POLS 4090 Office: 404 Baldwin

Fall 2018 542-2922

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*Social Justice*

Inequalities of income and employment opportunity; deprivations arising from poverty and disability; the sufferings of victims of oppression--all of these are routinely denounced as *unjust*. What is justice? Why is it important? How does it relate to other political values?

This course will explore the theoretical basis for claims about justice. Should the rules and institutions that govern the distribution of social goods be designed to maximize social utility; or does justice require rules and institutions that can be justified to the persons who are subject to the rules? What kind of arguments might such persons be willing to accept? The course will focus on the works of John Rawls, the leading contemporary theorist of justice, and will (i) examine contrasting views in the work of Robert Nozick and (ii) evaluate practical implications of these theories.

These texts are available at the University Bookstore:

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press)

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Basic Books)

Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk, *America Unequal (Harvard University Press)*

Assignments

I. *Rawls*

Tuesday, August 14

Introduction

Thursday, August 16

*A Theory of Justice*: 3-19

Tuesday, August 21

*A Theory of Justice*: 19-47

Thursday, August 23

*A Theory of Justice*: 40-47 (rev.); 47-52

Tuesday, August 28

*A Theory of Justice*: 47-52 (rev.); 52-65

Thursday, August 30

No Class

Tuesday, September 4

*A Theory of Justice*: 65-86

Thursday, September 6

*A Theory of Justice:* 65-86 (rev.); 86-93

Tuesday, September 11

*A Theory of Justice:* 102-122

Thursday, September 13

*A Theory of Justice*: 130-139; 153-160

Tuesday, September 18

*A Theory of Justice*: 171-180; 194-206; 214-227 (skim*)*

Thursday, September 20

*A Theory of Justice*: 228-234; 267-277

Tuesday, September 25

*A Theory of Justice:* 308-335

Thursday, September 27

*America Unequal*: 39-66

Tuesday, October 2

*America Unequal*: 92-110

Thursday, October 4--FIRST PAPER DUE

Review

Tuesday, October 9

*America Unequal*: 124-150

Thursday, October 11

*A Theory of Justice*: 347; 450-474

Tuesday, October 16

*A Theory of Justice*: 474-486

Thursday, October 18

*A Theory of Justice*: 486-514

II. Nozick

Tuesday, October 23

*Anarchy, State and Utopia*: ix-xvi; 3-25

Thursday, October 25

*Anarchy, State and Utopia*: 149-167

Tuesday, October 30

*Anarchy, State and Utopia*: 167-189

Thursday, November 1

*Anarchy, State and Utopia*: 189-213

Tuesday, November 6

*Anarchy, State and Utopia*: 213-232

III. *Justice and the State*

Thursday, November 8

Welfare "Reform"

Tuesday, November 13

International Comparisons: Handout

Thursday, November 15—SECOND PAPER DUE

Liberty--(Hausman and McPherson: 121-134)

Tuesday, November 20

No Class

Thursday, November 22

No Class

Tuesday, November 27

*Political Liberalism*: 1-43

Thursday, November 29

Review

Monday, December 10—FINAL PAPER DUE

Requirements

There are three course requirements. First, each student will write three papers on topics addressed by this class. The due dates for these papers are indicated in the list of assignments. Second, there will be five in-class quizzes. The third requirement is engaged participation.

**The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.**

*Grades*

The three papers will constitute 90% of the course grade. The quizzes will count for 10%. Any semester average falling between two letter grades will be resolved according to the quality of class participation. The instructor reserves the right to raise the letter grades of students who have participated exceptionally well over the course of the semester. Grades are calculated on the 4-point scale.

Attendance is mandatory, and the instructor reserves the right to make up to a ten percent reduction in the overall paper grade in the case of poor attendance. Assignments handed in late will be subject to significant grading penalties. A makeup quiz will be scheduled at the end of the semester for students who have missed one or more quizzes.

Finally, you are bound by the University's conduct regulations concerning academic honesty. In the context of this course, the inaccurate presentation of written materials as your original work would constitute academic dishonesty. All academic work must meet the standards contained in a culture of honesty. Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.