

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 218K: 42385

Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays

Mezes Hall 1.208

2:00pm-3:00pm

DESCRIPTION

In this course, we'll ask two questions: What is justice? And: What is injustice? And we'll think about how to answer them by tracing a particular methodological development in the history of Western political philosophy.

On the one hand, we'll examine "ideal" theories of justice; in particular, John Stuart Mill's, Robert Nozick's, and John Rawls's. These theories start by considering which features an ideal society would have in order to say how our society ought to be structured.

On the other hand, we'll examine "non-ideal" theories of justice that start by considering the features our society has in order to say how it ought to be structured; in other words, in order to say which is the ideal society at which we ought to aim. In particular, we'll examine Charles Mills' critique of ideal theories of justice, various conceptions of "oppression," "structure," and "ideology," and their implications for our ability to achieve justice.

To appreciate the implications of the theories we'll study, we'll ask, and try to answer, these questions, too:

- Should we legalize sex work?
- Should we defund the police?
- Do "we" owe reparations? If so, to whom?

As a result, this course will serve as an introduction to a debate that animates contemporary political philosophy, both in and outside the academy.

ME

I'm Emilie! (Please, call me "Emilie"! I'm working on a Ph.D. in the Department of Philosophy. I like to think about what social groups – like the Supreme Court, Rutgers University, and men and women – are, and why they matter.

I'll hold office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00pm-3:30pm. However, I'll take appointments, whether in person or via Zoom, if you're either unable to make it to office hours, or would like to speak with me privately. You don't have to have a question or comment worked out to come office hours, however. Our meetings are for doing philosophy *together*, and that starts with casual conversation.

Lastly, it's important that you know that I'm here to support you, both philosophically and otherwise. If you need anything, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

TEXTS

All texts are available on [Perusall!](#)

ASSIGNMENTS

There will be four kinds of assignment:

1. **Annotations:** You'll be required to both read and annotate a minimum of ten of the readings I assign (in *Perusall*) throughout the semester based on questions I'll embed in them: five *before* Week 8 and five *before* Week 16. (See "Directions – Annotations" for directions!) It's up to you which ten readings you annotate. **[30/100]**
2. **Reading responses:** You'll be required to write four of five prompted reading responses. (See "Directions – Reading Responses" for directions!) **[40/100]**
3. **Discussion questions:** You will be required to write three discussion questions, one before each of three student-led discussions. (See "Directions – Discussion Questions" for details!) **[15/100]**

4. **Student-led discussions:** I will split you into three groups and each group will be responsible for leading one of three student-led discussions we'll have throughout the semester. These will be based in part on the discussion questions your classmates have prepared and in part on additional material I'll provide. (See "Directions – Student-Led Discussions" for details!) [15/100]

Notice that attendance isn't part of your grade. **However, it's unlikely that you'll do well on these assignments if you don't attend class!**

SCHEDULE

SCHEDULE	DAY	IN GENERAL	IN PARTICULAR	READING: <i>PERUSALL</i>	DUE
1		Introduction: <i>What is political philosophy?</i>	What is philosophy?		
	W, 8/25		What make philosophy <i>political</i> philosophy?		
	F, 8/27				
2	M, 8/30	Justice	What is justice?	Shirley Jackson , "The Lottery"	
	W, 9/1		What is the scope of a theory of justice?	Shirley Jackson , "The Lottery"	
	F, 9/3		Activity: How should we theorize about justice?		
3	M, 9/6	John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism	Pleasure is what's intrinsically good.	Mill , <i>Utilitarianism</i> (Part I)	
	W, 9/8		Pleasure maximization is what's right.	Mill , <i>Utilitarianism</i> (Part II)	
	F, 9/10		The just state is one that maximizes pleasure to the extent that it's compatible with liberty for all.	Mill , <i>Utilitarianism</i> (Part III); Mill , <i>On Liberty</i> (Part I)	
4	M, 9/13	Robert Nozick's Libertarianism	Wrapping up: Mill's theory of justice.	Mill , <i>On Liberty</i> (Part I); Mill , <i>Utilitarianism</i> (Part IV)	
	W, 9/15		Objection: Pleasure <i>isn't</i> what's intrinsically good.	Nozick , "The Experience Machine" (Part I)	
	F, 9/17		The just state is one that respects entitlements.	Nozick , <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> (Part II)	
5	M, 9/20	Discussion	Respecting entitlements requires significant non-interference.	Nozick , <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> (Part III)	

	W, 9/22		Activity: How should you respond to what you've read? How should you prepare to discuss it?		
	F, 9/24		Viewing: Catharine MacKinnon on legalizing sex work. <i>Should we legalize sex work?</i>		Discussion question 1 @ 12pm CST
6	M, 9/27	John Rawls's Egalitarianism	Justice is a property of "the basic structure of society."	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (Part I)	Reading response 1 due @ 12pm CST
	W, 9/29		The Original Position: How do we know what's just and what's unjust?	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (Part II)	
	F, 10/1		There are two principles of justice.	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (Part III)	
7	M, 10/4	Justice, Fairness, and Idealization	Justice as fairness.	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (Part IV)	
	W, 10/6		Viewing: Mills' Tanner Lecture (Part I)	Mills, <i>The Racial Contract</i> (Part I)	
	F, 10/8		Viewing: Mills' Tanner Lecture (Part II)		
8	M, 10/11	Oppression: Alienation and Exploitation, Objectification and Dehumanization	In what way is alienation a source of injustice?	Marx, "Comments on James Mill"	Reading response 2 @ 12pm CST
	W, 10/13		In what way is exploitation a source of injustice?	Marx, <i>The German Ideology</i> (Part I)	
	F, 10/15		In what way is objectification a source of injustice? Dehumanization?	Watch: Smith @ La Ciudad de las Ideas; Mikkola, "Why Dehumanization is Distinct from Objectification"	
9	M, 10/18	Structure, Ideology and Action	What is it for injustice to be structural?	Cudd, <i>Analyzing Oppression</i>, (Part I) Haslanger, "What is a (social) structural explanation?"	
	W, 10/20		What is ideology? How does structure enact ideology?	McLellan, "Introduction: The Career of a Concept"; Marx, <i>The German Ideology</i> (Part II)	
	F, 10/22		How does this influence action?	Cudd, <i>Analyzing Oppression</i> (Part I)	
10	M, 10/25	Discussion	What is intersectionality? How is oppression intersectional?	Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins"	Reading response 3 @ 12pm CST
	W, 10/27		Case: Policing		
	F, 10/29				

11	M, 11/1	Responsibility and Blame	Activity: What is it to be responsible (i.e., for x)?		
	W, 11/3		Activity: Is one blameworthy whenever one is responsible?		
	F, 11/5		Activity: When should we blame one another?		
12	M, 11/8	Responsibility for Injustice	How does injustice persist?	King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"	
	W, 11/10		Who is responsible, then?	Butler, "Hannah Arendt's Challenge to Adolf Eichmann"	
	F, 11/12		Can <i>societies</i> be responsible?	Young, <i>Responsibility for Injustice (Part I)</i>	
13	M, 11/15	Backward- and Forward-Looking Responsibility for Injustice	The Social Connection Model of responsibility.	Young, <i>Responsibility for Injustice (Part II)</i>	
	W, 11/17		What does the Social Connection Model imply about historic injustice?	Young, <i>Responsibility for Injustice (Part III)</i>	
	F, 11/19		Viewing: Nightline on Native & Mexican Americans		
14	M, 11/22	Discussion	Do "we" owe reparations?		Discussion question 3 @ 12pm CST
					Reading response 4 @ 12pm CST
15	M, 11/29	Anger at Injustice	Should injustice make us angry?	Nussbaum, <i>Anger and Forgiveness (Part I)</i>	
	W, 12/1		Guest: Steven Gubka (<i>University of Texas – Austin</i>)	Nussbaum, <i>Anger and Forgiveness (Part II)</i>	
	F, 12/3		Yes.	Lorde, "Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger"; Watch: Cherry @ the University of Illinois – Chicago (TEDx)	
16	M, 12/6	Conclusion: Good Conversation and Good Snacks	What's next for political philosophy?		Reading response 5 @ 12pm CST

