

Course Instructor: Benjamin Lozano
Course Time: Thurs 4:10-6:55pm
Course Rm Number: BH 222
Office Hours: Tues 4:15-5:15
Email: bjlozano@sfsu.edu
Final Exam: May 23rd

PLSI-150 (03)

Contemporary Moral & Political Issues

Introduction

Our course is concerned with contemporary moral and political issues. What is morality? What are ethics? When and where do various moral and ethical issues arise in politics? And how, if at all, does our politics inform our morality, and our morality our politics? This course will pose and consider such questions in a concrete setting, and in the process will introduce students to contemporary moral and political issues.

Our course is divided into 3 parts: Part I provides an overview of the themes and concerns of our course. Part II considers some contemporary moral and political issues that arise in wartime states of emergency, involving law, justice, rights, freedom, and security. Part III considers some contemporary moral and political issues that arise in economics, markets, and finance capitalism, involving credit/debt, group behavior, freedom, liberty, property, alienation, and systemic violence. Also, within Parts II and III we convene in working groups to prepare and deliver working group debate presentations on various contemporary moral and political issues covered in our course.

Course Requirements

- A. Students are asked to attend all classes, arriving prepared to discuss the readings for that day –there are roughly 75 pages of reading each week.
- B. Each student is responsible for 2 working group debate presentations.
- C. The grade breakdown is as follows: (1) Participation 20% (2) 3 Pop-Quizzes 30% (3 of 4 @ 10% each; you drop your lowest score) (3) 4-page Essay 20% (4) Final Exam 30%

Required Texts

Plato, *Four Texts On Socrates*, Cornell Univ. Press, New York, 1998

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Belknap Press, Cambridge, 1971

Karen Greenberg, *The Torture Debate in America*, Cambridge University Press, 2006

Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, University of Chicago Press, 1962

Karl Marx, *Wage Labor and Capital; Value Price and Profit*, International Publishers

Gillian Tett, *Fool's Gold: The Inside Story of J.P. Morgan and How Wall St. Greed Corrupted Its Bold Dream and Created a Financial Catastrophe*, Free Press, 2009

All other required readings are available through online or through ilearn.

I. Introduction

January 31st

A. Introduction to the Course

Itinerary

Introduction; overview of the syllabus

II. Law, Liberalism, Security, and States of Emergency

February 7th

A. Moral and Political Issues in the Trial of Socrates

Required Reading

Plato, *Four Texts On Socrates*, Cornell Univ. Press, New York, 1998

Itinerary

02/07. The Trial of Socrates

Presentations: _____

February 14th

B. Liberalism and Fairness

Required Reading

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Chapter 1 section 1-4, Chapters 2 & 3)

Itinerary

02/14. Justice as Fairness

Presentations: _____

February 21st

C. Case Study #1: Law, Justice, Detention, and Due Process

Required Reading

J. Mayer, "The Hidden Power: The Legal Mind Behind the White House's War on Terror" *The New Yorker*, July 3rd 2006 http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/07/03/060703fa_fact1 (optional)

Proclamation 7463: Declaration of National Emergency By Reason of Certain Terrorist Attacks

<http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/mobil/pdf/proclamation.pdf>

Military Order of Nov. 13th 2001: Detention, Treatment, and the Trial of Certain Non-Citizens in War <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/eo/mo-111301.htm>

Authorization for the Use of Military Force, September 14th 2001

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publo40.107

Hamdi v. Rumsfeld, 542 U.S. 507 (2004) http://www.oyez.org/cases/2000-2009/2003/2003_03_6606

Itinerary

02/21. Government detention policy and practice after 9/11: Power, security, and the issue of "blank checks"

Presentations: _____

February 28th

C. Case Study #2: Democracy, Terrorism, Torture, and Rights

Required Reading

Jane Mayer, "The Memo: A Hidden History of Torture Policy" (pg. 32-45) in *The New Yorker*, Feb. 27th, 2006, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/02/27/060227fa_fact
Casey and Rivkin, "Rethinking the Geneva Conventions" in *Greenberg* (pg. 203-213)
Alan Dershowitz, "Want to Torture? Get a Warrant", *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 22nd 2002
<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2002/01/22/ED5329.DTL>
David Luban, "Terrorism, Torture, and the Ticking Bomb", in *Greenberg* (pg. 35-83)
Scott Horton, "Through a Mirror, Darkly, Applying the Geneva Conventions to 'A New Kind of Warfare'", in *Greenberg* (pg. 136-150)

Itinerary

02/28. Video: The Ghosts of Abu Ghraib; the Torture Debate

March 7th

Debate #1 Preparation

March 14th and 21st

Debate #1

III. Capitalism, Freedom, Finance

April 4th

A. Capitalism and Freedom

Required Reading

Capitalism and Freedom (ch. 1-2, 7, 13), Milton Friedman, Univ. of Chicago, 1962

Itinerary

04/04. Video: Free to Choose (Volume I): the Power of the Market; Freedom in the Market

April 11th

B. Alienation, False Freedom, and Systemic Violence

Required Reading

Karl Marx, *Wage Labor and Capital; Value Price and Profit*, International Publishers (selections)

Itinerary

04/11. Alienation and Systemic Violence (Friedman v. Marx)

April 18th and 25th

C. Case Study #3. Gambling, Debt, Credit, and the 2008 Financial Crisis

Required Reading

No scheduled reading.

Itinerary

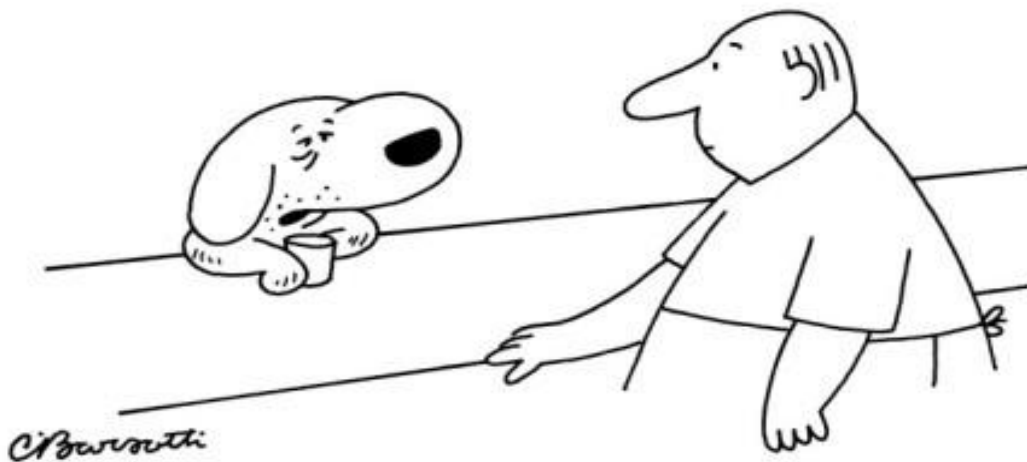
04/18. The 2008 Financial Crisis; Video: *Inside Job*

04/25. Contemporary moral and political issues of the 2008 financial crisis; Video: *American Casino*;

May 2nd
Debate #2 Preparation

May 9th and 16th
Debate #2

Final Exam Scheduled for Wednesday May 23rd at 4:00pm
Submission of Final Essay is due at Final Exam
No late Essays Accepted



"Fetch and roll over weren't enough—then they sent me to philosophy classes."