Imagine a group of diverse individuals, with diverse interests, diverse values and diverse conceptions of the good life, come together to form a society. What political, legal and economic system consistent with their individual freedom and mutual equality would best allow them to flourish? This is the central question of contemporary political philosophy; in a nutshell, this is the question of justice. Theories of justice are theories of how best to distribute the benefits and burdens of social cooperation in light of our freedom and equality. We will begin this course by examining the most influential theory of justice in the twentieth-century: John Rawls’s (1921-2002) liberal egalitarianism. We will then turn to criticisms of, and alternatives to, Rawls’s theory of justice, including Robert Nozick’s (1938-2002) libertarianism, G. A. Cohen’s (1941-2009) socialism, Michael Sandel’s (1953- ) communitarianism and prominent feminist (and other progressive) critiques of liberalism. Along the way, we will examine a host of concepts that are central to theories of justice, including freedom, equality, rights, property, social justice, democracy and citizenship, among others. These are all contested terms in contemporary political philosophy, so part of our task will be to understand how these terms are employed in different theories of justice and what is at stake in debates about their meaning.

By the end of the semester we should: 1) be familiar with the central debates in contemporary political philosophy and 2) have developed the skills for deploying the main concepts and arguments of
these debates to critically analyze and evaluate a range of pressing political issues, from the ongoing immigration crisis on the U.S. southern border, to the recent rise of progressive and conservative populist movements like Occupy, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo and the Alternative Right (a.k.a., the Alt-Right), to the shifting nature of democratic institutions and the meaning of democratic values in light of the 2016 presidential election in the U.S. and comparably turbulent events in Europe and beyond (e.g., the Brexit vote in the U.K., the recent rise of far-right political parties in Germany, Austria and Eastern Europe, the refugee-crisis on the shores of Southern Europe, and the rise of “democratic” authoritarian governments in places like Russia, Turkey and Venezuela).

REQUIRED TEXTS

• Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction (2nd edition), Will Kymlicka, Oxford University Press.
• Arguing About Political Philosophy (2nd edition), Edited by Matt Zwolinski, Routledge.
• Additional readings posted on Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) Class Participation (10%)
   Students are expected to complete the reading for each class meeting and bring their books to class. They will be called upon in class to answer questions about the reading and are expected to make thoughtful comments or to ask well-formulated questions. No question is too simple or naïve to ask! Students are expected to maintain a respectful demeanor towards each other and the instructor.

2) Weekly Reading Summaries (30%)
   You will write fifteen reading summaries (400-600 words each) over the course of the semester. Your reading summaries must cover the readings that are designated with an {*} in the schedule on this syllabus (see below). Please see detailed instructions for the summaries on Blackboard. Reading summaries will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. Each summary is worth 2% of your final grade.

3) Short Essay (25%)
   You will write one 1250-1500 word essay for this course. See the schedule below for due dates. The assignment will require that you do the following (but please see the more detailed assignment directions posted on Blackboard):
   • Choose a topic from a list of essay topics that will be available on Sept. 20.
   • Read at least two reputable academic sources on the topic (e.g., a recent journal article on the topic in an academic journal) and include them in your essay.
   • Use the relevant assigned course readings in the essay.
   • Submit an outline of the essay by Oct. 4.
   • Submit the final essay by Oct. 18.
4) **Term Paper (35%)**

You will write a 2250-2500 word term paper for this course. See the schedule below for due dates.

This paper will require that you do the following (but please see the more detailed assignment directions posted on Blackboard):

- Choose a topic from a list of essay topics that will be available on Nov. 1.
- Read **at least** four reputable academic sources on the topic (e.g., a recent journal article on the topic in an academic journal) and include them in your paper.
- Use the relevant assigned course readings in the paper.
- Submit an outline of the essay by Nov. 20.
- Submit the final essay by Dec. 12.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Classroom Conduct Code:**
- The use of electronic devices (laptops, cell phones, audio recorders, etc.) is **strictly forbidden**.
- Arrive to class on time.
- Do not chat with fellow classmates during the lecture/discussion.
- I expect you to participate in class discussion on a regular basis. If you have a question or comment, raise your hand (and I will call on you).
- Treat your fellow classmates with respect at all times, including during class discussion.

**Note:** If you violate the Classroom Conduct Code, you will be asked to leave the class.

**No Extra-Credit Assignments:** There are no extra-credit assignments in this course.

**Academic Honesty/Plagiarism:** Students who engage in scholastic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action as stated in the UTEP policy: [http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.htm](http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.htm).

**Email:** All class email correspondences will be conducted exclusively through the email address that you have listed with the university.

**Blackboard:** We will be using the Blackboard shell for our class throughout the semester. If you have not done so already, you should familiarize yourself with accessing Blackboard.

**Disability Accommodation:** UTEP seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities. This university will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required affording equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with The Center for Accommodations and Support Services within the first two weeks of classes and inform the faculty member to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS)
Union East Building Room 106
Phone: (915) 747-5148
Fax: (915) 747-8712
Email: cass@utep.edu
SCHEDULE (tentative)

Texts Key: CPP = Contemporary Political Philosophy
AAPP = Arguing About Political Philosophy

Week 1: Introduction
Aug. 28: Syllabus; What is political philosophy?
Aug. 30: Will Kymlicka, “Utilitarianism” [Ch. 2, CPP]; [Recommended Reading: John Stuart Mill, “Justice and Utility” (excerpts from Utilitarianism) [AAPP]]

Week 2: Liberal Egalitarianism
Sept. 4: Will Kymlicka, “Liberal Equality” [Ch. 3, CPP]; John Rawls, “A Theory of Justice” (excerpts from A Theory of Justice) [AAPP]
Sept. 6: John Rawls, “A Theory of Justice” (excerpts from A Theory of Justice) [AAPP] *{Summary #1}

Week 3: Equality
Sept. 13: Elizabeth S. Anderson, “What is the Point of Equality?” [on Blackboard] *{Summary #2}

Week 4: Libertarianism
Sept. 20: Robert Nozick, “The Entitlement Theory of Justice” (excerpts from Anarchy, State, and Utopia) [AAPP] *{Summary #3}

Week 5: Rights

Week 6: Freedom
Oct. 4: Philip Pettit, “Republican Political Theory” [AAPP]
Week 7: Marxism and Socialism

Week 8: Social Justice

Week 9: Communitarianism

Week 10: Citizenship Theory and Democracy
Oct. 30: Will Kymlicka, “Citizenship Theory” [Ch. 7, CPP]
Nov. 1: Amy Gutman and Dennis Thompson, “Moral Disagreement in a Democracy” [AAPP] *{Summary #9}

Week 11: Democracy and Multiculturalism
Nov. 6: Jason Brennan, “Political Liberty: Who Needs It?” [AAPP] *{Summary #10}
Nov. 8: Will Kymlicka, “Multiculturalism” [Ch. 8, CPP]

Week 12: Immigration
Nov. 13: Michael Huemer, “Is There a Right to Immigrate?” *{Summary #11}
Nov. 15: David Miller, “Immigration: The Case for Limits”

Week 13: Political Feminism
Nov. 20: Will Kymlicka, “Feminism” [Ch. 9, CPP]; Virginia Held, “Non-contractual Society: A Feminist View” [AAPP] *{Summary #12}
Nov. 22: THANKSGIVING BREAK – UNIVERSITY CLOSED

Week 14: Oppression
Nov. 27: Catherine Mackinnon, “Difference and Dominance” [AAPP] *{Summary #13}
Nov. 29: Charles Mills, “The Racial Contract” (excerpts from The Racial Contract) [AAPP] *{Summary #14}
Week 15: Political Liberalism: A Defense

Dec. 6: TBA