

PHI 3930

Fall 2019

Social Philosophy

T 5-6 (RNK 0230), R 6 (RNK 0225)

Robert D'Amico

333 Griffin-Floyd Hall

273-1806

rdamico@ufl.edu

Office Hours

This course is intended to introduce philosophy majors and minors (though it is not restricted to majors or minors in philosophy) to an important topic that crosses academic boundaries.

Since 1990 the work of Margaret Gilbert in On Social Facts has generated a widespread and fruitful discussion on the intersections between action theory, political philosophy, philosophy of mind, moral philosophy, and the social sciences. We cannot cover every topic but I have divided up our task as such.

First, beginning with her book On Social Facts we will cover at least the following issues. In what sense are social groups distinct as phenomena from that of individuals? Are features of social phenomena such as institutional facts reducible to facts about individuals? If groups are not reducible to individual agency does that require an ontology beyond what is acceptable to philosophical naturalism?

Second, we will consider debates about whether institutional facts are foundational to social science. These topics also concern how we should understand rational decision-making as well as contractual theories of society. Here we will turn to Deborah Tollefsen's Groups as Agents, which is in part a reply to Gilbert. We will also cover John Searle's work on this topic since he was influenced by Gilbert's work, though they disagree about some underlying problems.

Third, I hope to have the time to briefly consider the impact of this topic of collective action on moral and political philosophy.

Aside from Gilbert's On Social Facts and Tollefsen's Goups as Agents, any other readings will be made available as PDFs within Files on Canvas.

This procedure also makes it possible to change or alter the readings depending on how the course develops and in terms of discussion. But it requires paying attention to changes in the syllabus and/or readings for any given part of the course.

Textbook: Margaret Gilbert, On Social Facts and Deborah Tollefsen, Groups as Agents (Reitz Union Bookstore)

Grade Requirements: The course requires two take home essay exams (1500 words each) and a final paper (2500-3000 words). I will discuss essays exams, and final papers at our first meeting.

The course is designed so that every week our Thursday meeting will be a seminar-style discussion. In some weeks I may post topics for discussion or even a writing exercise. These exercises are submitted on-line but graded S/U.

Though Thursdays could change due to contingencies, you should plan to come to Thursday's class meeting with questions or comments or responses to posted questions. My comments for discussion are posted in Announcements prior to Thursday's meeting.

UNIT 1 Gilbert's Plural Subjects

First Week

8/20 Introduction / Philosophy of Action

8/22 On Social Facts I

Second Week

8/27 On Social Facts II

8/29

Third Week

9/3 Continue On Social Facts II

9/5

Fourth Week

9/10 On Social Facts III

9/12

Fifth Week

9/17 On Social Facts IV

9/19

Sixth Week

9/24 On Social Facts VII

9/26 Essay Questions Posted

First Essay Exam Due 10/13

-

Seventh Week

10/1 On Social Facts VI

10/3 Review

-

Eighth Week

10/8 Review

10/10 Review

UNIT 2 Reactions and Disputes

Ninth Week

10/15 Tollefsen Chapters 1,2,3

10/17

-

Tenth Week

10/22 Tollefsen Chapters 4,5

10/24

-

Eleventh Week

10/29 John Searle, "Intentionality" and "Collective Intentionality and the Assignment of Function"

10/31

Twelfth Week

11/5 John Searle, "Collective Intentions"

11/7

Thirteenth Week

11/12 Gilbert, "Searle and Collective Intentions"

11/14 Second Essay Exam Questions Posted

Second Essay Exam Due 11/27

Fourteenth Week

11/19 Review

11/21

Fifteenth Week

11/26 Q&A

Thanksgiving Break November 27-29

UNIT 3 The Moral Conception of Groups

Sixteenth Week

12/3 Margaret Gilbert, "Pro Patria" Tollefsen, Chapter 6 Final Paper Discussion

CLASSES END Wednesday December 4

Final Paper Due 12/11

Course Guidelines: Extensions for assigned work papers are granted only for circumstances of the sort listed under excused absences and only if proper arrangements have been made. Essays handed in past the due dates set for them will normally suffer a grade penalty. Documentation must be provided to your instructor if you have a medical reason for not completing an assignment when due. Keep copies of all your essays.

Being assigned an Incomplete in lieu of a final grade for the course requires permission of the instructor and is rare.

Learning Objectives

Students should become familiar with a variety of philosophical questions and arguments about theory of action, collective action, and the nature of institutions. They should learn how to judge and criticize arguments, as well as understand and write about key concepts. Essay exams involve objective essay questions that do not ask for the student's opinion. The exams ask for critical analysis and responses to or assessments of positions and argumentative strategies. The aim of the course is to learn and think critically in both oral and written formats. The final paper is meant to meet the Department's aim of teaching philosophy students to write critical, analytical essays.

I will provide both in our syllabus and in Canvas a rubric for expectations of both take home essay assignments and the final paper. I will also discuss these expectations further as we get into the semester.

Grade Determination

Factor	Percentage
Participation (class discussion)	10%
Presentation	10%
2 Take home mid-term exams	45% (20%#1 25%#2)
Final Paper	35%

I will discuss the final paper and possible topics during the course. Students are required to meet with the instructor about their final paper before we reach the end of the semester.

Grade Scale. The following grade scale will be used to assign final letter grades for the course. See UF grading policies for assigning grade points at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> (Links to an external site.).

Grade Scale	Grade Value
100-93=A	A=4.0
92-90=A-	A-=3.67
89-86=B+	B+=3.33
85-82=B	B=3.00
81-79=B-	B-=2.67
78-75=C+	C+=2.33
75-72=C	C=2.00
71-69=C-	C-=1.67
68-66=D+	D+=1.33
65-62=D	D=1.00
61-60=D-	D-=0.67
59-0=E	E=0.00

For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx> (Links to an external site.)

Academic Honesty

Please note that all UF students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. In particular, you should be aware of the regulations governing the scope of the Honor Code and possible violations; you can find that here:

<http://regulations.ufl.edu/chapter4/4041.pdf> (Links to an external site.):

Plagiarism is a very serious violation of academic honesty. It includes, but is not limited to, copying another text as your own, copying the work of a fellow student, handing in a paper prepared by another as your own, and using sources for writing your paper not cited within the paper. Plagiarism is not restricted to matters of copyright infringement and therefore it does cover materials found on web pages. The penalties for plagiarism can range from an automatic failing grade in the course to suspension or expulsion from the university. If you have any questions about how to prepare your paper, please discuss them with your discussion leader or instructor before turning in the paper. We require that an electronic version be submitted along with a print version of all essays.

Attendance

This is not a grade contract course, thus regular attendance is simply an expectation of anyone registering for the course. This is also not an on-line course, therefore failure to attend for most of the semester or even a significant part of it will lead to being dropped from the course. Excessive unexcused absences will in effect lead to a lower final grade. Unexcused absences for roughly 1/3 of the course sets C+ as the highest possible grade.

As stated in UF's official policy regarding attendance, acceptable reasons for absence include: Illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused.

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> (Links to an external site.)

Extensions for assigned work papers are granted for circumstances of the sort listed above and only if the student makes proper arrangements in advance with regard to extenuating circumstances.

Classroom Etiquette

Do not read newspapers, sleep, check email, browse the Web, or distract your fellow students during the class. *Please turn off cell phones during course meetings.*

Evaluation

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their

Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Disability Accommodations

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resources Center (www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) for information about available resources for students with disabilities.