

Trust, Personal and Political

PHIL 848G

Requirements

- **As I've told many of you, this is an exploratory seminar, meaning that it's not on a subject I know lots about, but rather one I'd like to know more about.**
- **The syllabus and readings are available on my website; click on "courses," then on the link to the course. A link to the list of our initial readings is on the syllabus, along with a link to "course materials," with links to this among other courses.**
- **To access the readings under "course materials," use "Greenspan" (case sensitive) as both your username and password.**
- **I'll cover our first reading, from Baier, next time; then I'll ask students to do something similar for the rest of the list. I'll post (corrected) slides on my website, under "course materials."**
- **The only written requirement of the course will be a substantial (c. 20-page) term paper. We'll later schedule some time for credit students to discuss their plans for the paper.**

Participants

- **At the beginning of an in-person class, I give out cards asking for various pieces of information. Instead, let me ask you to email me the following, with 848G and your last name in the subject line:**
 - Year in college/grad school or etc.**
 - Student status (graded credit, registered auditor, noncredit auditor)**
(If auditing, note whether you're willing to help lead discussion.)
 - Background in philosophy – Where? What related (e.g. ethics) courses?**
 - Special reasons, if any, for interest in the subject**
- **My own initial interest was in emotions and related states. In contrast to some authors, I don't think trust amounts to an emotion (vs. absence of suspicion, plus dispositions to act/feel).**
- **Cf. also cases in current political discussion: trusting the police, the government, the judicial system, etc. (what Baier treats as artificial persons).**

Preview: Baier vs. social contract theory

- Baier's initial emphasis is on trusting persons, particularly strangers – though she later focuses on infant trust.
- She begins by noting that trust is necessary for cooperative activity, moral or immoral. So it's surprising that the great moral philosophers have largely ignored it.
 - Christian moralists discuss only trust in God.
 - Social contract theorists Lock and Hobbes discuss trust only as directed toward governments.
- Baier's own account, as you'll see, argues against contemporary versions of social contract theory (she mentions Scanlon; cf. also Rawls and Gauthier). Instead, she prefers a Humean account of ethics, based in the first instance on family relations rather than a contract.