PHIL 4820 - Seminar in Philosophy

Fall 2026 Syllabus, Section 01, CRN 42828,

Credit hours: 3

Instructor

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Public Instructor Information

Professional Qualifications:
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Course Description

4820. Seminar in Philosophy. Study in depth of a particular philosopher, topic, or area in philosophy, as determined by the instructor; may be repeated with different course content. Prereq.: One 3700-level PHIL course. 3 s.h.
In this seminar we will examine the history of free speech along with the arguments for and against the what is often termed the “absolutist” position. Although most people acknowledge the value of free speech, there is disagreement as to whether there are morally (and possibly legally) justifiable limits that may be place on certain types of speech, e.g., hate speech.

Course Readings

Group	Title	Author	ISBN
Required	Free Speech: A History from Socrates to Social Media	Jacob Mchangama	9781541620346
Required	Kindly Inquisitors	Jonathan Rauch	9780226145938
Required	On Liberty	John Stuart Mill	9780915144433
Required	"On Toleration"	John Locke	
Required	Only Words, Ch. 3	Catherine Mackinnon	
Required	The Harm in Hate Speech, Chs. 3-4	Jeremy Waldron	
Required	Words that Wound, Chs. 3-4	Delgado, et. al.	

The course readings are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, research developments, current events, and/or to ensure better learning.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Week of	Reading(s)	Proposed Topic	Due/To Prepare for Class
8/24	Introduction to the Class/Mchangama: Ch. 1 Ancient Beginnings	Free Speech Overview/Early History	Ch 1. Commentary
8/31	Mchangama: Ch. 2 The Not So Dark Ages/ Ch. 3 The Great Disruption	More History	Ch. 2 and Ch. 3 Commentaries
9/7	Locke: “On Toleration”	Locke's Argument for Religious Toleration	Locke Commentary
9/14	Mchangama: Ch. 7 Revolution and Reaction	Free Speech During America Revolution	Ch. 7 Commentary
9/21	J. S. Mill: On Liberty	Mill's Argument for Free Speech	Mill Commentary

9/28	Finish "On Liberty(?)/Mchangama: Ch. 9 White Man's Burden	Race and Free Speech	Ch. 9 Commentary
10/5	Mchangama: Ch. 10 The Totalitarian Temptation	Totalitarian threat to free speech	Ch. 10 Commentary
10/12	Mchangama: Ch. 11 The Age of Human Rights	Humand Rights and Free Speech	Ch. 11 Commentary
10/19	Mchangama: Ch. 12 Free Speech Recession	Limitations on speech	Ch. 12 Commentary
10/26	Mchangama: Ch. 13 The Internet and the Future of Free Speech	Free Speech and the Internet	Ch. 13 Commentary
11/2	Mackinnon: Ch. 3 Equality and Speech	Prohibiting Hate Speech	Ch. 3 Commentary
11/9	Waldron: Ch. 3 Why Call Hate Speech Group Libel/Ch. 4 The Appearance of Hate	Hate Speech	Ch. 3 and Ch. 4 Commentaries
11/16	Delgado: Ch. 4 Words That Wound/ Lawrence: Ch. 3 If He Hollers Let Him Go	Critical Race Theory/Race and Speech	Ch. 4 and Ch. 3 Commentaries
11/23	Rauch: Ch. 1 New Threats to Free Thought/ Ch. 2 The Rise of Liberal Science	Rauch's Response to Hate Speech	Ch. 1 and Ch. 2 Commentaries
11/30	Rauch: Ch. 3 The Politics of Liberal Science	Rauch (Continued)	Ch. 3 Commentary
12/7	Finals Week		Papers/Videos/Reading Notebooks

The course schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better learning.