

Social and Political Philosophy

Philosophy 243

Jack Woods

john.woods@bilkent.edu.tr

Course Description – The goal of this course is twofold. First, to develop the sort of critical and philosophical toolkit necessary to analyze arguments, respond critically, and to carefully and *charitably* read difficult texts. Second, to acquaint ourselves with several canonical philosophical texts dealing with questions of the good life, justice, the nature of happiness in the sense of well-being, and so on. We will thus spend the course slowly trawling our way through these texts, extracting arguments and attempting to understand not only what each philosopher thinks, but why they think it.

Course Prerequisites – None. It is helpful but by no means necessary to have taken another philosophy course. We will spend some time during the course discussing how to write about philosophical issues.

<i>Texts</i>	Plato	<i>Five Dialogues, Republic</i>
	Aristotle	<i>The Nichomachean Ethics</i>
	Cicero	<i>On Duties</i>
	Aquinas	<i>Political Writings</i>

Course Schedule – See STARS for a rough schedule, amenable to change at my discretion

Coursework – The main work for the course will consist of papers. The goal of these papers is development of analytic writing skills. If you can display an clear understanding of the topic to be addressed *and* you address that topic and only that topic in a reasonably straightforward fashion, you can expect to do well. The first writing exercise will give you an idea about what this means. You should view each writing exercise as a practice run at writing clear, straightforward prose.

There will be three essays and a final. The essays will be of increasing length and increasing difficulty. The first essay—really an exercise—will require you to do a bit of argument analysis. No critical work is necessary; simply identification of premises and conclusion of an argument I will select from our texts. The second and third essays will ask you to go further in writing an argumentative essay. These assignments will require you to submit either a full draft or an outline about a week before they are due. I will give feedback that I expect you to take into account when writing your final version. Finally, the final will be a mix of short answer and multiple choice questions drawn from the reading. The idea will be to identify short passages (author and work) and to display understanding of their content. I expect that *anyone* who has done the reading completely will be able to score a perfect or near perfect grade on this. I expect that *anyone* who has not done the reading will have difficulty in passing this exam.

I will take attendance. Missing more than 9 hours of the Philosophy portion of this course without an accepted and valid excuse will result in a failing grade, regardless of your other grades.

Nota Bene – *This description applies only to the Philosophy portion of the course. For the English portion, please consult your English instructor: [Aynur Kadioğlu](#)*