**IDST 190-001**

**Understanding Our Social World:**

**An Introduction to Philosophy, Politics and Economics**

**Instructors:**

Dr. Luc Bovens ([lbovens@unc.edu](mailto:lbovens@unc.edu))

Office Hours: Mondays 10:30-12:00pm (or by appointment), Caldwell Hall 108B

Dr. Douglas MacKay ([dmackay@email.unc.edu](mailto:dmackay@email.unc.edu))

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-3:00pm (or by appointment), Abernethy Hall 217

Dr. Brian McManus ([mcmanusb@unc.edu](mailto:mcmanusb@unc.edu))

Office Hours: Mondays 10:30-12:00pm (or by appointment), Gardner Hall 200C

**Teaching Assistants:**

Dominik Berger ([dominik@live.unc.edu](mailto:dominik@live.unc.edu))

Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:00-12:00pm and Fridays 10:00-11:00am (or by appointment), Caldwell Hall 12B

Michael Prinzing ([prinzing@live.unc.edu](mailto:prinzing@live.unc.edu))

Office Hours: Mondays 10-11am and Fridays 9-10am (or by appointment), Caldwell Hall 107A

**Meeting times and locations:**

Lectures: MW 9:05am-9:55am. Phillips 265

Recitations: Fridays. Locations and times vary.

**Prerequisites:** None.

**Course Content**

This interdisciplinary course provides an overview of some core conceptual tools used to analyze issues at the intersection of philosophy, politics, and economics (PPE). It introduces students to the tools of economic analysis, including supply and demand, equilibrium, taxes and tariffs, market failures, externalities, asymmetric information, game theory, monopoly and oligopoly, and GDP and growth. It complements these tools with philosophical reflection on the nature of well-being, fair pricing, the ethics of price discrimination, wealth and income inequality, and equality of opportunity. It addresses contemporary social issues such as minimum wage, sin taxes and nudge, health care, climate change, university admission, and concludes with public choice, voting theory, and gerrymandering.

**Course Goals**

This course will be an excellent opportunity for students to learn how to tackle social problems from multiple angles. Students will learn a lot about contemporary social problems and will acquire skills they require to address them in a comprehensive, interdisciplinary way. The course will achieve this by introducing students to a suite of tools, topics, and analytical resources that are often employed in isolation, but which gain considerable power from being brought together.

The guiding idea of the PPE Program and of this course is that the disciplines of philosophy, political science, and economics share a common subject matter – the formal and informal institutions and practices that shape our lives together – and they each bring into sharp relief crucial aspects of this common subject that would otherwise be missed. Students will read widely on these topics and will explore applications to contemporary social problems.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students will learn how to approach social problems from the complementary perspectives of philosophy, political science and economics.

**Course Audience**

This course is intended for students who are interested in:

1. Understanding the basic tools of economic, political, and philosophical analysis;
2. Exploring the economic, political, and philosophical aspects of contemporary public policy problems;
3. Participating in small-group and class discussions; and
4. Developing critical thinking, reading, and writing skills.

**Texts**

The course will include required readings from a variety of sources. These include economics texts, classic and contemporary scholarly writings in philosophy and political theory, and selected readings from newspapers, magazines, and other popular press.

Required text: Austin Frakt and Mike Piper *Microeconomics Made Simple*. 2014. (Available from UNC bookstore)

All other readings will be made available on Sakai.

**Course Website**

The course website is sakai.unc.edu. We will post course documents on the website. We will also use the Sakai site to make announcements regarding changes in the reading schedule or other aspects of the course.

**Graded Activities**

Students will complete a variety of assignments and exams that reflect the breadth of material covered in the course. In addition, they will receive grades on their participation during Friday recitation sessions. The full list of graded activities and their contributions toward students’ final grades is:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Grade share** | **Date** |
| Participation | 10% |  |
| Problem Set 1 | 5% |  |
| Problem Set 2 | 5% |  |
| Midterm | 15% | March 6, in class |
| Short Paper | 15% | Due February 21, 11:59pm |
| Long Paper | 25% | Due April 18, 11:59pm |
| Final Exam | 25% | May 6, 8-10am |

The instructors will assign grades using the following scale:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Score** |
| A-range | 90-100 |
| B-range | 80-89 |
| C-range | 70-79 |
| D-range | 60-69 |
| F-range | < 60 |

“A” indicates *mastery of course content*

“B” indicates s*trong performance*

“C” indicates an *acceptable performance*

“D” indicates *marginal performance*

“F” indicates *unacceptable performance*

Extra credit: You have the opportunity to accrue extra credit by attending PPE related events on or around campus. After the event you need to write up a 50 to 150 words account of the event. You can gain .5 points for each event attended and can turn in up to four write-ups. There will be an entry on Sakai (Dropbox) to turn in your write-ups.

**Course Policies**

1. Regular attendance and class participation is expected.
2. Our goal is to maintain a classroom setting which provides a good learning environment for all students and the instructors. To minimize distractions, please put away all phones, laptops, and tablets.
3. Late assignments will be penalized one half-grade (i.e. “A” to “A-“) per day, including weekends. Extensions will only be permitted on the grounds of illness (including mental illness) or bereavement. Documentation is required.
4. The instructors reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, including assignment due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

# Honor Code

You are encouraged to form study groups to review the reading material and questions posed for the discussion papers. However, you are expected to undertake the actual writing of the papers and the exams entirely independently. Plagiarism of published work is a violation of the honor code. Any two papers or exams that are submitted containing the same sentences will be considered a breach of the honor code (<http://honor.unc.edu/>).

In written work (including overheads or handouts used in presentations) words drawn from others should be indicated by quotation marks and ideas drawn from others should refer to their source. If you are unsure about what needs to be cited, please talk with and instructor or ask for assistance from the writing center. Plagiarism is a serious offense which can result in failure of the course and suspension from the University. To make sure that you understand what plagiarism is, please see the following:

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>

<http://www.lib.unc.edu/instruct/plagiarism/>

#### **Grade Appeal Policy**

We take the evaluation and grading of your papers and exams very seriously because we know that you take the preparation and writing of your exams very seriously. If you think you deserve a higher grade on a paper or exam, you may write a letter and explain why you would like to appeal the grade. Before making an appeal, you should review your work and the grading criteria we have provided. After we receive your letter, we will re-read your paper or exam within 1-2 class periods. Depending on our re-reading, your grade may stay the same, be raised, or be lowered. This system is designed to minimize frivolous grade appeals and to ensure that you have carefully examined and reflected on the quality of your work before deciding to initiate a grade appeal.

Students are required to first attempt to resolve disagreements regarding grades with the instructor concerned. If that fails, students and/or faculty may seek additional mediation with the assistance of the Philosophy Department’s Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS). However, the instructor (not TAs or the DUS) is ultimately responsible for the determination of student grades. Finally, after course grades are posted for the end of the semester, students may follow the process outlined in the undergraduate bulletin and protest their grades to the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The protest must be made in writing, must be made no later than the last day of classes of the succeeding fall or spring semester, and must be based upon one of the following grounds:

• Arithmetic or clerical error

• Arbitrariness, possibly including discrimination based on race, sex, religion, or national origin of the student

• Personal malice

• Student conduct cognizable under the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance

**UNC Copyright Policy**

UNC’s Copyright Policy clearly prohibits students from making commercial use of notes taken in class or labs; you may not sell or otherwise acquire financial or commercial gain from notes you take in this class. Students found to have violated this prohibition are in violation of the Honor Code and are subject to Honor Court proceedings.

**UNC Policy Addressing Discrimination and Harassment**

Any form of violence or harassment, including sexual assault, relationship violence, and stalking is unwelcome at the University*.* If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate UNC resources at http://sexualassaultanddiscriminationpolicy.unc.edu/.

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

Students in this course seeking accommodations to disabilities must first consult with the Office of Disability Services and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

**Email Protocol**

When writing email to your teachers, please use:

1. Proper salutation (e.g. Dear Professor/Dr./Mr./Ms. Johnson, Dear Susan, … )
2. Proper form of leave-taking (e.g. Sincerely,/ Best,/ Regards, …)
3. Sign your full name
4. Proofread your email for spelling and grammatical errors

For more info: [Link](https://www.scribendi.com/advice/how_to_write_a_professional_email.en.html) and [Link](https://www.scribd.com/document/248817768/How-to-Write-a-Formal-Email-docx)

**Non-Discrimination Policy**

This university does not discriminate against its students or employees based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. The University’s policy states that sexual orientation be treated in this same manner. In this class we will strive to maintain an open atmosphere with shared respect for all differences.

**Writing Center**

The UNC Writing Center, located in SASB North and in Greenlaw Hall #221, offers free tutoring services for students. You may visit the Writing Center to ask for help with a specific paper, whether you are concerned with developing ideas and content, organizing your assignment, or working on style issues. To make an appointment, browse the Writing Center's online resources, or send a draft online, please go to writingcenter.unc.edu .To make best use of your time there, please bring a copy of your assignment sheet and your draft with you. The Writing Center will not proofread papers or talk with you about grades.

**Accessibility Resources**

UNC-Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations for students with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health struggles, chronic medical conditions, temporary disability, or pregnancy complications, all of which can impair student success. See the ARS website for contact and registration information: <https://ars.unc.edu/about-ars/contact-us>”

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: https://caps.unc.edu or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.”

**Course outline**

Readings are provided on Sakai.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Schedule IDST090.001 Spring 2019 | | |
|  | Mo | We |
| 7-11 Jan |  | Intro  BM, DM & LB |
| 14-18 Jan | Intro to Econ  BM | Supply and Demand  BM |
| 21-25 Jan | NO CLASS | Intro to Phil  DM |
| 28 Jan – 1 Feb | Well-Being  DM | Fair Pricing  LB |
| 4-8 Feb | Taxes and Tariffs  BM | Sin Taxes and Nudge  DM |
| 11-15 Feb | Minimum Wage  BM | Minimum Wage  DM |
| 18-22 Feb | Externalities  BM | Utilitarianism  DM |
| 25-29 Feb | Climate Change  DM | Asymmetric Information  BM |
| March 4-8 | Health Care  LB | Midterm |
| March 11-15 | NO CLASS | NO CLASS |
| March 18-22 | Game-Theory 1  LB | Game-Theory 2  LB |
| March 25-29 | Monopoly and Oligopoly  BM | Price Discrimination,  University Admission  BM |
| April 1-5 | Limits of Markets  LB | GDP, Growth & Beyond GDP  BM |
| April 8-12 | Inequality  DM | Equality of Opportunity  LB |
| April 15-19 | Public Choice  LB | Gerrymandering  DM |
| April 22-26 | TBA | TBA |