Philosophy 436.01: Social and Political Philosophy
COURSE DESCRIPTION
Spring 2016

Instructor: Prof. Ruth Sample
Meeting: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:10-12:30, Conant 8.
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Course Description:
Philosophers have been thinking about people and society for over 2000 years. In this course we will read some of the classic works in social and political philosophy in the Western tradition, including works by

- Plato
- Hobbes
- Locke
- Rousseau
- Marx
- Mill
- Arendt

How should we live together?
Human beings have always lived in groups, but the structure, organization, and character of those groupings has not always been the same. Social philosophy examines and critiques the value of various forms of human social life. Political philosophy in particular looks at the relationship between individual human beings and the state (government). Here are some of the questions we will ask in our course:

1. What is human nature, and how does it constrain the societies we live in?
2. How does society shape human nature?
3. What is would the ideal society look like?
4. What problems are inherent in our social existence, and can we solve them?
5. What do we owe each other as members of a society? As citizens?
6. How may the government regulate the behavior of individuals?
7. What should the government do to counteract bigotry and discrimination?
8. Is there an obligation to obey the law, and if so, what grounds it?
9. When is rebellion against a government justified?
10. Is peace possible?

Course Requirements:
Two short essays, regular quizzes, and two in-class examinations. Attendance and participation in discussion are required for this course, including some Blackboard discussions.

Course Texts:
We will use an anthology of classic writings in Social and Political Philosophy. A style guide for writing is recommended.