
Course Syllabus

Course Information

PHIL 4322: THE IDEA OF JUSTICE

Charles Bambach

Spring 2026 T/TH 10:00 AM-11:15 PM [FN 2.302](#)

Professor Contact Information

My office hours, in JO 5.416, are from 11:30 AM-12:50 PM on Tuesday and by appointment; the phone number is 972-883-2006. My e-mail address is: cbambach@utdallas.edu

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions

None

Course Description

Derrida writes that "to speak of justice is not a matter of knowledge, of theoretical judgment. That is why it is never an issue of calculation...Justice, if it has to do with the other, with the infinite distance of the other, is always unequal to the Other, is always incalculable. You cannot calculate justice--- justice is the relation to the other." In this incalculable space between the Self & the Other [what Pindar calls the relation between what is of the home(oikos) & what is foreign(allotrios)], I wish to raise the question of justice again, pursuing the very questionability of this persistent question in a course that looks at Greek tragedy(Sophocles) & philosophy(Heraclitus)in a dialogue with contemporary continental philosophy(esp. Heidegger & Derrida). In the perilous waters of 20th-century "ethics", I want to pursue an argument that (in John Caputo's phrase) works "Against Ethics" in the name of a Justice whose ground has been blocked/occluded by the metaphysics of "subjectivity." How are we to think of "justice" in the wake of a century whose sheer devastation, transgression, & violence has unmoored the old metaphysical certitudes about Platonic justice? How can we think justice if the metaphysics of justice itself has collapsed? Post-Nietzsche, what would it mean to raise again the ancient Greek question of limits, balance, and incalculable incommensurability? What would it mean to confront the ethical aporia of justice?

These are some of the questions that I would like to raise in this undergraduate course on “Philosophy, Tragedy, Justice.”

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

Students will learn interpretive skills in reading texts with care, improve their writing ability, and will gain a fundamental knowledge of modern continental philosophy and its relation to the problem of justice.

Required Textbooks and Materials

The following editions are REQUIRED. You may find them at the UTD Book Store and commercially. It is imperative that you purchase the EXACT editions of these texts and NOT just any translation of these works.

AESCHYLUS II: THE ORESTEIA, ed. David Grene (Univ. of Chicago Press) ISBN-0-226-31147

SOPHOCLES I: ANTIGONE ed. David Grene (Univ. of Chicago Press) ISBN: 0-226-31151-7

THUCYDIDES: THE ESSENTIAL THUCYDIDES (Hackett Publishing) ISBN-13: 978-1647920159

MARTIN HEIDEGGER: HÖLDERLIN’S HYMN: ‘The Ister’ (Indiana University Press) ISBN-13: 978-0253330642

Suggested Course Materials

F.E.Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms*

Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*

John Caputo *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*

Miguel de Beistegui ed. *Tragedy and Philosophy*

Charles Bambach, “Heidegger, Tragedy, and the Ethics of the Uncanny: Reading Sophocles’s *Antigone*” in: *Heidegger and Classical Thought*, ed. Aaron Turner (Albany: SUNY Press, 2024): 13-38.

Charles Bambach, “Gerechtigkeit-Dike/Justice” in: *Heidegger Lexicon*, ed. Mark Wrathall (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 440-442.

Charles Bambach, “Heidegger and Hölderlin on Antigone” in: *Philosophers and Their Poets: Reflections on the Poetic Turn in German Philosophy since Kant*, eds. Charles Bambach & Theodore George (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019), 139-158.

Charles Bambach, *Of an Alien Homecoming: Reading Heidegger’s “Hölderlin esp. 177-226.*

Charles Bambach “Translating ‘Justice’: Heraclitus Between Heidegger and Nietzsche” *Philosophy Today* 50:2 (2006): 143-155

Assignments & Academic Calendar

21-26 January: Course Introduction + Anaximander Fragment (Handout)

28 January-2 February: Heraclitus SELECTIONS (Handout via Coursebook)

4-9-11 February: Aeschylus AGAMEMNON

16-18-23 February: Sophocles ANTIGONE

25 February- 2-4-9-11 March: Thucydides, *The Essential Thucydides: On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*, pp.1-12 and 60-73 and pp. 110-146 and 163-173

MIDTERM ESSAY DUE WEDNESDAY MARCH 11

SPRING BREAK MARCH 16 & 18 NO CLASSES

23-25 March: Friedrich Hölderlin “The Ister” (Handout)

30 March +1-6-8 April: Martin Heidegger HÖLDERLIN’S HYMN “THE ISTER” pp. 51-111.

15-20-22 April: Jacques Derrida “The Force of Law” pp. in: *Acts of Religion* (pdf. Handout)

27-29 April: Jacques Derrida: The Villanova Roundtable on Justice (pdf. Handout)

FINAL ESSAY DUE WEDNESDAY MAY 6TH

Grading Policy

Course requirements include: ONE IN-CLASS PROTOKOLL 1-2 pp. and TWO TAKE HOME ESSAYS: FIRST TAKE-HOME ESSAY (30%) 4-5 PAGES DUE MARCH 11, FINAL ESSAY OF 7-9 PAGE LENGTH (60%) DUE MAY 6. Classroom participation will constitute 10% of the grade (based on quality of insight). Students will be expected to read the texts for each class and be prepared to discuss them. Since we will be discussing the language and form of each text we read, students will be expected to bring their texts to class for each session. Grades are assessed on a 4.0 scale as described in the graduate catalog.

Course & Instructor Policies

You cannot hope to pass this class if you do not attend it and complete all of the required work. I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE PAPERS. This course will be conducted according to strict codes of academic honesty. All cases of plagiarism will be fully investigated and the deliberate instances reported to the Dean of Students. Penalties for deliberate cheating may include failing the assignment in question, failing the course, or suspension and expulsion from the University. Students are expected to know the University's policies and procedures on such matters, as well as those governing student services, conduct, and obligations.

Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work.

Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, statements, acts or omissions related to applications for enrollment or the award of a degree, and/or the submission as one's own work or material that is not one's own. As a general rule, scholastic dishonesty involves one of the following acts: cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic records. Students suspected of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Plagiarism, especially from the web/AI, from portions of papers for other classes, and from any other source is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the university's policy on plagiarism (see general catalog for details). This course will use the resources of turnitin.com, which searches the web for possible plagiarism and is over 90% effective.

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.