

Philosophies of Liberation

Syllabus – Fall 2016 -- Gray Cox

TF 2:35- 4:00 Seafox Seminar Room

Office Hours: Th 1-4, Davis second Floor and, of course, by chance or appointment – I am around most of the week ;-)
gray@coa.edu -- phone #801-5712 or #460-1163

Course Description:

What is freedom, why might it be of value, how might it be obtained, and what consequences might liberation have for individuals, classes, genders, ethnic groups, races, nationalities or species? In a wide variety of political, social, religious and cultural movements, the notion of freedom as achieved by some kind of liberation is a central theme -- and an essentially contested concept which means quite different things to different people.

This course focuses on the philosophical tasks of sorting out those different meanings and critically analyzing the frameworks of ideas people use to make sense of their notions of freedom and projects of liberation. It will adopt an intellectual history approach that will include placing the texts in their social and historical as well as philosophical contexts. Readings will include works from Gandhi, Paulo Freire, and writers from the open source and creative commons movements as well as selections from feminist, Buddhist, neo-liberal, Marxist, existentialist, and other traditions.

Goals of the course are: 1.) to develop students' philosophical skills in the interpretation of texts with awareness of relevant historical context and the critical analysis of frameworks of ideas, 2.) to develop students' critical understanding of alternative visions of freedom and liberation, and 3.) to develop their abilities to communicate well reasoned philosophical analysis in written and oral forms. Evaluations will be based on the demonstration of progress on these goals in class discussion, homework, short and medium sized papers and problem sets. HS, I/M, \$20 lab fee, no prerequisites,

There will be an extra class session on Tuesday the 18th of October extending from 4 to 8 that will include a public talk and then a workshop with Paul Chappell. You should make arrangements to renegotiate any work study hours or other extra class conflicts you might have with this session for this day. If you have a class during this period, please explore in a polite and tactful and appropriate way with your professor if – and under what conditions – it might be possible for you make up the work in that other class so it would be possible for you to attend this session. This workshop does not pre-empt your other class in such a case but it does make it appropriate to explore the possibility that you might find ways to make up the work for it and to negotiate, respectfully, with your professor about this.

Assignments will include:

1. Short homework exercises and activities
2. A short (650- 750 word) paper in week 3 – sketching the concept of liberation in some movement and a critical comparison of it to one of the notions covered already in the course. (The concept focused on in this paper should be the one you think you will present on in week 8 or 9 – though it is possible to “liberate yourself for a new topic” after finishing this first paper ;-)

3. A Problem Set, one due in week 5 , which will focus on comparing, contrasting and critiquing the concepts of liberation studied in the first half of the course. The answers should focus on being as clear, explicit and succinct as possible and should be in the range of 3-4 pages (750-1000 words).

4. An oral, in class report on a key philosophical text from a movement for liberation and the concept of liberation it presupposes or is trying to work out. The report can be focused on themes related to liberation concerned with social class, animals, gender, nationalism, religion, age, artificial intelligence, or other issues. Presentation must include 10 minute introduction to the movement, a comparison of it to at least one other movement studied in the course, and an articulation of its key concepts regarding what liberation is and how it can best be achieved.

The report must also include a short – e. g. 8-10 page – reading shared with the whole class and provided to us at the class meeting before the presentation. It must also include a one page bullet list précis of key points in the report and an annotated reading list for further study. This précis should be given out at the start of the report presentation as a hard copy handout to the rest of us in the class. The 10 minute report will be followed by a 10 minute discussion period. Reports may be done as collaborative projects with 2 or more people involved. If so, somewhat more time will be allowed for presentation and more material should be included in the précis and reading list.

5. A final paper which should fall into two parts. The first part should provide an in depth presentation of the philosophy of liberation you did your oral report on, providing a systematic account of its key ideas and strengths and weaknesses as a philosophy of liberation (6-8 pages). The second part should provide an evaluative comparison and contrast of it with the other principal theories studied in the second half of this course, aiming to be as clear, explicit and succinct as possible (4 pages).

For students who take this course for a letter grade, the weighting of the grade will be based on: class participation, homework, short exercises and short paper (25%); problem set (25%); oral report (20%); final paper (30%) .

Schedule

9/9 Introductions

9/13 Visitor: Xavier Mao
Case Study: Liberation struggles in India and the Nagas

Readings TBD

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naga_nationalism

9/16 Gandhi's conceptions of nonviolence and Liberation

Required: selections from *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* by M. K. Gandhi, chs. 13-17

Recommended: from Joan Bondurant's *The Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, pp. 1-35

9/20 Four traditions of liberty in the US

Required: Selections from David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways In America*

Recommended: selections from George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant*

9/23 Neoliberalism

Required: Selections from John Stuart Mill *On Liberty* and Milton and Rose Friedman's *Free To Choose*

Recommended: Dinesh D'Souza's *What's So Great About America?*

9/27 Autonomy, Morality, Community and Freedom

Jean Jacques Rousseau, selections from *The Social Contract*

DUE: First Short Paper on "A Philosophy of Liberation"

9/30 Autonomy, Morality, Community and Freedom – and Reason

Selections from Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*

10/4 Marx

Required: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*

10/7 Karl Marx, selections from *1844 Manuscripts* and *Das Capital*

10/11 Freire

Required: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*, Preface and Chapter One;

DUE: First Problem Set

10/14 Required: *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*, Introduction, Foreword, Chapter 2 and the Introduction to Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*

Recommended: Selections from G. W. F. Hegel's *Phenomenology Of Mind* on the "Master/Slave Dialectic"; Jean Paul Sartre's "Existentialism is a Humanism"

10/18 Session from 2:35 – 8:00 pm Visitor: Paul Chappell

Required: Chapter three of Paul Chappell's *The Cosmic Ocean*

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find ways to make up the work for it and to negotiate, respectfully, with your professor about this.

10/21 Required: *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*, Chapter 3 and selections from Howard Richards' *The Evaluation Of Cultural Action*

10/25 Student Presentations

Required: *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed* and bell hooks "when i was a young soldier for the revolution': coming to voice" from *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black*

10/28 Student Presentations

Required: selections from Sayyid Qtub's *Social Justice in Islam*

And <http://tamimbarghouti.net/index.php/the-daily-start-lebanon/165-looking-at-the-concepts-of-state-and-dawla>

And <http://tamimbarghouti.net/index.php/the-daily-start-lebanon/167-the-meaning-of-the-umma-the-west-still-has-it-wrong>

11/1 Student Presentations

Required: Osama bin Laden's "Message to America" and a manifesto from ISIS http://myreader.toile-libre.org/uploads/My_53b039f00cb03.pdf
<http://jihadology.net/category/the-islamic-state/>

11/4 **Faculty Retreat**

11/8 Student Presentations

Required: Samir Chopra and Scott D. Dexter, *Decoding Liberation: The Promise Of Free And Open Source Software*, Chapter 1

11/11 Student Presentations

Required: Donna Haraway, "The Cyborg Manifesto"

11/15 Student Presentations

Required: David Loy, "Buddhist Social Theory?", Chapter One from *The Great Awakening: A Buddhist Social Theory*

11/18 Closing

DUE: Final Paper – A presentation of a philosophy of liberation (6-8 pages) along with an evaluative comparison and contrast of it with the other principal theories studied in the second half of this course (4-5 pages).