Sandel, Reader, chapter XII (the whole chapter).**
- **Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, excerpts TBA.**

- **Take the Quiz.**
- **Post your answers to discussion questions in your group's discussion board.**
- **Compose the Weekly Group Summary (if it is your turn).**

Week #9, July 7-11: Recapitulating Essay due July 12

- **The Essay is due Sunday morning, July 13 at 11:00 A.M.**

Grading Scale

Number- Letter Conversion Scale for the Final Course Grade	
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

Grade Dissemination

Grades will be posted on Canvas.

Course Policies

Late Work Policy:
There are no make-ups for missing weekly quizzes or class graded group discussion.

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.

Course Policies: Technology and Media

Email: Use my email to communicate with me: Daniel.Marien@ucf.edu or through course email. Allow up to 48 hours for a response. Repeat message if you haven't received a response within 48 hours. Usually, you will receive answer the very same day.

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, the instructor reserves the right to utilize turnitin.com to verify that students did not plagiarize their answers to the discussion questions or the essay, or a contribution to Engaging Class Participants or any other text submitted for the purposes of earning academic credit in this course.