**Pomona College**

**POLI 189N PO, Theorizing Unfreedoms**

Time: Monday, 7-9:50pm

Location: Carnegie 11

INFO

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Office Hours: Mondays, 3-6.

DESCRIPTION

This class turns to the history of political thought to understand the theoretical context that often foregrounds salient topics in our own contemporary political life. With any luck, we will discover helpful and creative ways to think about these topics as well. The class will take up four issues, gathering facts about the issue, surveying the contemporary debate surrounding the issue in conjunction with the theoretical and historical context. and others for illumination and, possibly, guidance. Topics will include:

* Civil disobedience, drawing on Edward Snowden, Gandhi, Thoreau, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ta-Nehisi Coates, among others.
* Economic inequality in the United States, drawing on John Locke, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Elizabeth Anderson, and Amartya Sen.
* Punishment and incarceration, drawing on Michelle Alexander, Erwin Chemerinsky, Cesare Beccaria, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke.

The final topic considered will be determined by the class, by vote, at the end of week two.

EXPECTATIONS and GRADING

**Read.** Read everything!

**Participation.** 30 points. To receive full credit for participation:

* Have no more than one unexcused absence.
* Complete a one to two page **response paper** for each class. Papers need to be posted online by Monday at noon. Have no more than one missing response paper. No late response papers will be accepted.
* Speak at least once each class!

**Civil Disobedience essay, Inequality Essay, Punishment Essay.** 20 points each.

**TBD final.** 10 points.

COURSE POLICIES

**Late Assignments:** Late papers will be docked one full letter grade per day late.

**Integrity:** I take academic integrity veryseriously. Do not plagiarize.

Here are some examples of things that are plagiarism:

* cutting and pasting sentences or parts of sentences from the internet and presenting this work as your own.
* failing to cite sources that you used.
* failing to use quotation marks around a portion of text, thus giving the reader the impression that the text is your own work.
* using a paragraph of someone else's text, but changing some of the words so that it isn't *exactly* like someone else's work.

Here are some examples of things that are likely *not* plagiarism:

* reading, thinking, and writing a summary of something you read, and then citing that source.
* including common knowledge without citing a source.
* using key terms from a text without quotation marks.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Michelle Alexander. [*The New Jim Crow*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/1595586431/ref=sr_1_1_twi_1_pap_olp?ie=UTF8&qid=1433378256&sr=8-1&keywords=the+new+jim+crow). New York: The New Press, 2012.

Many of the texts for this class will be articles or selections from books. The PDF’s will be posted on Sakai under the “Resource” tab.

SCHEDULE

**Civil Disobedience**

What causes a government’s power to be legitimate? When and why can the state legitimately coerce me into doing something I don’t want to do? Am I ever justified in resisting the state, or indeed, am I ever *obligated* to do so? Ought we to only obey the law when it accords with our consciences? At what point does the obligation to obey the law cease? Do we ever have an obligation to *dis*obey the law?

**Monday, September 5:** Introduction

Go over syllabus, watch the documentary *Citizen Four*

Glenn Greenwald, “Edward Snowden: the whistleblower behind the NSA surveillance leaks,” *The Guardian*, 11 June 2013. [Here](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/09/edward-snowden-nsa-whistleblower-surveillance).

Excerpts from *The Snowden Reader*:

William E. Scheuerman, “Taking Snowden Seriously: Civil Disobedience for an Age of Total Surveillance”

Edward Snowden’s “Statement at the Moscow Airport”

Attorney General Holder, “Letter to the Russian Minister of Justice”

**Monday, September 12:**

Henry Thoreau, “Civil Disobedience”

J. Abe Fortas, selection from *Concerning Dissent and Civil Disobedience*

Daniel J. Wakin, “Arrest Me, Please! (But No Jail Time),” *New York Times*, 3 June 2001. [Here.](http://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/03/nyregion/arrest-me-please-but-jail-no-thanks-rediscovering-the-price-of-protest.html)

DUE:

*Civil Disobedience!* Homework assignment described in Appendix A.

**Monday, September 19:**

Mahatma Gandhi

“Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience, Passive Resistance, Non-co-operation”

“Satyagraha—Not Passive Resistance”

“Is it Unconstitutional?”

“Letter to Lord Irwin”

“Duty, Democracy, and Swaraj”

“Democracy and Non-Violence”

Krishnalal Shridharani, “Direct Action in Democracy” in *War without Violence* (1939)

Richard Gregg, “Moral Jiu-Jitsu” and “Utilizing Emotional Energy” in *The Power of Nonviolence*

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

**Monday, September 26:**

Hannah Arendt, selections from *Crises of the Republic*

John Rawls, “The Justification of Civil Disobedience”

Ta-nihisi Coates, “Nonviolence as Compliance”

**Friday, September 30**

**DUE:** Civil Disobedience Paper

**Inequality**

What makes private property legitimate? If all people are equal, what justifies inequality, and to what extent can it be justified? Can economic inequality exist in a democratic society without that democracy becoming eroded? If so, how much?

**Monday, October 3:**

Dierdre N. McCloskey, [“The Formula For a Richer World? Liberty, Equality, Justice,”](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/04/upshot/the-formula-for-a-richer-world-equality-liberty-justice.html?_r=0) *New York Times*, 2 September 2016.

David Lay Williams, [“Tackling Poverty isn’t Enough. Inequality is a serious problem, too,”](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/13/tackling-poverty-isnt-enough-inequality-is-a-serious-problem-too/) *Washington Post*, 13 September 2016.

Harry G. Frankfurt, selection from *On Inequality*

John Locke, Chp. V, “Of Property,” *Second Treatise on Government*

Bernard Mandeville, “The Grumbling Hive: OR, Knaves Turn’d Honest,” from *The Fable of the Bees*

Podcasts (optional):

Peter Singer, “The Life You Can Save” *Philosophy Bites*

Hillel Steiner, “Exploitation” *Philosophy Bites*

Alex Voorhoeve*,* “Inequality” *Philosophy Bites*

G.A. Cohen, “Inequality in Wealth” *Philosophy Bites*

**Monday, October 10:**

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

"Alienated Labour"

"Wage Labour and Capital"

"The Sale of Labour Power”

Thomas Picketty, selection from *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*

**Monday, October 17:** No class. Fall Recess.

**Monday, October 24:**

Elizabeth Anderson, “What is the Point of Equality?”

Amartya Sen, selection from *Development as Freedom*

Robert Nozick, selection from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

**Friday, October 28:**

**DUE:** Inequality Paper

**Punishment**

To what extent is punishment consonant with the basic principles of liberalism (liberty, equality, individualism, tolerance, limited government)? How ought we to punish in a liberal, democratic society? If these questions seem hopelessly abstract or unimportant to you, I would bet that there is a good chance that the State has not tried to arrest, incarcerate, or kill you lately. That's great news!

**Monday, October 31**: The state of American incarceration today

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, pp. 1-139.

No response paper due.

**Monday, November 7**

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow,* pp. 140-end.

In-class screening: Ava DuVernay’s “The *Thirteenth*”

**Monday, November 14**:

Cesare Beccaria, selections from *On Crimes and Punishments*

“Origin of Punishments”

“The Right to Punish”

“Consequences”

“Proportion Between Crimes and Punishment”

“Errors in the Measurement of Punishment”

“Purpose of Punishments”

“Promptness of Punishment”

“Mildness of Punishments”

“The Death Penalty  
 “Proceedings of Limitations on Criminal Prosecution”

“How to Prevent Crimes”

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chp. II, “Of the State of Nature,” sections 4-8; 13.

Erwin Chemerinsky, “Cruel and Unusual: The Story of Leandro Andrade.” *Drake Law Review* 42 (2003): 1-24.

Abu Ali Abdur’Rahman, “Statement on Solitary Confinement”

**Monday, November 21:**

ACLU [map](https://www.aclu.org/map/state-criminal-re-enfranchisement-laws-map) of felon disenfranchisement

Jeff Manza and Christopher Uggen, selection from *Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy*

**Wednesday, November 23:**

DUE: Thesis for incarceration paper.

**Monday, November 28:** TBD

**Tuesday, November 29:**

**DUE:** Incarceration Paper

**Monday, December 5:** TBD

**Monday, December 12, 7pm:** Final Exam. Please bring a blue book and writing utensils.

Appendix A: Civil Disobedience Examples

DUE: September 12

Assignment: Prepare a TWO-minute presentation and accompanying visual aid (e.g. a picture) on the topic of a lesser-known example of civil disobedience. This can be a contemporary example or a lost example from history. It can be a cause that you deem noble, a cause you deem despicable, or something in between. In your short presentation, be able to briefly summarize:

* the historical context
* the motivations of the protesters
* the tactics used
* the consequences of their actions, and
* *why* their actions qualify as civil disobedience.

Some little-known historical examples that you may want to check out:

* The actions of Presbyterian-Congregationalist missionaries who refused to cooperate with Georgia laws aimed at removing the Cherokees in 1829. Lewis Perry has called this the “earliest plausible instance of civil disobedience” in America.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)’s strikes of 1936-1937.
* The Industrial Workers of the World “jail, no bail” tactics during the 1920’s.
* Gallaudet University’s “Deaf President Now” actions in 1988.
* Daniel Ellsberg’s release of the “Pentagon Papers” in 1971.
* Tree-sitting.
* The *Black Lives Matter* movement.

Pick an action that interests you! Here are some news articles that might get the juices flowing:

Alcindor, Yamiche, “Bernie Sanders Facing Pressure Over Supporters’ Actions in Nevada,” *The New York Times,* 17 May 2016. [Here](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/18/us/politics/bernie-sanders-supporters-nevada.html).

Blinder, Alan and Richard Fausset, “Kentucky Clerk Who Said ‘No’ to Gay Couples Won’t Be Alone in Court,” *The New York Times,* 2 September 2015. [Here](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/03/us/kentucky-rowan-county-clerk-kim-davis-denies-marriage-license.html?action=click&contentCollection=U.S.&module=RelatedCoverage&region=EndOfArticle&pgtype=article).

DeBonis, Mike and Marc Fisher, “Florida mailman lands a gyrocopter on Capitol lawn, hoping to send a message,” *The Washington Post,* 15 April 2015. [Here](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/florida-mailman-lands-a-gyrocopter-on-capitol-lawn-hoping-to-a-send-message/2015/04/15/3be11140-e39a-11e4-b510-962fcfabc310_story.html).

Edelman, Marian Wright, “The Time is Always Right to Do Right,” *Huffington Post,* 1 April 2016. [Here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marian-wright-edelman/the-time-is-always-right_b_9592976.html).

Flippin, Rev. Vicki and Rev. Nathan Bledsoe, “At Time to Follow Rules, and a Time to Refrain from Following Rules: Reflections on Occupy Wall Street and the United Methodist Church,” *Huffington Post*, 5 May 2016. [Here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-vicki-flippin/a-time-to-follow-rules-an_b_9843816.html).

Garber, Megan, “The Revolutionary Aims of Black Lives Matter,” *The Atlantic,* 30 September 2015.

Greenwald, David M. “Black Lives Matter and Civil Disobedience,” *Davis Vanguard*, 22 January 2016. [Here](http://www.davisvanguard.org/2016/01/commentary-black-lives-matter-and-civil-disobedience/).

Halstead, John, “Why I Chose to Get Arrested on Sunday,” *Huffington Post,* 19 May 2016.

Mevorach, Ian, “16 Clergy Arrested for Blocking Pipeline Construction: Here’s Why,” *Huffington Post,* 2 June 2016. [Here](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ian-mevorach/16-clergy-arrested-for-bl_b_10182052.html).

Mann, Thomas E., “Democrats’ sit-in is a justified use of civil disobedience,” *The Washington Post*, 23 June 2016. [Here](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/democrats-sit-in-is-a-justified-act-of-civil-disobedience/2016/06/23/671f7ea2-393c-11e6-8f7c-d4c723a2becb_story.html).

Mettler, Katie, “ ‘Good Trouble’: How John Lewis fuses new and old tactics to teach about civil disobedience,” *The Washington Post*, 23 June 2016. [Here](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/06/23/good-trouble-how-john-lewis-fuses-new-and-old-tactics-to-teach-about-civil-disobedience/?wpisrc=nl_most-draw7&wpmm=1).

McFadden, Syreeta, “Teaching Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Age of Freddie Gray,” 9 September 2015, *New York Times Magazine*. [Here](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/13/magazine/teaching-martin-luther-king-in-the-age-of-freddie-gray.html).

Appendix B: Civil Disobedience Prompt

Respond to the following prompts in 4-5 pages.

Define “civil disobedience.” Engaging with three to six of the texts that we’ve read in this class, make sure to respond to the following questions in your essay:

* Is it a right?
* Is it a duty?
* Must civil disobedience appeal to a divine, sacred, or higher moral end?
* Is it only for serious wrongs?
* To what extent must it be conscientious?
* Does it require a process of “self-purification”?
* Must it be non-violent?
* Must it be public?
* Is it for individuals and groups alike?
* Does it require respect for the law?
* Does it require the civil disobedient to be punished, or to be willing to accept punishment?
* What determines whether civil disobedience is successful or not?

Choose one contemporary example of civil disobedience—e.g. Edward Snowden, Black Lives Matter, some Bernie Sanders supporters, Occupy Wall Street. To what extent do the actions of this person/group adhere to or depart from your definition of civil disobedience?

1. Lewis Perry, *Civil Disobedience: An American Tradition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013, p. ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)