

University of Toronto
Department of Political Science

Topics in Political Theory: Privilege and Opportunity

Political Science 381H1F Lecture 0301

Winter 2023

Tentative Syllabus: 6 January 2023

[The final syllabus, distributed on the first day of class, will be more complete and authoritative.]

COURSE SESSIONS: Wednesdays, 4-6 p.m.

Location: Bissel building (BL), room 325

The class will meet in person. A hybrid option will not be offered.

INSTRUCTOR

Andrew Sabl (rhymes with “bauble”)

Professor of Political Science

Email: andrew.sabl@utoronto.ca

(Emails will be answered within 24 hours. **Feel free to re-send if one is not.**)

Office location: Sidney Smith, Room 3030.

Office hours (a.k.a. *student meeting hours*, whether or not you have a particular problem):

Wednesdays, 6:15-7:15 p.m.; Thursdays, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Please sign up via Calendly: calendly.com/andrew-sabl/office-hour-meeting

In person: Sidney Smith, Room 3030.

Meetings at other times are also possible, including Zoom meetings for good reasons: please email. However, please schedule a meeting for office hours if at all possible.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine

(1) a certain kind of privilege, i.e. monopolization of a good or advantage by a more-or-less-closed group, and

(2) opportunity considered as the absence of privilege or an attack on privilege, via extension of access to that good or advantage to those outside the group.

The course will study, from the perspective of normative political theory drawing on empirical knowledge, historical and current instances of privilege based on a variety of group memberships (e.g. aristocratic birth, class, gender, race, religion), and policy disputes arising from contention over opportunities to access various goods (e.g. the ownership, control, and use of land; employment; housing; education; privacy; freedom of movement; and personal security).

The cases chosen are avowedly illustrative, not comprehensive. The course will not aim to cover all possible instances of privilege and/or opportunity but to suggest a framework for analyzing many, though not necessarily all, such instances.

The course will end by discussing contemporary liberalism as a project devoted to attacking privilege and demanding wider opportunity, rather than being primarily about rights, discourse, or modes of justification.

The course will stress that political theory is a *political* enterprise. Rather than just talking about what ought to happen, we will consider throughout who benefits and who is harmed under the status quo (in both absolute and relative terms); who would incur benefit or harm from proposed changes; and how we might think both ethically and strategically about the politics of attacking privilege and expanding opportunities. Unit IV of the course will consider these questions most explicitly.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **2 short papers** (4-5 pages, 1100-1500 words) **Total Weight: 45%**
Due 13 February and 6 April.

2. **Course exam** (date and time TBA) **Weight: 45%**

The exam will last **three hours** and will be offered in person. It will cover all the material in the course and will be closed-book, closed-notes. It will consist of two essay questions, with choice.

3. **Participation** **Total Weight: 10%**

Includes:

(a) attendance at Wednesday class meetings (attendance will be recorded).

(b) quality of class participation during those meetings, with the caveat that participation opportunities may be limited if enrollment is high.

The papers should be turned in via Quercus: no hard copies will be accepted. The Paper assignments will be under "Assignments".

QUERCUS AND EMAIL

Course assignments and guidelines will be posted on Quercus. You **MUST** have a valid UTOR email and are expected to consult Quercus regularly as well as enabling prompt (same-day) Quercus announcements to allow communication of urgent matters.

I will respond to emails within 24 hours whenever possible. In the rare case that a substantive question is not answered within that time, you should feel free to send it again, and will never be marked down for (politely!) repeating your inquiry. *Please consult the syllabus or Quercus before asking questions that are answered there.*

WRITING ESSAYS

This course assumes that you are prepared to work on improving your prose style and argumentative skill. Moreover, it regards clear, well-structured, and forceful writing as the hallmark of strong analytic and synthetic thought. Passive, indirect constructions let a writer get away with not stating and defending a definite position, and in many cases not having one.

The Writing at U of T website (<http://writing.utoronto.ca/>) contains a variety of online resources, links to writing centers, and other forms of support. Writing assistance is also available through every College. *You are strongly encouraged to take extensive advantage of all these resources.* Not only the worst but also the best writers are constantly trying to improve.

Other resources for improving your writing will be posted on Quercus.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will be dealt with accordingly. Students must read "Tips for Avoiding Academic Misconduct" <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students/avoid-misconduct/tips-for-avoiding-academic-misconduct> and the University's "How not to Plagiarize" document, <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/> and are encouraged to discuss with the instructors if they are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism or

academic dishonesty. Plagiarism applies not only to essays, but also to more informal forms of writing.

SUBMITTING PAPERS AND OTHER ASSIGNMENTS

Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments to the University's plagiarism detection tool website for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their material to be included as source documents in the University's plagiarism detection tool reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the University's plagiarism detection tool service are described on the company web site.

[The above statement is required by the University and may not be modified by the instructor.

However, because it is baffling to mention the "company web site" without specifying the company, I am happy to add that U of T will, as far as I know, be using a tool called Ouriginal—AS.]

You should ensure that you have an electronic copy and a backup copy (hard copy, or an electronic copy stored somewhere other than the device on which the original is) of all work submitted, and you are strongly advised to retain the rough work, notes, and draft material that went into the essay or assignment.

Students have the right to refuse to use the university's plagiarism tool. In this case, students will be expected to submit an electronic copy of their essay to me by email, accompanied by their outline, thesis statement and annotated bibliography, as well all their notes and rough drafts, **by the time each paper would normally be due on TurnItIn.**

LATE WORK POLICY

Late papers and other assignments will be penalized three points on the 100-point U of T grading scale per day late or part thereof. Exceptions may be granted to students who have faced serious medical or other emergencies, and who have substantial and convincing documentation fully accounting for the length of delay. If you are facing such a situation, inform me as soon as possible—and, whenever possible, *before* the assignment is due. **It is my intention to be understanding and lenient when you face difficult circumstances, but please contact me as far in advance as possible and provide as much detail as is consistent with university rules, medical privacy, etc.**

CLASS ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:

You are expected to complete the readings listed for each lecture/discussion session *before* that session takes place. You are also expected to download and print out the handout that will be provided as a reference point for each lecture: it will contain an outline of the lecture as well as relevant quotations.

The lectures will not summarize the reading. On the contrary, they will assume that you have covered the reading material and will therefore analyze or explain the reading, or place it in a larger context. The papers as well as the fall and end-of-year exams will be based on material covered in both the readings and the class lectures and discussion.

COVID-19 AND SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

As of this writing, covid-19 is not as disruptive as it was in previous academic years, and it is expected that learning will take place in person. However, this may change without notice, and course delivery may end up becoming virtual. Even if that is not the case, any student may have to miss specific classes if those individuals come down with covid-19 infections.

I am determined to be sensitive to all such circumstances and to accommodate them whenever possible (e.g. by adapting assignments). Please contact me, however, with any special circumstances that have not been covered here. I will try to do what I can to accommodate those

circumstances—with the proviso that we will have to settle on some way that I can monitor whether you have learned the course material.

TEXTS

The following books (though by no means the whole of each book) will be assigned in this course. ; the numbers at the end are ISBN-13 numbers for easier used book shopping).

Fishkin, Joseph. *Bottlenecks: A New Theory of Equal Opportunity*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 978-019-981214-1 . Available online through UofT library.
 McGhee, Heather. *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*. New York: One World, 2021. 978-052-5550956-1. Limited online availability through UofT library (one user at a time) but many used copies available.
 [Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* may also be assigned: see note on Week 12]

Reading will typically consist of less than 80 pages a week—often much less if the material is dense and/or difficult. Only portions of larger books will be assigned.

All other required course readings will be available online, either as copyright-compliant postings on the course Quercus site or as links to the University of Toronto Libraries electronic collection (see below).

You are responsible for completing all readings by the dates indicated on the syllabus, that is, *before* the lecture in which they will be discussed.

All the readings marked on the syllabus are required, unless otherwise stated. Readings may be modified at the Instructor's discretion – you must consult Quercus regularly for new, revised or updated assignments.

CLASS SCHEDULE

I. Introduction (Week 1): 11 January

Course introduction, mechanics, and format; the course's main themes.

[The class will refer to Peggy McIntosh's famous piece, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (*Peace and Freedom*, July/August 1989, available at https://psychology.umbc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2016/10/White-Privilege_McIntosh-1989.pdf), but it is not assigned reading as such.]

(Discussion will probably be a little light, and the session will probably not last two hours.)

II. Conceptual Building Blocks: Privilege and Opportunity

Week 2 (18 January): Privilege, Advantage, and Entitlement.

Rachel McKinnon and Adam Sennett,
 "Survey Article: On the Nature of the Political Concept of Privilege." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 25, No. 4 (2017): 487-507 (in Quercus under "Files")

Week 3 (25 January): Opportunity and the problem of "Equal" Opportunity

Fishkin, *Bottlenecks*, 1-24, 48-82.

Week 4 (1 February): Privilege, Opportunity, and Liberalism (and unit on paper-writing)

J.A. Hobson, "The Vision of Liberalism" and "Equality of Opportunity", in *The Crisis of Liberalism: New Issues of Democracy* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1909), 91-95, 96-114 (public domain: available through Quercus in "Files").

The second half of the class lecture will focus on essay-writing and will demonstrate close reading techniques with "The Vision of Liberalism" as the text.

***The first paper will cover material from Weeks 1-4 but will be due at the start of Week 6 (see below).*

III. Cases: Privilege with respect to What, Opportunity to Have What?

Week 5 (8 February): Housing and Exclusionary Zoning

Readings [in Quercus under "Files"]:

Richard V. Reeves, *Dream Hoarders* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2017), selections from Chapter 6.

Housing Matters, "Rethinking the Yellowbelt: A Proposal to Increase Toronto's Housing Availability and Affordability" (2019). <https://housingmatters.co/hm-yellowbelt-sep-30-2019.pdf>

Monday, 13 February, 10 p.m.: First paper due via Quercus (based on material from weeks 1-4).

Week 6 (15 February): Education

Reeves, *Dream Hoarders*, further selections.

Fishkin, *Bottlenecks*, selections.

22 February: READING WEEK—NO CLASS. (Regular office hours will not be held; individual meetings may be scheduled via Zoom).

Week 7 (1 March): Personal Security and Race-Based Police Harassment

Readings TBA: may include work by Naomi Zack, Randall Kennedy, and Jeremy Waldron.

Week 8 (8 March): Street Harassment of Women, "Civil Inattention", and Hierarchy

Reading: Bianca Fileborn and Tully O'Neill, "From 'Ghettoization' to a Field of Its Own: A Comprehensive Review of Street Harassment Research". *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* 24, No. 1 (2023): 125-138. (In Quercus/Files)

Other readings TBA.

IV. The Politics of Privilege and Opportunity

A. Week 9 (15 March): Expanding the Frontier: Economic Growth

Benjamin Friedman, *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth* (New York: Knopf, 2005), selections.

B. Week 10 (22 March): The “Solidarity Dividend”? Stressing Potential Gains

McGhee, *The Sum of Us*, extensive selections.

C. Week 11 (29 March): Attacking Privilege: Coercion, Persuasion, and the Limits of Liberalism (?)

Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Scribner, 1932), selections.

[The selections may be so extensive that the book will be assigned as a text. If so, fair warning will be given.]

Karuna Mantena, “Showdown for Nonviolence: The Theory and Practice of Nonviolent Politics.” In *To Shape a New World: Essays on the Political Philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr.*: 78-101. Edited by Tommy Shelby and Brandon M. Terry. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Belknap Press), 2018.

Recommended: David L. Chappell, “Martin Luther King: Strategist of Force.” In *African American Political Thought*: 516-540. Edited by Melvin L. Rogers and Jack Turner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

V. Week 12 (5 April): Opportunity and Liberal Theory (5 April)

Readings to be announced (light) and concluding lecture.

Thursday, 6 April, 10 p.m.: Second paper due via Quercus. Extensions will be generously granted.

COURSE EXAM: DAY AND TIME TO BE ANNOUNCED. THREE HOURS, IN-PERSON, CLOSED-BOOK, CLOSED-NOTES.