

Political Judgment

POS 6933

Spring 2013

Wednesday 5-7 (11:45 AM-2:30 PM)
CBD 224
Office Hours: Wed. 2:30-4:30 PM
Anderson Hall 302

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Ever since Plato and Aristotle celebrated the virtue of practical wisdom, the faculty of judgment has been an important concern for political philosophers and theorists. This seminar offers graduate students an intensive investigation of the nature of moral and political judgment, a historically significant and increasingly topical issue.

Judgment might be thought of as the capacity to make good decisions and choices in the absence of principles or procedures that dictate or generate correct answers. Today, good judgment is in greater demand than ever before. In diverse, multicultural, and postmodern societies, where the moorings for public decision-making can no longer be secured by religious doctrine or metaphysical principles, the faculty of judgment is thrust into ethical and political life with an unprecedented mandate. Is our capacity for judgment up to the challenge of helping us navigate a socially interdependent, technologically complex, culturally diverse, and quickly changing world? The question provokes philosophers, politicians, and civic leaders.

This seminar will provide a historical, conceptual, and critical interdisciplinary review of moral and political judgment. It will address and attempt to integrate the work of philosophers, political scientists, economists, and cognitive psychologists. Students will investigate the role of judgment in moral and political life while self-consciously examining the contributions of the faculty of judgment to social scientific and philosophical scholarship.

Required Texts:

- Hannah Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," *Social Research*, 38:3 (1971:Autumn) pp. 417-446. Available as pdf online.
- Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (Pennsylvania 1983)
- Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain* (Penguin 2005)
- John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (Digireads 2012)
- Joseph Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground: Practical Judgment and the Lure of Technique* (Notre Dame Press; 2nd edition, 1997)
- Bent Flyvbjerg, Todd Landman, Sanford Schram, eds, *Real Social Science: Applied Phronesis* (Cambridge, 2012)
- Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Straus and Giroux, 2011)
- Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (Penguin, 2009)
- Philip Tetlock, *Expert Political Judgment* (Princeton 2006)
- Leslie Paul Thiele, *The Heart of Judgment* (Cambridge 2006; provided free in electronic form by the PRPSGS)

Seminar Requirements:

1. Seminar participants will write a term paper of 15-20 double-spaced pages. It is due by noon on Monday, April 22. Late papers without exception will be penalized 1/2 letter grade for each day late. Paper topics are to be closely aligned to the seminar readings and themes, and must be selected in consultation with Professor Thiele. Please set up an office meeting early in the semester to begin the process of developing a paper topic. The paper is worth 60% of the final grade.

2. Students will make presentations based on the weekly readings. The presentation is to be emailed to all seminar participants, including Professor Thiele, by noon of the Monday preceding the seminar. Late electronic submissions will be penalized 1/2 letter grade. Written presentations should consist of three components:

- A single-spaced, one-page synopsis of the weekly reading.
- A single-spaced page consisting of 3 full paragraphs, with each paragraph posing a question that interrogates the reading(s), addresses on the textual context of the question, and underlines its significance. Think of these questions as the sort you will be writing when you compose essay exams for your students.
- A single-spaced, 2-3 page answer to one of the questions.

Seminar participants will summarize (not read) the synopsis, questions, and answer in a 15-20 minute oral presentation. The presentation is worth 15% of the final grade.

3. Students will present a 10-15 minute response to a presentation. Your response should (1) critically evaluate the presentation and (2) address one of the questions left unanswered by the presenters. You are to compose and submit a written

outline to serve as an aid for your oral response. Do not read the outline verbatim. The oral response is worth 10% of your final grade.

4. Students should be consistently well prepared to discuss the weekly readings in an informed and articulate manner. It will not be possible for you to receive an A in this seminar unless you have done the readings and engage in seminar discussions each and every week. Seminar participation will count for 15% of the final grade. As much as 1/3 of participation grade will depend upon your contribution on the special presentations scheduled for April 24. Each student will have 7 minutes to propose a Nudge and explain why it is needed and why it will work, given the nature of human beings and their patterns of decision making and behavior. A prize will be awarded to the best proposal.

Students requesting classroom accommodation for disabilities must register with the Dean of Students Office and provide documentation from this office when requesting accommodation. Plagiarism in presentations or term papers will result in failure of the course. All students are required to abide by UF's Academic Honesty Guidelines, which may be viewed at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php>

Grading Scale:

A	95 – 100%	C	73 – 76%
A-	90 – 94%	C-	70 – 72%
B+	87 – 89%	D+	67 – 69%
B	83 – 86%	D	63 – 66%
B-	80 – 82%	D-	60 – 62%
C+	77 – 79%	E	59% or below

Seminar schedule:

January 9:	Introduction
January 16:	Bernstein, pp. ix-206
January 23:	Thiele, pp. vii-69 (skip sections on Aristotle, Dewey, and Arendt); Dunne, pp. 104-226
January 30:	Thiele on Aristotle, Dunne, pp. 235-382
February 6:	Seminar cancelled
February 13:	Thiele on Dewey, Dewey (all)
February 20:	Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," (online) Thiele: "Exemplary Praxis" (hand out); Thiele on Arendt; Dunne, pp. 88-103; Bernstein, pp. 207-231.
March 6:	UF Spring Break
March 13:	Damasio (all)
March 20:	Thiele, pp. 70-291
March 27:	Seminar cancelled
April 3:	Tetlock (all)
April 10:	Kahneman (all)
April 17:	Flyvbjerg, Landman, Schram, esp. chapters 1,2, 4-6, 14
April 22	Paper due, noon
April 24:	Thaler and Sunstein (all, but you can skim pp.105-176): 7 minute <i>Nudge and Judge</i> proposals