PPHE/PHIL/PSCI 293:
Politics, Philosophy & Economics - How to Change the World

University of Rochester
Spring Semester 2024
Gavett 301 x M-W 9:00-10:15

Instructor – James Johnson
Office Hours x Harkness 312
Friday 9:30-11:00 & By Appointment
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xxx

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way.
 Maybe many of us won't be here to greet her, but on a quiet day,
if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing.”
~ Arundhati Roy

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tĂŶƚ ƚŽ ĐŚĂŶŐĞ ƚŚĞ ǁŽƌůĚ͍
TŚĞƌĞ͛Ɛ ŶŽƚŚŝŶŐ ƚŽ ŝƚ͊͟
~ Willy Wonka

Public Health Prologue Many folks – including the University administration – seem to think Covid is
“over.” That, I believe, is naïve and dangerous. Not only is the direct experience of contracting Covid
dangerous, but we know little about the long-term and downstream implications. What we do know
about such things tends to be disturbing. However, College and University policies insist that we engage in
risky behavior. I (Professor Johnson) am part of an age cohort (old folks!!!) for whom Covid is especially
dangerous. So please, if you feel even the faintest bit ill ƐƚĂǇ ĂǁĂǇ from class. Feel free to mask and
maintain as much social distancing as our classroom allows. I encourage you to do all three things. I will be
broadcasting class sessions on zoom for those who stay away from class due to illness or suspected illness.

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Course description: We humans confront a litany of problems both close to home and across the globe:
environmental exploitation and degradation; dire poverty; profound and growing political-economic
inequality; deep, often deadly divisions within nations along, among other dimensions, generations, race,
gender, and class; massive migration of populations, whether voluntary or not, within and across
international borders; violent conflict between nations and states. The list goes on. It is daunting to the
point of being intellectually and practically debilitating. It’s nearly enough to make one dismiss Willie
Wonka out of hand! For citizens, activists, government officials, and economic actors it is difficult to know

3
Class participation: The course is relatively small and will run - as much as is possible – as a discussion.
Given the nature of the undertaking it is imperative that everyone actively participate in class. That means
that I expect you not only to keep up with the reading, but also to read with care and to demonstrate this
in class discussions. I plan to broadcast class sessions on zoom for those who have conflicts or are ill. You
should not assume that your default will be to treat this as a virtual course. If you are able to attend class I
expect you to do so!

In order to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate and that a small subset of the class
does not dominate the discussion, I will call on students more or less at random. The regularity and
quality of your participation and especially your willingness to stick your neck out in seminar discussion
will constitute 20% of your final grade for the course.

PůĞĂƐĞ ŶŽƚĞ͊ TŚĞƌĞ ŝƐ ŶŽ ƉĂƌƚǇ ůŝŶĞ ŝŶ ƚŚĞ ĐŽƵƌƐĞ͕ ŵĞĂŶŝŶŐ I ĚŽ ŶŽƚ ĐĂƌĞ ŝĨ ǇŽƵ ĂŐƌĞĞ Žƌ ĚŝƐĂŐƌĞĞ ǁŝƚŚ ŵĞ͕
ǁŝƚŚ ŽŶĞ ĂŶŽƚŚĞƌ͕ Žƌ ǁŝƚŚ ĂŶǇ ;Žƌ Ăůů͍Ϳ ŽĨ ƚŚĞ ƌĞĂĚŝŶŐƐ͘ I ĐĂƌĞ ĂďŽƵƚ ǇŽƵƌ ǁŝůůŝŶŐŶĞƐƐ ƚŽ ƐƟĐŬ ǇŽƵƌ ŶĞĐŬ ŽƵƚ͕
ƚŽ ƚŚŝŶŬ ĐƌŝƟĐĂůůǇ͕ ĂŶĚ ƚŽ ĂƌƟĐƵůĂƚĞ ĂŶĚ ĚĞĨĞŶĚ ǇŽƵƌ ǀŝĞǁƐ ĐůĞĂƌůǇ ďŽƚŚ ŽƌĂůůǇ ĂŶĚ ŝŶ ǁƌŝƟŶŐ͘

Having said all that, I urge you to read and think about the “Policy on Classroom Interactions” below. Every
student in the class is due civility and respect irrespective of their substantive views. What matters are
evidence, reasoning and the clarity with which they are articulated.

Group Project/Presentation: Once the class enrollment has settled (to allow

6

SĐŚĞĚƵůĞ

JĂŶƵĂƌǇ
17 - Introduction

22 – Spelman; Pettit; Rorty
24 - Myerson

29 - Schelling
31 – Ullman-Margalit (x2)

FĞďƌƵĂƌǇ
5 - Rawls
7 – Okin; Anderson; Mills

12 - Sen
14 - Akire

19 – Sen (x2)
21 – Muthoo; Agarwal

26 – Schelling; Hart/Case
28 – Reynolds ĞƚĂů͖ Hollenbach ĞƚĂů

MĂƌĐŚ
4 – Cohen & Dawson
6 - Anderson; Shelby

11 – XXX SƉƌŝŶŐ BƌĞĂŬ (No Class)
13 – XXX SƉƌŝŶŐ BƌĞĂŬ (No Class)

18 – Ostrom; Allen
20 - Taylor

25 - Bicchieri
27 –
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Policy on classroom interactions: In order to create a classroom environment that supports respectful,
critical inquiry through the open exchange of ideas, we will observe the following guidelines: (i) Treat
every member of the class with respect, even if you disagree with their views; (ii) R

8

Policy on late assignments: Except in the direst circumstances, I very much frown upon late

assignments . I will deduct one third of a letter grade for every day an assignment is late. (This means if

your grade would have been a B+, one day late gets you a deduction to B, two days a deduction to B -,

etc.). If you anticipate a problem getting an assignment in on time (due to, say, religious holidays, t ravel

for athletic teams, etc.) please speak to me ŝŶ ĂĚǀĂŶĐĞ. I will make reasonable accommodation to

address such difficulties.

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