

**PHL 239 Political Freedom & Insecurity**  
Tues-Thurs 2:00 to 3:15PM, Moyer 302  
Professor: Dana Francisco Miranda  
Email: danamiranda@muhlenberg.edu  
Student Hours: M 1:00-2:00PM; W 1:00-2:00PM  
@ Moyer 306, or by appointment

## **Overview**

“Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.” -Benjamin Franklin

In this course, we will examine the experience of political freedom as thematized in practices of liberation, slavery, and surveillance. Students will draw from an eclectic mix of genres – speeches, short stories, as well as a graphic novel – to interrogate what political freedom is, what it means, how it arises, what blocks it, and how we might sustain it. Readings will include classic texts by Hannah Arendt, Thomas Hobbes, John Stuart Mill, Frederick Douglass, and Frantz Fanon.

## **Course Objectives**

Students will aim to interrogate various definitions of freedom, as well as its relationship towards security and surveillance, in order to begin mapping out their own political definition of freedom. Through such examination, students will apply their own philosophical knowledge and construct their own working definition of “freedom.”

## **Course Unit Instruction**

This class is scheduled to meet for 3 hours per week. Additional instructional activities for the course include attendance at various College events and associated writing activities/workshops distributed across the semester. Participation in these events and completion of associated activities/workshops will add an additional 14 hours of instruction. Students will be expected to come prepared with critical questions they would like to raise and be prepared to listen to others.

## **Policies**

All Muhlenberg policies are in effect, but please talk to me if you have any questions. These include:

- Policy on Academic Dishonesty: As an academic community devoted to the discovery and dissemination of truth, Muhlenberg College insists that its students will conduct themselves honestly in all academic activities. Students are expected to refuse to engage in any activity unauthorized by College policy and the faculty member(s) which profits themselves of which helps or hinders others in any work which is submitted for a grade or in any work which leads ultimately to a grade. Students must comply with the Academic Integrity Code.
- Students with disabilities requesting classroom or course accommodations must complete a multi-faceted determination process through the Office of Disability Services prior to the development and implementation of accommodations, auxiliary aids, and services. Each Accommodation Plan is individually and collaboratively developed between the student and

the Office of Disability Services. If you have not already done so, please contact the Office of Disability Services to have a dialogue regarding your academic needs and the recommended accommodations, auxiliary aides, and services.

- If you are experiencing financial hardship, have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or do not have a safe and stable place to live, and believe this may affect your performance in this course, I would urge you to contact our CARE Team through the Dean of Students Office for support. Their website is [www.muhs.edu/main/aboutus/deanst/careteam/](http://www.muhs.edu/main/aboutus/deanst/careteam/). You may also discuss your concerns with me if you are comfortable doing so.

Some additional policies include:

- Gender Pronouns: All people deserve to be addressed in accordance with their identity, ranging from preferring a nickname to your gender pronouns. Students are encouraged to notify me of their gender pronouns so I can address you correctly (she, he, they, ze, etc.), especially if they have reason to believe I may use the incorrect pronouns. I use he/him.
- Electronic Device: Engaged listening without electronic mediation is an important skill, and this classroom will be an opportunity for those otherwise challenged in this domain to practice it. If you have important reasons (e.g., medical, disability accommodation, etc.) to use any such devices, please talk to me as soon as possible so that I can approve appropriate exceptions to this policy. Otherwise, this classroom will be free of electronic devices.
- Policy on Children: If you are a parent, you are welcome to bring your child to class. If they are interested and old enough to take part in the conversation, all the better. If they are babies, fine. If they need to breastfeed, fine. You probably have alternate arrangements, and your other professors might not have the same policy (and I respect that), but I just wanted to make my attitude about children explicit in case of preference or emergency. You are welcome here, and if you have dependents that need constant care or whose care has been interrupted, they are also welcomed.
- Everyone needs help at some point (and typically at multiple points) in their academic journey. When you do, I and other campus resources (such as the Academic Resource Center, Writing Center, Disability Services, Counseling Services, and the M.U.L.E. Community Cabinet) are here to help.
- No one will be asked to speak for a group (whether class, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, disability, gender, or geography).

## Assignments

**Participation (20%):** Attendance is mandatory. I understand that emergencies arise, so each student is allowed two absences. Each absence beyond the allotted two will result in a ten-point deduction. Please note that to receive a grade in this category one must not only show up, but also participate. This will primarily reflect a) Preparation for posing questions in the discussion period of class and b) Engaged listening and discussion contributions during this period; will be boosted by c) Participation and question-posing during the (ideally interactive) lecture segment. If you are at any point unsure how you are doing in participation and want to know, email me and we can begin a conversation. *Students who are extremely weary of speaking in class can receive alternative assignments in lieu of in-class participation, but must meet with me in the first two weeks of the semester (or within one week of enrolling if not enrolled during this period) to make arrangements.*

Students will also be frequently asked during class dialogues to provide their thoughts on the reading. Be sure to jot down at minimum one question, observation, or provocation in our digital working document.

**Presentations (20%):** Students will select one week where they will choose a reading and give an in-class presentation. Students must turn in an outline of their presentation. This outline will include at minimum two dialogic questions as well as detailed instructions on the structure of their presentation. These questions will serve as the basis for in-class discussion. Outlines must be emailed the day before one's presentation by noon. \*An example outline will be provided\*

**Final Paper Proposal (15%):** An outline as well as 750- to 1500-word preliminary exploration of a topic for the final paper must be emailed by midnight October 7, 2019, prior to the start of Week 7.

**Final Paper Draft (10%):** A 1500- to 2000-word draft of your final paper must be emailed by midnight November 11, 2019, prior to the start of Week 12.

**Final Paper (25%):** A 2500- to 4000-word paper dealing with any philosophical topic arising from or inspired by course materials. Final papers must be emailed by midnight December 9, 2019. My policy is to deduct ten points for each day late.

**Assessments (10%):** Students will complete mid-semester and end-of-class self-assessments so that we may better focus on qualitative and not quantitative evaluations. You will be reflecting carefully on your own work and the work of your peers. If this process causes more anxiety than it alleviates, see me at any point to confer about tips for self-evaluations. Please know that if an assignment does not feel productive, we can find ways to modify, remix, or repurpose the instructions.

Mid-semester assessments must be completed by noon on October 9, 2019. Final assessments must be completed by noon on December 11, 2019, after your final paper is turned in.

### **Guidance on Late Work**

Missing a deadline is a stressful experience. Sometimes it's just the result of an acute situation, but sometimes it's the result of something more persistent—struggling with the material, life circumstances, or one's mental state—and the source of trouble is not always obvious from the inside. Students in these situations often blame themselves and as a result incur late penalties. Students sometimes even fail classes because they get paralyzed and ultimately never submit the assignment. If you are in this situation, I can help. If you are going to miss a deadline:

1. Email me *whatever you have* before the deadline. If I get something from you, no matter how incomplete, the first day's late penalty will be halved.
2. Stay in contact with me until you finish. We will make a plan to get you back on track.

### **Required Texts**

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen* (DC Comics).  
Harriet Jacobs. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Project Gutenberg).  
All other readings will be provided online.

## Schedule

### Week 1:

Aug. 27: Introductions: What is this course and who's in it? *No Reading.*

Aug. 29: "Introductory," On Liberty by John Stuart Mill

### Week 2:

Sep. 3: The Liberty of Ancients Compared with that of Moderns by Benjamin Constant

Sep. 5: Two Concepts of Liberty by Isaiah Berlin

### Week 3:

Sep. 10: What Is Freedom? By Hannah Arendt

Sep. 12: Are Freedom and Liberty Twins? By Hanna Pitkin

### Week 4:

Sep. 17: The US Declaration of Independence + On Indians and Negroes by Thomas Jefferson

Sep. 19: The Declaration of Sentiments by the Seneca Falls Conference

### Week 5:

Sep. 24: The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro by Frederick Douglass

Sep. 26: Haitian Constitution of 1805 + The Haitian Revolution and the Limits of Freedom: Defining Citizenship in the Revolutionary Era by Carolyn Fick

*Recommended Reading:* Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen of 1789

### Week 6:

Oct. 1+3: Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl by Harriet Jacobs

### Week 7:

Oct. 8: On the Question of Women's Liberation by He-Yin Zhen + The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation by Emma Goldman

Oct. 10: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom by Nancy Hirschmann

*Remember: Final Paper Proposal + Mid-Semester Assessment due this week.*

### Week 8:

Oct. 15: The Leviathan, Chapter XVII by Thomas Hobbes

Oct. 17: The Leviathan, Chapter XXI by Thomas Hobbes

### Week 9:

Oct. 22: Thoughts on the Colonization of Free Blacks by Robert Finley

Oct. 24: The Space Traders by Derrick Bell

### Week 10:

Oct. 29: "B®anding Blackness: Biometric Technology and the Surveillance of Blackness," Dark Matters by Simone Browne

Oct. 31: Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race-Class Subjugated Communities by Joe Soss and Vesla Weaver + Be Free by J. Cole

### Week 11:

Nov. 5: “Panopticism,” Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison by Michel Foucault  
Nov. 7: NSA Files: Decoded by Ewen Macaskill and Gabriel Dance + Life Inside China’s Social Credit Laboratory by Simina Mistreanu + Ghost World by Darren Byler

Week 12:

Nov. 12+14: Watchmen by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons

*Remember: Final Paper Draft due this week.*

Week 13:

Nov. 19: “On Violence,” The Wretched of the Earth by Frantz Fanon

Nov. 21: West India Emancipation by Frederick Douglass

Week 14:

Nov. 26: On the Duty of Civil Disobedience by Henry David Thoreau

Thanksgiving Break (Nov. 27 – Dec. 1)

Week 15:

Dec. 3: “Personal Freedom and Others + Conclusion,” The Ethics of Ambiguity by Simone de Beauvoir

Dec. 5: Freedom/License by Montague Brown

*Remember: Final Paper and Final Assessment due next week.*