

GVPT 859A/PHIL 688P/PUAF 698E
PROSEMINAR IN POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY, AND PUBLIC POLICY
Fall 2009
Tuesdays 12:30-3:15
Van Munching 1107

Instructors

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Texts

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Avinash Dixit and Barry Nalebuff, *Thinking Strategically: The Competitive Edge in Business, Politics, and Everyday Life* (Norton, 1991).

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William Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism* (Waveland Press, 1982).

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Other readings will be available online: most on Blackboard's "Course Reserves" (BCR); some on Blackboard's Course Documents (BCD); some will be available through the library's Research Port (RP); others as directed below.

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Overview

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The Pro-seminar is a two semester course. The two parts are sufficiently autonomous that they can be taken separately, but the second semester also builds on the first. The goal of the course, and of the program of which it is the core requirement, is to introduce the student to the range of concepts and theories that are crucial for engaging in morally thoughtful and politically effective efforts in political reform.

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Policy decisions emerge from politics, and from the institutional context within which politics takes place. Political reform must take into account both the nature of politics and of this institutional context. Postponing the consideration of institutions and problems of institutional reform until the second semester, in the first we consider the essentials of how politics works and then plunge into the fundamental question: What should governments do? Assuming that politics has a deliberative component, we can consider what governments should do by asking what sorts of reasons should guide them.

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The semester is organized around a debate between what we might call the economic approach (rational choice, game theory, cost-benefit analysis, social choice) and the most significant alternatives, with a focus on what matters in the evaluation of policy. We begin with the nature of politics as understood in game theory, and then we complement it with a more deliberative view. When we move to our central question (what should governments do?) we begin with utilitarianism and cost benefit analysis, accounts of fundamental values that fit well the economic approach, and then we complement it with deontological, and other alternatives.

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Course requirements

The main student project is a policy paper, roughly 6000 words in length, proposing, or evaluating, some significant policy reform in light of the political, institutional and moral considerations the course discusses. This paper will be due on December 18.

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An outline/prospectus for the paper, with a list of sources, will be due on November 3. Each student will give a 20-minute in-class presentation based on his or her

research for the policy paper. The presentations will take place on December 1 and 8.

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Students will also write three short papers, length approximately 1000 words. These correspond to questions that accompany the readings for each of the weeks in Part II of the course. These questions will be posted on Blackboard at least 1 week before the class discussing those readings. Students must write one short paper for each of the three sections of Part II (i.e. one for section A, one for section B, and one for section C), though which questions they answer is up to each student. They are due at the beginning of the class to which the question answered corresponds.

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The policy paper will count for 50% of your grade; each of your three short papers will count for 10%; and your policy paper presentation/class participation grade will count for the remaining 20%.

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Finally, though this is not technically a “requirement,” your participation in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is a responsibility you hold as a student member of the U.M. academic community. Your feedback is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University as well as to the tenure and promotion process. CourseEvalUM will be open for you to complete your evaluations for fall semester courses between Tuesday, December 1 and Sunday, December 13. Please go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluations.

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TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND PARTIAL LIST OF READINGS

Part I: The Nature of Politics

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1. September 1: Strategic interaction, bargaining and game theory (KS)

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2. September 8: The problem of collective action (KS)

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Dixit and Nalebuff, pp. 1-201.

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Michael Taylor, *The Possibility of Cooperation*, chapter 1 (pp. 1-33). BCR.

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3. September 15: Politics, principle, and the public interest (KS)

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Steven Kelman, "Why Public Ideas Matter," and Giandomenico Majone, "Policy Analysis and Public Administration," both in R. Reich, ed., *The Power of Public Ideas*, pp. 31-54, 157-178. BCR.

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Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes*, chapter 1. BCR.

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Part II: What Should Governments Do

A. Aggregative Conceptions of the Common Good

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4. September 22: Democracy, social choice and the aggregation of preferences (KS)

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Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism*, chapters 1-7, 10 (pp. 1-196, 233-53), but skip sections 4F, G, and H of chapter 4, and only skim chapters 6 and 7.

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5. September 29: Utilitarianism and poverty (AW)

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Will Kymlicka, "Utilitarianism," *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, chapter 2. BCR.

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Daniel Hausman and Michael McPherson, *Economic Analysis and Moral Philosophy*, chapter 6. BCR.

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Peter Singer, "One Community" in *One World*. BCR.

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6. October 6: Cost benefit analysis and the environment (KS)

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Edith Stokey and Richard Zeckhauser, *A Primer for Policy Analysis*, chapter 9. BCR.

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Cass Sunstein, "Cognition and Cost-Benefit Analysis." *Journal of Legal Studies*, 29, no. 2 (2000): 1059-97. RP.

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Norman Vig and Michael Kraft, eds., *Environmental Policy* (6th ed.), chapters 9, 10. BCR

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7. October 13: Markets (KS)

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Charles Lindblom, *Politics and Markets*, pp. 33-51, 76-89. BCR.

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Herman Daly and John Cobb, *For the Common Good*, chapters 2 and 3, pp. 44-84. BCR

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B. Respect for the Individual

8. October 20: Deontology: Rights and the Trolley Problem (AW)

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Shelly Kagan, “Doing Harm,” *Normative Ethics*, pp. 70-84. BCR.

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Carl Wellman, *A Theory of Rights*, pp. 8-15. BCR.

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Judith Jarvis Thomson, “Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem,” *The Monist* 59 (1976): 204-17. BCR.

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Alec Walen and David Wasserman, “The Mechanics of Rights” (manuscript) BCD.

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9. October 27: Deontology: Just war theory, Collateral Damage and Proportionality (AW)

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Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (2d edition), pp. 34-47; 151-156; 251-263. BCR.

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Thomas Hurka, “Proportionality in the Morality of War,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 33 (2005): 34-66. RP

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10. November 3: Distributive Justice and Taxation (AW)

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John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* sections 1-3, 11-13 (p.78), 17 and 22. BCR.

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Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Chapter 7. BCR.

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Liam Murphy and Thomas Nagel, "Taxes, Redistribution, and Public Provision," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 30 (2001) 53-71. RP.

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C. Perfectionism vs Anti-perfectionism:

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11. November 10: The capabilities approach and economic development. - Sen v. Nussbaum (AW/DC)

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Amartya Sen, *Inequality Reexamined*, chapters 4-5. BCR.

Martha Nussbaum, "Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice," in *Feminist Economics*, 9, 2-3, (July/November 2003): 33-60. BCR.

UNDP, Human Development Report 2004, Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World, Ch. 1. Google

RECOMMENDED: David A. Crocker and Ingrid Robeyns, "Capability and Agency," in Christopher Morris, ed. *Amartya Sen*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). BCD

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12. November 17: Environment – Rawlsian Anti-Perfectionism v. Perfectionism (AW)

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John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (1993), Lecture V. BCR.

George Sher, *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics* (1997) 199-244. BCR.

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Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, "Rawls and Communitarianism," in S. Freeman (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls* (2003), pp. 470-475. BCR.

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Robert H. Nelson, "The Gospel According to Conservation Biology," *Philosophy and Public Policy Quarterly* 27 (3/4), pp. 10-16. BCD.

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Holmes Rolston III, "Natural and Unnatural, Wild and Cultural," *Western North American Naturalist* 61 (2001), pp. 267- 276. BCD.

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13. November 24: Global system of human rights (KS)

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Joseph Raz, "Human Rights without Foundations." SSRN on line.

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Richard Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality" on line (search by title)

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Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (2d. ed), chapters 2 and 3, pp. 22-53. BCR

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Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):
<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

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European Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000): www.europarl.eu.int/charter

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Part III: Policy Papers

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14 & 15. December 1, 8: Student Presentations

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