

Philosophy 305

**Justice and Equality:
Topics in Contemporary Political Philosophy**

Spring 2001

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Office Hour Wed 2-3
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Monday, Wednesday 11.30-12.30

In this class, we will discuss some of the most important and most interesting work in recent political philosophy. Focusing in one way or another on the subjects of justice and equality, most of these pieces were published in the 80s and 90s, to some extent in reaction to either Rawls' *Theory of Justice* or Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. This class is well-suited as a continuation of Philosophy 125, Political Science 114, Political Science 118 or classes with similar contents, but can also be taken independently. The class is also suitable for graduate students with interests in contemporary political thought. Since this material is very recent, it is rarely taught at the undergraduate (or even graduate) level. We will spend the first two weeks on a brief introduction to the topics of justice and equality. The second and longest part of the class is devoted to the so-called "equality-of-what" debate: Once it is granted that equality is an ideal for distributive justice, we need to ask about the *equilizandum*: Equality *of what?* Different answers (resources, welfare, opportunity for welfare, "capabilities", etc.) entail different answers as to what kind of redistributive measures (if any) should be taken by the state. Therefore, different answers also lead to significantly different political ideals. In the third part, we will discuss the debate between Nozick (or libertarianism) and G.A. Cohen (or Marxism/socialism) about the implications of self-ownership. Both camps agree that everybody owns himself/herself and has strong claims to the fruits of his/her labor. However, they embed these ideas into fundamentally different visions of a political community. In the final part of this class, we will address excerpts from three important recent books: John Rawls' *The Law of Peoples* (the most recent contribution to political philosophy by the most important living political philosopher), Susan Okin's *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (a seminal work in feminist theory), and Jeremy Waldron's *The Dignity of Legislation* (a recent contribution to the boundary area common to legal and political philosophy). This syllabus is tentative and may be changed in accordance with the interests of those taking the class. Students with deeper interests in political philosophy should note that there is going to be a public two-day conference on the work of G.A. Cohen at Yale in May. Students who wish to attend that conference may think of this class as a preparation.

Requirements

One previous class in moral philosophy, political philosophy or political theory is recommended but not required. One midterm paper (6-8 pages), one final paper (6-8 pages), and a final exam. A selection of essay topics will be distributed in advance for each essay assignment. In addition,

a selection of exam questions will be distributed in advance a proper subset of which will appear in the exam itself. If you choose to attend a section, the midterm paper will count 25%, the final paper 30%, the final exam 25%, and attendance/participation will count 20%. If you choose not to attend a section, the midterm paper will count for 30%, the final paper for 40% and the final exam will count for 30%.

Required Reading

Available for purchase at Book Haven:

G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*

Susan Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*

John Rawls, *The Law of the Peoples* (will be available as paperback at Book Haven in February)

Jeremy Waldron, *The Dignity of Legislation*

Many of the papers/chapters to be read for this class are collected in a Reader, which is available for purchase at Tyco. The Reader also contains material that you are not required to read, but that it might be useful for you to consult if you decide to write a paper on certain questions.

Recommended for background reading: Will Kymlicka, *Introduction to Contemporary Political Philosophy*. The book should be readily available in bookstores and on the web.

Tentative Schedule

Justice and Equality – Themes

Justice – Introductory Themes and Overview

Mon, Jan 8 – No Reading

Wed, Jan 10 – Will Kymlicka, “Introduction” to *Justice in Political Philosophy*; James Sterba, “Recent Work on Alternative Conceptions of Justice”, both in Reader

Mon, Jan 15 - No new reading

Equality – Introductory Themes and Overview

Wed, Jan 17 – Bernard Williams, “The Idea of Equality”, in Reader
Recommended: Richard Arneson, “Equality”, in Reader

Mon, Jan 22 – Harry Frankfurt, “Equality as a Moral Ideal”, in Reader
Recommended: J. R. Lucas, “Against Equality”;

The Equality-of-What Debate

Equality of Welfare and Equality of Resources

Wed, Jan 24 – Dworkin, “Equality of Welfare”, in Reader

Mon, Jan 29 – Dworkin, “Equality of Resources” in Reader

Wed, Jan 31 - Dworkin: Criticisms

Complex Equality

Mon, Feb 5 – Michael Walzer – excerpts from *Spheres of Justice*, in Reader

Recommended: Arneson, “Against ‘Complex Equality’”; Cohen, “Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality”, both in Reader

Equality of Opportunity

Wed, Feb 7 – John Schaar, “Equality of Opportunity, and Beyond”, to be handed out

Recommended: Peter Westen, “The Concept of Equal Opportunity”, to be handed out

Mon, Feb 12 – Richard Arneson – “Equality of Opportunity for Welfare” and “Defense of Equality of Opportunity for Welfare”, in Reader

Recommended: Lippert-Rasmussen, “Arneson on Equality of Opportunity for Welfare”; Arneson, “Equality of Opportunity for Welfare Defended and Recanted”, both in Reader

Wed, Feb 14 – John Roemer, excerpts from *Equality of Opportunity*, in Reader

Mon, Feb 19 – Roemer et al., “To What Extent Do Fiscal Regimes Equalize Opportunities for Income Acquisition Among Citizens”, in Reader

Reflections on Egalitarian Justice

Wed, Feb 21 – G.A. Cohen, “On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice”; “Equality of What? On Welfare, Goods, and Capabilities in Reader

SUGGESTIONS FOR MIDTERM PAPERS TO BE HANDED OUT

Mon, Feb 28 – G. A. Cohen, “Where the Action Is: On the Site of Distributive Justice”; “Political Philosophy and Personal Behavior”, chapter 10 of *If You’re an Egalitarian, How come You’re So Rich?*; both in Reader

Wed, Feb 28 – Elizabeth Anderson, “What Is the Point of Equality?”

Recommended: Richard Arneson, “Luck Egalitarianism and Prioritarianism”, both in Reader

The Self-Ownership-Debate

Mon, Mar 19 – Robert Nozick, excerpts from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, in Reader

MIDTERM PAPERS ARE DUE ON MARCH 19, 5 PM

Wed, Mar 21 – G.A. Cohen, chapters 3 and 4 from *Self-Ownership*

Mon, Mar 26 – G.A. Cohen, chapters 6 and 10 from *Self-Ownership*

Wed, Mar 28 – Susan Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, chapter 4; Paul Warren, “Self-Ownership, Reciprocity, and Exploitation, or Why Marxists Shouldn’t be Afraid of Robert Nozick”; Jan Narveson, “Libertarianism vs. Marxism: Reflections on G. A. Cohen’s ‘Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality’”, both in Reader

Selected Recent Work in Political Philosophy

Mon, Apr 2 – John Rawls, Part I of *The Law of Peoples*

Mon, Apr 4 – Part III of *The Law of Peoples*

Mon, Apr 9 – Susan Okin, chapters 1 and 5 from *Justice, Gender, and the Family*

Wed, Apr 11 – chapters 7 and 8 from *Justice, Gender, and the Family*

SUGGESTIONS FOR FINAL PAPERS TO BE HANDED OUT

Mon, Apr 16 – Jeremy Waldron, chapters 1 and 6 from *The Dignity of Legislation*

Wed, Apr 18 – Waldron continued; conclusion of class

FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 27, 5 PM

EXAM IS ON MONDAY, MAY 7, 9 AM

ALTERNATE EXAM Friday, May 4, 2 PM