

Introduction to Political Theory

Political Science (PLSC) 28701

Winter Quarter 2017

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00-4:20pm, Kent Chemical Laboratory 120

Instructor:

James Lindley Wilson (jimw@uchicago.edu) Office Hours: W 2-4, Pick 521

Teaching Assistants:

Fabian Arzuaga (arzuaga@uchicago.edu) OH: T 12-1:30, Ex Libris Café (Regenstein)

Alex Haskins (ahaskins@uchicago.edu) OH: F 10-11, Pick 320 (Grad Lounge)

Tejas Parasher (tparasher@uchicago.edu) OH: F 10-1, Pick 507

Ram Sabaratnam (rams@uchicago.edu) OH: TBA

Agatha Slupek (aaslupek@uchicago.edu) OH: Th 11-1, Pick 320 (Grad Lounge)

Nazmul Sultan (nazmulsultan@uchicago.edu) OH: TBA

Please read this entire syllabus before the second meeting. Students are responsible for knowing all of this information. It may also help.

Course Overview and Aims:

This course aims to provide students an introduction to political theory, understood here as normative and evaluative argument about social institutions and other significant patterns of social behavior. We will read relatively recent work on major political concepts and values, such as justice, freedom, and equality, with particular attention to how these bear on pressing questions regarding how we ought to live together. We aim to develop our ability to understand and evaluate arguments involving these concepts and values. We also aim to develop our ability to make such arguments ourselves. The texts we read are systematic and subtle. Understanding them will therefore also require us to learn how to read, interpret, and respond to detailed and complex written works. Students should leave the class with a better grasp of what the study of political theory is, and what it might be, thereby able to make informed choices about any future study of political science. But even if they do not take any more classes in political science, the aspiration of the course is to empower students to engage in thoughtful and rigorous normative political argument.

Required Text (available at the Seminary Cooperative Bookstore and the Campus Bookstore):

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (revised edition, Belknap, 1999)

Note: Be sure to get the revised edition, not the first edition.

All other readings will be provided on the Library Reserves on the course Chalk site.

Course Requirements and Grades:

There will be **one midterm exam** and a **final exam**. On each exam, there will be a short answer section and an essay section. At least one week before each exam, I will circulate a list of essay questions that may appear on that exam. The exam will include several questions from that pre-circulated list, of which you will have to answer one.

The midterm exam will be worth 40% of your grade. The final exam will be worth 60% of your grade.

Further Course Policies

Teaching Assistants: There will be no discussion sections for this course. (I believe the student/TA ratio is too high for the sections to have inclusive discussions that would allow for a meaningful participation grade.) Each student, however, will be assigned to one TA. (I will post this information early in the quarter.) This TA will grade his or her assigned students' exams. Accordingly, it may be prudent to contact that TA first if you wish to discuss the course material. (You are also welcome to see me; more on that below.) If demand for meeting TAs is sufficiently high, they may, at their discretion, hold informal group discussions during their office hours instead of one-on-one meetings. But even in this case there is no expectation that they will lead an extended discussion with a preset agenda. In short, we all are eager to help you better learn the material, and willing to do so in settings more interactive than the lecture hall; I just do not believe discussion sections are the best way to do that in this context.

Absences: There is no participation grade for this course, and so your grade will not directly suffer if you miss class. I strongly advise, however, that if you miss class, you make an effort to look at a classmate's notes, come to office hours, or otherwise learned what you missed in the lecture. This should help you in preparing for exams.

Disability/Impairment Accommodations: If you have a disability or impairment that you believe requires special accommodation, please see me immediately. I cannot unilaterally grant accommodations—you must go through the College—but I can assist you with the process if necessary.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: You are responsible for submitting your own, original work on exams, and for acknowledging your sources (if any) according to standards of academic honesty. **Failure to do so—that is, plagiarizing or cheating—will likely result in your failing the course and being referred to the College for possible disciplinary action.** You are responsible for knowing what constitutes academic dishonesty and plagiarism. (That means ignorance of the rules is not a defense.) If you have any questions about the standards, please ask me—sooner rather than later.

In-class Computer Use: You may only use a computer in class (such as a laptop or tablet) if that use is consistent with the course aims. Use of the internet—even to engage in course-related research—is prohibited (it tends to distract other students), though I acknowledge I will probably not be able to enforce this rule. While you are permitted to use computers to take notes, I strongly advise against it. Research has shown that students learn better when they take notes by hand, probably because this requires more active mental processing than typing up a near-transcript of a lecture. That being said, you are free to choose the note-taking method you prefer.

Some Advice:

For Reading:

This is a course about making, analyzing, and evaluating arguments, many of which are carefully laid out in our readings. So while classes are essential, a lot of the learning in this course will happen outside of class, while you are reading. So take the reading process seriously: read actively, doing your best to think about, and respond to, the works you are reading. (Note-taking may help.) Take steps (e.g., underlining, tabbing) that will help you track down important passages when you come back to them later, such as in class or preparing for the exams. And I hope you'll discuss the readings with other students out of class—while I realize you have a life to live that isn't all about political theory, this is a very helpful way to improve your memory of the readings and to develop a more active engagement with them.

Instructor office hours:

Please do come to my office hours, or those of the teaching assistants. We'll all get a lot more out of this class if we know each other a little better, and just a few minutes of one-on-one discussion can help clarify a lot of issues. Please don't feel as if you have to have something brilliant to say (or, alternatively, some burning problem or question) to come and talk to me; feel free to come without any real agenda at all. I consider it my responsibility and my pleasure to spend time with you, so please don't feel like you're intruding by coming by.

Course Readings and Exams

Week One

Tues. Jan 3: Introduction—No Reading Assigned

Thurs. Jan 5: Rawls I: Social Justice and the Two Principles

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (1971/1999), §§ 1-4, 11-12, 14-17 (pp. 3-19, 52-65, 73-93) (53 pages)

Week Two

Tues. Jan 10: Rawls II: The Original Position Argument and the Basic Liberties

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (1971/1999), §§ 20, 22, 24, 26, 29, 31, 33-35, 39, 82 (pp. 102-05, 109-112, 118-23, 130-39, 153-60, 171-76, 180-94, 214-20, 474-80) (60 pages)

Thurs. Jan 12: Rawls III: Democracy and Distributive Justice

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (1971/1999) §§ 36-37, 42, Preface for the Revised Edition (last three pages), 79, 87 (last two pages) (pp. 194-206, 234-42, xiv-xvi, 456-64, 513-14) (43 pages)

Week Three

Tues. Jan 17: Libertarianism

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974) chap. 7, "Distributive Justice," the following sections: Introduction, all of Part I *except* "Sen's Argument"; Part II, only "Collective Assets"; chap. 8, "Equality, Envy, Exploitation, Etc.," only "Voluntary Exchange" (pp. 149-64, 167-82, 228-31, 262-65) (40 pages)

Thurs. Jan 19: Freedom

G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (1995), chap. 1, "Robert Nozick and Wilt Chamberlain: How Patterns Preserve Liberty," sections 1-4, 6-8; chap. 2, "Justice, Freedom, and Market Transactions," sections 2, 4 (pp. 19-28, 31-37, 53-62, 65-66). (29 pages)

Philip Pettit, *Republicanism* (1997), chap. 2, "Liberty as Non-Domination" (pp. 51-79) (29 pages)

Week Four

Tues. Jan 24: Equality I: Luck Egalitarianism

G.A. Cohen, "On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice." *Ethics* 99 (1989): 906-44 (39 pages)

Thurs. Jan 26: Equality II: Democratic Egalitarianism

Elizabeth Anderson, "What Is the Point of Equality?" *Ethics* 109 (1999): 287-337 (51 pages)

Week Five

Tues. Jan 31: Democracy I: Instrumentalism and Minimalism

Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942), chap. XXI, "The Classical Doctrine of Democracy," chap. XXII, "Another Theory of Democracy," Part I: "Competition for Political Leadership," pp. 251-73 (23 pages)

Richard J. Arneson, "Democracy Is Not Inherently Just," in *Justice and Democracy: Essays for Brian Barry* (2004), pp. 40-58 (19 pages)

Thurs. Feb 2: Democracy II: Political Equality

Niko Kolodny, "Rule Over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 42 (2014): 287-336 (50 pages)

Week Six

Tues. Feb 7: Midterm Exam—No Reading Assigned

Thurs. Feb 9: Racial Justice I: Discrimination

Sophie Moreau, "What Is Discrimination?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 38 (2010): 143-79 (37 pages)

Richard A. Epstein, "Should Antidiscrimination Laws Limit Freedom of Association? The Dangerous Allure of Human Rights Legislation." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 25 (2008): 123-59 (37 pages)

Week Seven

Tues. Feb 14: Racial Justice II: Antiracism

Glenn C. Loury, "Racial Inequality and Developmental Affirmative Action." *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 27 (2003): 15-19 (5 pages)

Justice Clarence Thomas, concurring opinion, *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña*, 515 U.S. 200 (1994), 240-41 (2 pages)

Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (2010), chap. 8, "The Folly and Incoherence of Color Blindness," pp. 155-79 and endnotes, pp. 232-36 (30 pages)

Thurs. Feb 16: Sex and Gender Justice

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1990), chap. 1, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," pp. 3-44 (42 pages)

Susan Moller Okin, "'Forty Acres and a Mule' for Women: Rawls and Feminism." *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 4 (2005): 233-48 (16 pages)

Week Eight

Tues. Feb 21: Global Justice I: War and Humanitarian Intervention

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (c. 404 B.C.), "The Melian Dialogue," pp. 400-08 (9 pages)

Leo Tolstoy, "Letter to a Non-Commissioned Officer" (1898), pp. 230-37 (8 pages)

Michael Walzer, "The Moral Standing of States." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 9 (1980): 209-29 (21 pages)

Charles R. Beitz, "The Moral Standing of States Revisited." *Ethics & International Affairs* 23 (2009): 325-47 (23 pages)

Thurs. Feb 23: Global Justice II: Partiality and Universality

Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1 (1972): 229-43.

David Miller, *On Nationality* (1995), chap. 3: "The Ethics of Nationality," pp. 49-80 (32 pages)

Week Nine

Tues. Feb 28: Global Justice III: Global Distributive Justice

Thomas Nagel, "The Problem of Global Justice." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33 (2005): 113-47 (35 pages)

A.J. Julius, "Nagel's Atlas." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 34 (2006): 176-92 (27 pages)

Thurs. Mar 2: Global Justice IV: Immigration

Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (1983), chap. 2, "Membership," pp. 31-63 (33 pages)

Joseph H. Carens, *The Ethics of Immigration* (2013) chap. 11, "The Case for Open Borders," p. 225-54 (and endnotes, pp. 332-35) (34 pages)

Week Ten

Tues. Mar 7: Global Justice V: Climate Change and Conclusion

Simon Caney, "Just Emissions." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 40 (2012): 255-300 (46 pages)

Thurs. Mar 9: Reading Period—No Class

Exam Week

Thurs. Mar 16, 1:30-3:30pm: Final Exam (Room to be announced)