PHILOS 198: Public Philosophy
M/W 5-6 pm ⬧ 2 Unit P/NP
UC Berkeley Spring 2020

Primary Instructor: Claire Michael[1]
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>   Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description:

Philosophy is a dynamic and evolving subject that, whether we realize it or not, is present in our everyday lives. Yet, for a number of reasons, the field of philosophy has often been labeled "inaccessible" to the general public. Public Philosophy, or philosophy practiced outside of academia, challenges this label. In essence, by studying Public Philosophy, the principal aim of this course is to not only analyze but experiment with *doing* philosophy with the general public in mind.

We will begin by reflecting on what philosophy is, how it could benefit non-philosophers, and which challenges public philosophers face. In the second unit, we will turn our attention to public philosophy prepared for specific audiences: children, high schoolers, prisoners, and activists. We will discuss how philosophy can be presented to serve the special needs of these populations. In the third unit, we will explore different mediums for public philosophy: podcasts, op-eds, videos and films, and story-telling. We will talk about specific philosophical pieces created using these mediums, and talk about the opportunities and challenges each presents. The fourth unit will support students in creating their own public-facing philosophy pieces. Students will learn the basics of using different mediums, have time to work on their projects in class, and get feedback. The class will conclude with a conference in which students will present their projects to members of UC Berkeley's philosophy department.

Most of the materials of this class are themselves pieces of public philosophy, and many of the classes will include presentations by public philosophers connecting into the class remotely. There are no specific prerequisites to take this course, however, this course is only open to philosophy majors at this time.

Key Learning Outcomes:

While taking this course, students will **(i)** reflect on what philosophy is as well as the roles it takes on in public spheres, **(ii)** adapt philosophical methods and teachings to different kinds of audiences, **(iii)** critically analyze contemporary modes of philosophical inquiry, including Podcast, Op-Ed, Video, and Storytelling, and **(iv)** learn digital editing methods such as sound, video, photo editing and more while creating their own public-facing content.

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[1] **Acknowledgements:** This course was co-designed and supervised by Ravit Dotan, UC Berkeley Graduate Student. The faculty advisor for the class was Wesley Holiday.

Assignment Break Down and Grading:

This class is graded on a Pass/No pass scale. Your grade will be determined based on your completion of three kinds of assignments. You will earn points for every assignment you complete.

- **Discussion and Speaker Questions (40%):** Students are required to submit two questions about the assigned content an hour before each class. These questions may be used in fishbowl discussions or, if about a guest speaker's work, incorporated into that day's lecture. *Question submissions are worth 4 points each and graded on a P/NP scale.* **You need a minimum of 40 points to receive a passing grade.** No late submissions will be accepted.

- **Fishbowl Discussions (20%):** Each week, a minimum of five students will participate in a Fishbowl-style discussion on the week's assigned content. Discussions will last 10 - 15 minutes and center around answering student-submitted Discussion Question(s) for the week. Student selection is volunteer-based. Each Fishbowl is worth 5 points and graded on a P/NP scale. *Each student must actively participate in a minimum of* **4 discussions to receive a passing grade.**

    - Active participation in Fishbowl discussions includes but is not limited to: Referencing quotes/examples from assigned sources, both taking and making space regarding speaking time, asking follow-up questions, etc.

- **Final Project (40%):** Now it's your chance to produce Public Philosophy! Projects can range from producing your own Hi-Phi Nation style podcast episode, filming a video on Ethics for children or politicians, writing a short story or collection of poems, capturing images for a photo essay, and more!

    You can work individually or form a group. If you choose to form a group, an individual meeting must be scheduled with the primary instructor before any work begins to discuss grade distribution and ensuring equal participation. Due dates for each element listed below can be found in the "Lecture Schedule". A detailed requirements breakdown and examples of each element will be provided during the Wednesday of Week 7 Final Project Introduction lecture. To receive a passing grade, **you must receive a total of 30 points on your final project**. No late submissions will be accepted.

    - **Outline (5%):** A basic outline for your final project, including (i) names of group members (if necessary), (ii) what question/area of philosophy will you be discussing, (iii) what format will your final project be in (e.g. podcast episode, video, photo essay, short story, collection of poems, etc.), (iv) 100-word description of what someone should get out of your project (what're you talking about/why is it important), (v) a timeline, (vi) name of the target audience (e.g. for kids, activists, etc.), and (vii) a list of materials needed to complete your project will be submitted to the primary instructor for approval. *Worth 5 points upon submission.*

- ○ **Rough Draft (10%):** This could be a fully developed script, a rough cut of recorded/unedited interviews or video, music or photos with corresponding explanations, etc. Additionally, a scheduled individual or group check-in with the primary instructor is required. *Worth 10 points upon submission.*

- ○ **Final Product (20%):** Final Products will be shown in our final class meetings as well as made available to members of MAP and sent to department faculty. *Worth 20 points upon submission.*

- ○ **Peer Reviews (5%):** Peer reviews of fellow group members - or project reflection if worked alone - will be due at the end of the project to ensure full participation by every group member. *Worth 5 points upon submission.*

Attendance and Absence Policy:

Attendance to all lectures is required unless otherwise advised. Excused absences will only be granted in cases of medical or family emergencies. Students are responsible for notifying the primary instructor of an absence. As stated in the "Course Requirements", *having more than four unexcused absences, only one of which on a guest speaker day, will result in an automatic NP for the course.*

Teaching Methods:

Along with daily lectures to introduce concepts in-class, this course will involve a mix of guest speakers by prominent public philosophers, fellow Berkeley students and GSIs, student-led discussions (both large and small group), as well as online content to engage with the concepts outside of the classroom.

Materials:

Just as philosophy ought to be accessible to the public, all readings, links and/or course materials will be available on the bCourses course site.

Course Schedule:

PART 1: PHILOSOPHY AND THE PUBLIC

Week 1:
Monday (Jan. 27th): Overview of the class and syllabus Breakdown
Wednesday (Jan. 29th): Discussion: What is Philosophy?
- Thi Nguyen, Manifesto for Public Philosophy (*Daily Nous*)

Week 2:
Monday (Feb. 3rd): Public Perspective on Public Philosophy
- Kwame Appiah, What Does It Mean to 'Look Like Me'? (NYT Op-Ed)
- Thi Nguyen and Bekka William, Why We Call Things 'Porn' (NYT Op-Ed)
- S. Matthew Liao, Do You Have a Moral Duty to Leave Facebook? (NYT Op-Ed)
Wednesday (Feb. 5th): Public Perspective on Public
- **Guest Speaker**: Jamie Ryerson, Senior Editor at the New York Times

Week 3:
Monday (Feb. 10th): Public Philosophy Discussion
- Amber Makaiau and Chad Miller, The Philosopher's Pedagogy (*Journal of College Education*)
Wednesday (Feb. 12th): Public Philosopher on Public Philosophy
- **Guest Speaker**: Ravit Dotan, UC Berkeley PhD Candidate

PART 2: SPECIAL TOPICS IN PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

Week 4:
Wednesday (Feb. 19th): Children and High School Ethics Bowl
- Jonathan Ellis and Francesca Hovagimian, Are School Debate Competitions Bad for our Political Discourse? (NYT Op-Ed)
- Kyle Robertson, Inside Conversations: Ethics Bowl and Philosophical Dialogue in San Quentin (*Precollege Philosophy and Public Practice*)
- UCSC Center for Public Philosophy, Ethics Bowl at San Quentin State Prison (Video sent from UCSC Center for Public Philosophy)
- **Guest Speakers**: Kyle Robertson and Francesca Hovagimian, UCSC Center for Public Philosophy

Week 4:
Monday (Feb. 10th): Public Philosophy Doubts
- Agnes Callard, Is Philosophy Fight Club? (*The Point*)
- Agnes Callard, Is Public Philosophy Good? (*The Point*)
- Agnes Callard, I Feel I Owe You an Explanation (unpublished manuscript)
Wednesday (Feb. 12th): Public Philosophy Doubts

- **Guest Speaker**: Agnes Callard, University of Chicago

Week 5:
Monday (Feb. 24th): Philosophy and Activism
Wednesday (Feb. 26th): Philosophy and Activism: Philosophy in the Inner City
- **Guest Speaker**: Ray Banks, Urban Scholars Program

Week 6:
This week's meetings were canceled due to COVID-19-related events
Monday (Mar. 2nd): Philosophy in Prison
- Jennifer Lackey, False Confessions and Testimonial Injustice (*Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*)
- Jennifer Lackey, The Prison Education Paradox (*TEDx*)

Wednesday (Mar. 4th): Philosophy in Prison cont. and Final Project Introduction
- **Guest Speaker**: Jennifer Lackey, Northwestern University and Director of the Northwestern Prison Education Program

PART 3: CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY MEDIUMS

Week 7: Podcast
Monday (Mar. 9th): Podcast Production
- Hi-Phi Nation, Risky Business (Season 3, Episode 2)
- Hi-Phi Nation, The Illusionist (Season 3, Episode 9)
- Hi-Phi Nation, The Name of God (Season 1, Episode 4)
- Barry Lam, The Use of Narrative in Public Philosophy (*Precollege Philosophy and Public Practice*)

Wednesday (Mar. 11th): Hi-Phi Nation
- **Guest Speaker**: Barry Lam, Vassar College, Creator and Host of Hi-Phi Nation

Week 8: Op-Ed
Monday (Mar. 16th): Op-Ed Writing
- Regina Rini, The Last Mortals (*TLS*)
- Regina Rini, The Dangerous Veneer of 'Science' (*TLS*)
- Regina Rini, Deepfakes Are Coming. We Can No Longer Believe What We See (NYT Op-Ed)
- **DUE: Final Project Outline**

Wednesday (Mar. 18th): Op-Ed Writing
- **Guest Speaker**: Regina Rini, York University

Week 9: Video/Film
Monday (Mar. 30th): Video and Film Production
- Massimo Pigliucci, The Philosophy of Stoicism (*TED-Ed*)

- Matthew Walker, [Mengzi on Human Nature](#) (*Wi-Phi Philosophy*)
- Geoff Pynn, [Introduction to Critical Thinking](#) (*Wi-Phi Philosophy*)
- Laurie Santos, [Cognitive Biases: Alief](#) (*Wi-Phi Philosophy*)

Wednesday (April 1st): Video and Film Production
- **Guest Speaker**: Geoff Pynn, Elgin Community College, Associate Director at Wi-Phi Philosophy

Week 10: Public Philosophy on COVID-19
The planned topic for this week was philosophy thorough storytelling. Instead, students presented and discussed public texts that engage with philosophical concepts in the context of COVID.

Monday (April 6th): Ethics in the Media – COVID-19
Wednesday (April 8th): Ethics in the Media – COVID-19

Among the pieces students chose to present are the following:
- Stefano Canali, [Further Philosophical Considerations about COVID-19: Why We Need Transparency](#) (*Daily Nous*)
- David Benatar, [Our Cruel Treatment of Animals Led to the Coronavirus](#) (*New York Times*)
- Dominic Wilkinson, [Boris Johnson will be receiving the same special treatment other patients do in NHS intensive care](#) (*The Conversation*)

PART 4: Final Project

Week 11: Tech Workshops
The plan for this week had to be revised due to COVID-19. Instead of the plan below, students gave each other feedback on their projects.

Monday (April 13th): Photo/Video Editing, presentation by UC media center
Wednesday (April 15th): Sound Editing, presentation by UC media center
- **DUE: Final Project Rough Draft**

Week 12: Worktime
Monday (April 20th): Individual meetings with the instructor
Wednesday (April 22nd): Individual meetings with the instructor

Week 13: Present/Reflect
Monday (April 27th): Present your final project
- **DUE: Final Project**
Wednesday (April 29th): Feedback on final projects and reflections on the course
- **DUE: Peer Reviews on Final Projects**

Academic Integrity:

"Any test, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor. In all of your assignments, including your homework or drafts of papers, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. 'Proper attribution' means that you have fully identified the original source and extent of your use of the words or ideas of others that you reproduce in your work for this course, usually in the form of a footnote or parenthesis."

> — Report of the UCB Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism Subcommittee, June 18, 2004

Classroom Climate:

The nature of Public Philosophy *heavily* leans on discussion and collaboration. This being said, due to the contentious nature of topics we will discuss, all classroom discussions must be conducted in a collegial and respectful manner. This is not always easy, and if you wish to challenge the idea, be sure to target the idea itself rather than the person who expressed it. It is never appropriate to demean or denigrate fellow students and instructors.

In addition, all students are expected to comply with the Student Code of Conduct: https://sa.berkeley.edu/code-of-conduct

Accommodations for Students with Visible and Invisible Disabilities:

If you have a letter of accommodation from the Disabled Students Program, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can do whatever we can to help you in the course.

Policy on Sexual Violence and Harassment:

Sexual violence and sexual harassment have no place in a learning environment. Therefore, in alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, it is the policy of the University of California to prohibit sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking. The UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy requires that the University immediately implement interim remedies and permanent support measures, when necessary, for victims/survivors. If you or someone you know experiences sexual violence or harassment, there are options, rights, and resources, including assistance with academics, reporting, and medical care. Visit survivorsupport.berkeley.edu or call the 24/7 Care Line at 510-643-2005.

MAP Sponsored: This course has been approved and sponsored by UC Berkeley's MAP, Minorities and Philosophy, chapter.