

1. Bulletin Material
PHIL 335
Disobedience, Dissent, and Revolution
3 credit hours

Bulletin description:

This course explores central philosophical issues related to resisting and opposing claimed state authority. Focus will be on classic and modern texts regarding the intentional, ethically-, or politically-motivated violation of law and on the justification of revolution.

Prerequisites:

none

2. Course Overview:

The state is a powerful institution, capable of using coercive and overt force against individuals. Nothing can insure that states will never err in the exercise of these powers, or that subjects will never be justified in their beliefs that those powers are being used in impermissible ways. In ideal circumstances, there will be mechanisms that allow for corrections without opposition to the state. There will be times, however, when subjects will believe that they should not or cannot approve of the exercise of state authority.

We will begin by looking at why and in what circumstances citizens have an obligation to recognize state authority and whether opposition to state authority might ever be justified. We will then turn to distinguishing different forms of opposition to state authority and considering arguments that might be given to justify such opposition. We will consider principled law-breaking (disobedience), both violent and non-violent, dissent (protest), interference in state or civil exercise (direct action), personal separation from state authority (conscientious objection), political separation from state authority (secession), and attempts to replace state authority (revolution). We'll ask both about whether there are contexts in which such acts of opposition might be justified, what reasons might be given to justify such actions, and whether such actions might ever be required of individuals.

3. Itemized Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the differences between disobedience, protest, direct action, secession, and revolution and their commonality as forms of opposition to state authority.
2. Explain and evaluate arguments for the justification of different forms of opposition to state authority and for the duty to oppose state authority.
3. Explain and assess the normative significance of different methods of opposition to state authority.
4. Read and understand primary texts in academic philosophy.
5. Develop and discuss objections to arguments in philosophy texts.
6. Present and defend philosophical arguments in both discussion and academic writing.

4. Carolina Core Outcome

VSR - Students will be able to examine different kinds of social and personal values, analyzing the ways in which these are manifested in communities as well as individual lives.

5. Sample Required Course Materials

Texts for this course will be provided through Blackboard.

6. Sample Course Outline

Wk	Topic	Readings
1	Introduction	Gene Sharp "Methods of Nonviolent Action" Watch <i>Freedom Riders</i>

2	Legal Disobedience	Plato, <i>Crito</i> , 49c onward The Report of the Task Force on Law and Law Enforcement to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (Read: “Part One The Rule of Law” [< 1 page] and read from “Our Contemporary Discontents” to “Conclusion” [6 pages]) ⁴ Carl Cohen, “Arguments Against Civil Disobedience”
3	Political Obligation and Civil Disobedience	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> §51-53, 55, 57, 59 Peter Singer “Disobedience as a Plea for Reconsideration” Greenawalt “Justifying Nonviolent Disobedience” ¹
4	Duty to Disobey Unjust Laws	Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> QQ. 90, 94, 96 Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” Kretzmann, “Lex Iniusta Non Est Lex: Laws on Trial in Aquinas’ Court of Conscience”
5	Self-Respect	Thomas, “Self-Respect, Fairness, and Living Morally” in <i>Blackwell Companions to Philosophy: A Companion to African-American Philosophy</i> Boxill, “The Responsibility of the Oppressed to Resist their own Oppression” Hay, “The obligation to resist oppression” Cudd, “Resistance and Responsibility,” Ch 7 in <i>Analyzing Oppression</i>
6	Political Resistance	Delmas, “Political Resistance: A Matter of Fairness” Thoreau, “Resistance to Civil Government” Lyons, “Political Responsibility and Resistance to Civil Government”
7	Conscientious Objection	Simmons, “The Obligations of Citizens and the Justification of Military Conscription” Walzer, “Conscientious Objection” King, “Beyond Vietnam—A Time to Break the Silence”
8	Legal Defenses	First Amendment defenses <i>U.S. v O’Brien</i> (1968), <i>Cohen v. California</i> (1971) Brownlee, “The Demands-of-Conviction Defense” and “The Necessity Defense” (Ch 5-6 of <i>Conscience and Conviction: The Case for Civil Disobedience</i> , 2012) <i>Gillette v U.S.</i> (1971)
9	Principles of Nonviolence	Gandhi, “Satyagraha v Passive Resistance” and <i>Hind Swaraj</i> (pp. 1-38) Bilgrami, “Gandhi’s Integrity: The Philosophy Behind the Politics” Horsburgh, “The Distinctiveness of Satyagraha”
10	Violence and incivility	Morreal, “The Justifiability of Violent Civil Disobedience;”

¹ Kent Greenawalt, *Conflicts of Law and Morality* (Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 226–43.

11	Direct Action	Harcourt, "The Politics of Incivility." Smith "Disruptive Democracy: The Ethics of Direct Action" Aitchison "Coercion, Resistance and the Radical Side of Non-Violent Action" Mathew Humphrey, "Democratic Legitimacy, Public Justification and Environmental Direct Action",
12	Coercion and Terrorism	Waldron "Terrorism and the Uses of Terror" Held "Terrorism and War" Thoreau "A Plea for Captain John Brown"
13	Riots and Pragmatism	Haines, H. H. (1984). Black radicalization and the funding of civil rights: 1957-1970. Rini "The Language of the Unheard" https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/protest-discourse-morals-of-story-philosophy/ Havercroft "Why is there no just riot theory?"
14	Secession	Wellman "A Defense of Secession and Political Self-Determination" Hendrix "Political Authority and Indigenous Sovereignty" Buchanan "Theories of secession."
15	Revolution	The US Declaration of Independence Morkevicius "Why we need a just rebellion theory." Korsgaard "Taking the Law Into Our Own Hands, Kant on the Right to Revolution"

7. Assignments and Expectations

Papers

Students will write two papers, 3k-4k words, developing a critical discussion of course material.

The first paper is due the Friday of Midterm week, the second paper is due at the assigned final exam period for the course.

These papers should meet the following expectations:

- exhibit clear understanding of the discussed material
- identify a central topic or issue for critical engagement
- develop a question, problem, or objection to that central topic
- anticipate and address reader concerns and objections
- meet high disciplinary standards (clarity, structure, precision, formatting)

Papers will be graded on the following scale, on the basis of the above expectations.

- A – meets all standards to a high degree
- B+ – meets disciplinary standards, but fails to meet one of the expectations to a high degree.
- B – meets disciplinary standards, but fails to meet one or two of the expectations to some degree.
- C+ – does not meet disciplinary standards, but does involve attempts to meet each of the expectations.
- C – does not meet disciplinary standards and does not demonstrate an attempt to meet each expectation.
- D – does not meet disciplinary standards, and fails to demonstrate philosophical engagement with course topic.
- F – involves no evidence of attempt to meet paper expectations.

Weekly Self-Reports

Students will complete a weekly self-report, on Blackboard, reporting their participation in class and their progress in engaging with and understanding the material.

These self-reports will be graded on the following scale:

- 3/Excellent: report demonstrates high-levels of quality engagement in class discussions, and strong understanding of material
- 2/Satisfactory: report demonstrates adequate levels of quality engagement in class discussions, and reasonable understanding of material
- 1/Minimal: report demonstrates some level of engagement in either class or attempted understanding of material, but needs improvement
- 0/No report: report was not completed

The total self-report grade is determined by the average of the weekly-reports on the following scale:

2.5-3:	A
2-2.49:	B+
1.5-1.99:	B
1-1.49:	C+
.5-.99:	C
<.5:	F

8. & 8. Grading Scheme and Weights

Grading Weights:

Course paper(s)	60%, 30% each
Self-report grade	40%

GRADING SCALE

A: 90-100	B: 80-87	C: 70-77	D: 60-67	
	B+: 88-89	C+: 78-79	D+: 68-69	F: below 60

9. Attendance policy

When you miss class, you miss important information. If you are absent, you are responsible for learning material covered in class. Absences threaten your ability to complete weekly self-reports, which are a graded course component.

Technology Requirements

Links to articles, assignments, quizzes, and rubrics are located on the Blackboard site for the course. To participate in learning activities and complete assignments, you will need:

- Access to a working computer that has a current operating system with updates installed, plus speakers or headphones to hear lecture presentations (transcripts provided);
- Reliable Internet access and a USC email account;
- A current Internet browser that is compatible with Blackboard (Google Chrome is the recommended browser for Blackboard);
- Microsoft Word as your word processing program; and
- Reliable data storage for your work, such as a USB drive or Office365 OneDrive cloud storage.
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If your computer does not have Microsoft Word, Office 365 ProPlus package is available to you free of charge and allows you to install Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote, Publisher, and Access on up to 5 PCs or Macs and Office apps on other mobile devices including tablets. Office 365 also includes unlimited cloud storage on OneDrive. To download Office 365 ProPlus, log into your student (University) email through a web browser, choose Settings (top right corner), and select software. If you have further questions or need help with the software, please contact the [Service Desk \(https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/servicedesk.php\)](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/servicedesk.php).

Justification

The philosophy department currently offers courses in political philosophy, social justice, and philosophy of law. However, there are currently no courses that allow students to study historical and contemporary philosophical arguments for and against justifying the rejection of claimed state authority. Given the enduring significance of actions opposing such authority in the form of civil disobedience, protest, and direct action, such a course is sure to be of both academic and practical interest to both philosophy majors and the general student population.

Values, Ethics, and Social Responsibility

- How will students in the course be required to identify the source and function of values? Students will study the role ethical duties and justice have in answering questions about when individuals may act against the dictates of state authority. For example, students will read, discuss, and have the opportunity to write about arguments about whether there are duties to resist unjust laws and what obligations the oppressed have to oppose their own oppression.
- Describe how the course requires students to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of values, ethics, and social responsibility for the self and for contemporary society. Students must read, discuss, and write about arguments about the justification of resistance to state authority. Many of the arguments covered in class involve conflicts between personal ethical and social demands and the claims of the state. For example, students will read, discuss, and have the opportunity to write about arguments about conscientious objection, protests, and civil disobedience.
- Explain the course requirements for evidence that students reflect on how values shape personal and community ethics and decision-making. In this class, students will engage arguments about how individuals may permissibly convey their values to those in authority. For example, students will read, discuss, and have the opportunity to write about whether civil disobedience is justified when it is a form of communication motivated by the need to express the sense of injustice to a majority.
- What specific assignments, projects, or student works will be used to measure successful student outcomes in this course? Students will write two papers in the course. In these papers, students will demonstrate mastery of the arguments covered in the course as well as their ability to substantially engage those arguments and demonstrate their practical applications.