

**WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE**  
**LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION**  
**GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE**

PHI	120	Social and Political Philosophy	3-0	3
Course Prefix	Course Number	Course Title	(Lec-Lab)	Semester Hours

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Focuses on the ideas of justice, liberty, equality, law and order, rights and privileges. This includes discussion of such issues as democracy, communism, nuclear war, capital punishment, sexual equality, hunger and drugs.

**TOPICAL OUTLINE**

The topics of justice, liberty, equality should be the heart of any Social/Political Philosophy course. Whatever selection of topics and whatever order in which they are treated, the development of each topic should include the following elements: (using the concept of justice as an example).

- I. Conceptual development (of the concept of justice)
  - A. Definition(s) of Justice
    1. Traditional definitions
    2. Definition in relation to similar concepts, rights, equality
    3. Definition in relation to opposing concepts, interest of the stronger, arbitrariness
  - B. Implications of the Definition of Justice
    1. For personal morality
    2. For social order
    3. For interrelationships between social orders
- II. Historical Development (of the concept of justice)
  - A. The Concept of Justice in Western Philosophy (emphasis on the ways in which later thought is based on and extends earlier thought)
    1. Classical Greek and Roman philosophy and law
    2. Modern theories
  - B. The Concept of Justice in Oriental Philosophy (optional)
    1. In the classical literature of the various Eastern traditions
    2. Modern formulation
    3. Social/Political issues: abortion, euthanasia, revolution, environmental and population control, censorship, economic injustice, capital punishment, etc.

**METHODS OF PRESENTATION**

1. Lecture
2. Discussion
3. Small group work
4. Student presentations
5. Student debates

**STUDENT OUTCOMES:** (*The student should . . .*)

1. Demonstrate an awareness of the major issues and arguments in social and political philosophy.
2. Identify and explain the main arguments of at least three thinkers on these issues, e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Mary Wollstonecraft, John Rawls, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Charles W. Mills, etc.

3. Identify and explain the central arguments on at least the following: (a) views of society and politics, e.g. Marxism; (b) social contract theory and its criticisms; (c) a theory of democracy and its criticisms.
4. Apply distinct philosophical perspectives to current, real-world issues.
5. Demonstrate an awareness of the possible weakness of one's own views and the possible strength of competing views on the above issues.
6. Demonstrate the use of at least three primary texts in the service of the above outcomes.
7. Write a total of ten pages (of approximately 300 words each) of college-level writing in the service of the above outcomes in addition to more conversational written or oral discussion.

METHODS OF EVALUATION (Some of the following):

1. Quizzes
2. Exams (may be oral)
3. Written reading responses
4. Debates
5. Homework
6. Class activities including discussion groups
7. Participation

SOME SUGGESTED TEXTBOOKS/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Tannenbaum, Donald G. and David Schultz, *Inventors of Ideas: An Introduction to Western Political Philosophy*, 3rd ed. Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2012

Cahn, *Political Philosophy*, 3rd ed., Oxford University Press, 2013

McKennon and Feingold, *Taking Sides*, 18<sup>th</sup> ed. McGraw Hill, 2013

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Semester Fall                      Year 2015 / 2020  
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