

Revised March 11, 2014

**Philosophy 505/Government 783  
Paradoxes and Legacy of J.S. Mill  
Spring 2014  
Judith Lichtenberg  
Thursdays, 12:30-3  
204 New North**

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Office hours: Thursdays 3-4:30, and by appointment

**About the seminar**

In this course we will study intensively some of John Stuart Mill's most important works in moral and political philosophy. Mill's collected works fill thirty-three fat volumes, which the University of Toronto Press published from 1963 to 1991. Most of those volumes are no longer in print, but the Liberty Fund has the complete works available for free online [here](#), and you can get eight of the volumes in print. (I've asked you to buy two; for a little over \$100 you can get all eight. They are definitive and beautiful editions.)

We will read some of Mill's classic books, including *Utilitarianism*, *On Liberty*, and *The Subjection of Women* in their entirety, as well as portions of the *Autobiography*, *Considerations on Representative Government*, and *Principles of Political Economy*. We'll also read some of the important essays, including "Bentham," "Coleridge," "A Few Words on Non-Intervention," and "Chapters on Socialism." As background, we'll read a little bit of Bentham; and we'll study some modern writings that Mill inspired, negatively or positively. With one or two exceptions we'll proceed chronologically.

I have not taught this course before, so the schedule of readings, as well as the pace, could change a little depending on our interests and other factors; a few readings, especially from the secondary literature, may be added or recommended.

**Books you ought to have**

*Autobiography and Literary Essays*; Collected Works, Volume 1 (Liberty Fund)  
*Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*; Collected Works, Volume 10 (Liberty Fund)

*On Liberty* (Hackett)

*The Subjection of Women* (Hackett)

If you have different editions of these works, it's not essential to buy these books, although having them will help when we look for particular passages. Other readings will be available on Blackboard or online.

### Course requirements

- Two short papers (each 1000-1500 words). The two papers together are worth 30% of the final grade (the first will count for slightly less than the second).
  - The first, on utilitarianism, is due Saturday, February 8.
  - The second, on one of the topics after utilitarianism but before *Representative Government*, is due Saturday, March 22.
- A longer paper (3000-5000 words), on a subject of your choice, due at the end of the semester. You will submit a proposal for the paper by around the end of March (exact deadline to be announced later), and schedule a meeting to discuss it with me outside of class. This paper is worth 45% of the final grade.
- Preparation for, and regular attendance and participation in, the seminar. 15%. Especially in a class of this size, active participation by everyone will be a crucial factor in the success of the course.
- A brief weekly comment on the reading assignments. I'll set up a discussion board on Blackboard for this purpose. (No post required the first week or the last week; you may skip one other week.) Please submit the post no later than 8 p.m. the night before the seminar meets. 10%. It should be a question or comment on some aspect of the week's reading. Please also read the other students' posts before class.
- All written assignments will be submitted electronically. Further directions to follow.

### Schedule

Works are by J. S. Mill unless otherwise indicated.

January 9

*Autobiography*, chapters 1 and 2

Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, chapters 1 and 4  
"Bentham"

January 16

*Autobiography*, chapter 5

"Coleridge"

January 23

Elizabeth Anderson, "John Stuart Mill and Experiments in Living" (1991)

*Utilitarianism*, chapters 1-4

January 30

*Utilitarianism*, chapter 5

April 1868 Speech on Capital Punishment (in Hackett edition of *Utilitarianism*, and [here](#)).

J. O. Urmson, "An Interpretation of the Moral Philosophy of J. S. Mill" (1953)

Debate from *The Economists' Voice* on the death penalty (Richard Posner; Gary Becker; John Donohoe and Justin Wolfers)

February 6

Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism" (1973), 77-140  
Jon Elster, "Sour Grapes" (condensed)

February 13

CLASS CANCELLED—SNOW DAY

February 20

*A System of Logic*, Book VI, chapters 1-9

February 27

*On Liberty*, chapters 1-3

March 6

*On Liberty*, chapters 4-5  
"A Few Words on Non-Intervention" (1859)  
Gerald Dworkin, "Paternalism" (1972)

March 13: no class, spring break

March 20

*Considerations on Representative Government*, chapters 3-4, 7-8

March 27

*Considerations on Representative Government*, chapters 9-10, 12

April 3

*The Subjection of Women*, chapters 1-2

April 10

*The Subjection of Women*, chapters 3-4

April 17: no class, Easter break

April 24

*Principles of Political Economy*, book II, chapters 1-2 (on property): 199-234;  
Book IV, chapter 7 ("On the Probable Futurity of the Laboring Classes"), 759-96

April 29, last class and dinner at my house

"Chapters on Socialism"