PPE Capstone Seminar
Fall 2013

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Course Description
The capstone seminar is a chance to take some of the core concepts you’ve learned in previous PPE courses and apply them to specific topics. The class is also an opportunity for you to write a concise research paper on a PPE-related topic of your choice. In the first part of the semester, we’ll discuss the readings below. In the second part, you will present work in progress and get feedback from your peers. Each student will be assigned a time slot to present a chunk of their research paper, or talk about a book chapter or article that is central to their paper. Final papers will be submitted on the last day of class, and should be about 15 pages long.

Grading and Attendance
10% Participation   45% Midterm exam   45% Final paper
Attendance is mandatory: any more than one unexcused absence will adversely affect your grade.

Reading
All articles are available on Sakai

Week One   UTILITARIANISM
JJ Smart, “Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism”
Bernard Williams, “A Critique of Utilitarianism”
Philosophy Bites Podcast: Philip Pettit on Consequentialism

Week Two   COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS and PUBLIC POLICY
Steven Kelman, “An Ethical Critique of Cost Benefit Analysis”
David Schmidtz, “A Place for Cost Benefit Analysis”
Robert Frank, “Why is Cost-Benefit Analysis so Controversial?”
Week Three  REGULATION and RENT-SEEKING
Bruce Yandle, “Bootleggers and Baptists”
Mike Munger, “Rent-Seek and You Will Find”
James Buchanan, “How can Constitutions Be Designed so that Politicians Who Seek the Public Interest can Survive and Prosper?”
Eban Goodstein, “The Political Economy of Environmental Regulation”
Planet Money podcast: Why Taxpayers Pay for Farmer’s Insurance

Week Four  LIBERTARIAN PATERNALISM  Part 1
Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, “Libertarian Paternalism is not an Oxymoron”

Week Five  LIBERTARIAN PATERNALISM  Part 2

Week Six  MARKETS and MORALS
Herbert Gintis, “Giving Economists their Due” (reply to Sandel)
Samuel Bowles, “How Markets Crowd In Morals” (reply to Sandel)
Peter Singer, “Altruism and Commerce”
Loren Lomasky, “Gift Relations, Sexual Relations and Freedom”

Week Seven  SEX, MARRIAGE and BABIES
David Friedman, “Marriage, Sex and Babies”
Kate Taylor, “Sex on Campus: She Can Play That Game, Too”
Kay Hymowitz et al, “Knot Yet: The Benefits and Costs of Delayed Marriage”
Julian Savulescu, “The Moral Obligation to Create Children with the Best Chance of the Best Life”
Philosophy Bites Podcast: Julian Savulescu on Designer Babies

Week Eight  MONEY and HAPPINESS
Richard Easterlin, “Will Raising the Incomes of All Increase the Happiness of All?”
Philosophy Bites podcast, Myles Burnyeat on Aristotle on Happiness
TED talk (in-class screening): Dan Gilbert on the Science of Happiness

Week Nine  COLLECTIVE ACTION
Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action (excerpt)
Gerald Marwell and Ruth Ames, “Economists Free Ride, Does Anyone Else?”
Elinor Ostrom, “Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms”
Herbert Gintis and Samuel Bowles, “The Evolutionary Basis of Collective Action”