POLS 4090 Office: 404 Baldwin

Spring 2024 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 work 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, January 8

Introduction

Thursday, January 11

*A Theory of Justice: 3-19*

Tuesday, January 16

*A Theory of Justice: 19-46*

Thursday, January 18

*A Theory of Justice*: 40-46 (rev.); 46-52

Tuesday, January 23

*A Theory of Justice: 46-52 (rev.); 52-64*

Thursday, January 25

*A Theory of Justice:* 64-86

Tuesday, January 30

*A Theory of Justice*: 64-86 (rev.); 86-93

Thursday, February 1

*A Theory of Justice:* 102-122

Tuesday, February 6

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

Thursday, February 8

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

Tuesday, February 13

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

Thursday, February 15

*A Theory of Justice:* 308-335

Coates: handout, pp. 2-18, 32-38, 40-45, 51-54, 65-66

Tuesday, February 20

Review

Thursday, February 22—FIRST PAPER DUE

*America Unequal*: 39-66

Tuesday, February 27

*America Unequal:* 92-110

Thursday, February 29

*America Unequal*: 124-150

Tuesday, March 12

*A Theory of Justice*: 347; 450-486

Thursday, March 14

*A Theory of Justice*: 486-514

II. Nozick

Tuesday, March 19

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

Thursday, March 21

*Anarchy, State and Utopia:* 149-167

Tuesday, March 26

*Anarchy, State and Utopia:* 167-189

Thursday, March 28

*Anarchy, State and Utopia:* 189-213

*Tuesday,* April 2

*Anarchy, State and Utopia:* 213-232

III. *Justice and the State*

Thursday, April 4

Welfare "Reform"

Tuesday, April 9

International Comparisons: Handout

Thursday, April 11

Sen, A. "Well-Being, Agency and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984", *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985), Pp. 169-220

Tuesday, April 16

Review

Thursday, April 18—SECOND PAPER DUE

Cohen, G. A. "On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice", *Ethics 99* (1989), 906-944

Tuesday, April 23

TBA

Thursday, April 25

Review

Wednesday, May 8—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 a 4-point scale.

**Attendance is mandatory**, and the instructor reserves the right to make up to a twenty percent reduction in the overall course grade in the case of poor attendance. Three unexcused absences will lead to a mandatory grade reduction. **Five unexcused absences will lead to a mandatory F in the course.** 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.

**The instructor reserves the right to lower the letter grades of students whose behavior in class falls below the standards of civility and respect for fellow students expected of UGA students**.

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.