

Old World and New World Political Philosophy PHIL

Instructor: Dr. János Salamon

Required Texts: (all of them provided as hand-outs one week before class)

- Isaiah Berlin: *Two Concepts of Liberty*
- Plato: *Apology; Republic (Book II, & VIII), Gorgias*
- Rousseau: *First Discourse*
- Tocqueville: *Democracy in America (Introduction, and Book I, ch. 7: The Omnipotence of the Majority in the United States and its Effects)*
- Thoreau: *Walden (ch. 1: Economy)*
- Friedrich Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morals (First essay: 'Good and' Evil; 'Good and Bad')*
- Arthur Schopenhauer: *On the Suffering of the World*

Course Overview:

According to Socrates, the unexamined life is not worth living. Starting from this premise, the course is designed to make your life more worthwhile by looking at the simplest and, at the same time, most fundamental questions of metaphysics, moral philosophy, and political philosophy.

Some of the questions we are going to examine are:

What is there? Are there such things as abstract objects? Are numbers as real as chairs?

Where do we live? In a cosmos or in a chaos?

How should we live? By the rules of society (convention) or by the rules of nature?

What is justice, and why should anyone be just?

Who's right: the hedonist who says that the pleasant is the same as the good, or the moralist who says that some pleasures are bad and some pains are good?

What is the best political regime? Is democracy indeed the best such regime, or is it just another form of tyranny, the tyranny of the majority?

Is it true that life has no intrinsic value?

In our discussion of these questions we shall rely exclusively on primary sources, that is, on the ideas and arguments of some of the greatest minds of what we still call Western Culture.

Course Requirement:

Grades will be based on a midterm paper (30%), a final paper (50%) and class participation (20%). The papers are take-home.