

Rawls and Liberal Political Philosophy

Phil 179L | Spring 2019

M/W 12:00 – 1:15, Sever 214 (FAS)

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Office Hours: Monday 3:00-4:00 (Group Sessions) and 4:00-6:00 (Individual Sessions)

Appointments: Students may drop by unannounced from 3:00-4:00 for the group session. This will be a shared session and any students who turn up at this time should expect to be consulted jointly. For the individual 4:00-6:00 session please use the following link to link to make a fixed 20 minute appointment: <http://bit.ly/2sJCByi>. For the 4-6 sessions, I will only make myself available for meetings in the zoom personal meeting room if an appointment has been booked.

We will use my zoom personal meeting room for these one-on-one sessions.

Emilio's personal meeting room ID: 822-129-5124

Emilio's personal meeting room link: <https://harvard.zoom.us/j/8221295124>

I have a scheduled zoom session for the shared office hours session (Mondays 3-4)

Course Description:

John Rawls's publication of *A Theory of Justice* in 1971 was an intellectual lightning bolt. He provided a powerful and systematic defence of an egalitarian liberal framework that reinvigorated Anglo-American political philosophy. Moreover, his philosophical methodology became enormously influential in normative theory, and the questions which preoccupied him set the research agenda for much of the subsequent work in political philosophy. In this course, we will examine contemporary liberal political theory with special attention to Rawls's work. Before engaging his seminal text, we will examine the utilitarian tradition to which Rawls's *Theory of Justice* was, in part, a critical reaction. We will then consider the later development of Rawls's thought in his book *Political Liberalism*; a work which updated the argument for the principles he outlined in *A Theory of Justice* in a way that sought to accommodate the deep and intractable disagreements that citizens in a liberal society have regarding their philosophical, religious, and ethical views. Throughout the course, we will consider a number of direct and indirect critical responses to Rawls's views. Firstly, works that contended with the substantive direction in which Rawls took liberal theory, as well as the justificatory foundation he provided for that theory. Secondly, works that disputed the methodological choices and conceptual framing devices which Rawls used to approach the subject of political philosophy more broadly.

Course texts:

There are two prescribed texts for the course:

- 1) John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice (Original Edition)*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1971.
- 2) John Rawls, *Political Liberalism (Expanded Edition)*, Columbia University Press: New York, 2005 (original publication 1993).

You can source the books yourselves or get them from Harvard Coop using the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/300-W20-PHIL-179L-1>

You will also need to get John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*. Mill's *On Liberty* is in the public domain and can be accessed on the internet. (Here are two links to external sites):

-<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/34901>

and

All other class readings will be posted in pdf format on the Canvas course website. Note that readings may be subject to change throughout the semester. I will let you know about any changes through email and in class announcements but do check the course website for updates to the Syllabus.

Course Requirements (subject to moderate revision)

For Undergraduates

1. You **must** do the reading. Carefully. And in advance of the relevant class. In most classes we will closely engage with the readings and there will be interactive elements that will require you to have formed an understanding of the text.
2. An informal 15-minute meeting with Professor Mora at the beginning of semester. (Instructions on how to sign up for these meetings will be given in class). The purpose of this meeting is simply to get to know you, your learning objectives for the course, and your interests. The meeting will not be a component of the course grade.
3. Regular attendance. You must inform me in advance if there are any classes you will miss.
4. Two equally weighted short papers (2000-2500 words) due April 6th and May 6th (90% of Final Grade).
5. Class participation. 10% of final grade. The class participation component can be fulfilled by contributing either in class or during office hours. You cannot lose points for your contributions.

For Graduates:

1. You **must** do the reading. Carefully. And in advance of the relevant class. In most classes we will closely engage with the readings and there will be interactive elements that will require you to have formed an understanding of the text.
2. Class participation. 10% of final grade. The class participation component can be fulfilled by contributing either in class or during office hours. You cannot lose points for your contributions.
3. One short paper (2000-2500 words) due April 6th (40%) and one long paper May 6th (3000-4000 words) (50%)
4. In lieu of the two papers graduate students can instead submit one long research paper (15-25 pages) Due: May 6th (90%) You will devise your own topic and discuss it with me at least two weeks in advance of the due date.

Reading and Writing Resources

Writing and reading philosophy is hard. It can take a while to get familiar with the mechanics, style, and expectations of philosophical writing. In particular, if this is your first time with philosophy, don't be discouraged by initial grades that don't meet your expectations. In this course, you will have plenty of opportunity to improve your philosophical writing (and grade) throughout the semester. Feel free to come talk to me about any difficulties you are having. There are also several resources that are available to you to help with your reading and writing.

- The Department Writing Fellow can assist you in improving your philosophical writing, both generally and in relation to specific pieces of writing. You can get in contact with the writing fellow, and book individual appointments with them, in the undergraduate section of the philosophy department website.
- More generally, the philosopher Jim Pryor has some excellent resources for learning how to read and write philosophy papers. You can find them at: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/index.html>

Expectations:

You may expect of me that:

- I will treat each of you with respect and take your ideas and contributions seriously.
- I will be prepared for classes.
- I will give you useful and constructive feedback on your assignments.
- I will be readily available outside of class to discuss any issues or difficulties you are having with the class.

I will expect of you that:

- You will treat one another with courtesy and respect.
- You will come to class well prepared and having done the requisite readings. You will have genuinely engaged with those readings and you will have formed views about the success or failure of their

arguments.

- You will observe all the specified class policies.
- You will seek my help with respect to any concerns or problems you are having in class.

Classroom Policies

Starting Times:

“Harvard Time” is a thing of the past. So please be on time for the class starting time at 12:00.

Course Policies

Extensions:

I am going to be more generous with extensions. But please contact me in advance to request the extension and let me know what is going on.

Absences for religious observance:

See the Harvard College Handbook (<https://handbook.fas.harvard.edu/book/attendance-absences-reading-period-examinations-and-extensions>)

Submitting work and Penalties:

All essays must be submitted via email by 11:59 PM on the due date. Essays submitted after the deadline will incur an immediate penalty of one “grade step” per day (e.g. B+ to B), and a further “grade step” every 24 hours. Errors in the submission process will be your responsibility (e.g. missing file attachments, lost emails, corrupted files, etc.). All assessment must be completed to receive your final grade.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism or cheating will be reported. Please refer to the Harvard Student Handbook for information on academic dishonesty and its associated penalties. You should also feel free to ask me for clarification on any questions you may have regarding what constitutes plagiarism.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you need course accommodations for a disability, please contact the Accessible Education Office (AEO). I will do my utmost to help in any way I can. To help me do this, please notify me as soon as possible about any accommodation instructions that AEO have made.

Course Reading

Class 1: Introduction

-No Reading

Utilitarianism

Class 2: Introduction to Utilitarianism

-No reading

Class 3: Introduction to Utilitarianism Continued

-No reading

Class 4: Utilitarianism and Justice

-No reading

Liberalism and Utilitarianism

Class 5: John Stuart Mill

-John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 1-3

Class 6 and 7: John Stuart Mill

-John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 4-5

Robert Nozick's Libertarianism

Class 8, 9: Anarchy, State, and Utopia

-Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 9-12, 26-35, 48-51, 149-164, 167-182.

A Theory of Justice

Class 10: A Theory of Justice

-John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 1-4, 9

-John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 20-25

Class 11: A Theory of Justice (3/9)

-John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 5-6

-John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 11-17

Class 12: A Theory of Justice (3/11)

-John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 11-17

SPRING BREAK

Class 13-14: A Theory of Justice

-John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 26-30

Class 15-16: Nozick on Rawls

-Robert Nozick, *Anarchy State and Utopia*, 183-231

Class 17 and 18: A Theory of Justice (4/6 & 4/8)

-John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 33, 39, 50, 63-64, 69-76, 82-85

Class 19: A Theory of Justice

-John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 18-19, 51-52, 87

Political Liberalism

Class 20: Political Liberalism

-Lecture I, II (Section 1-3)

Class 21: Political Liberalism

-Lecture IV

Class 22: Political Liberalism

-Lecture VI

Class 23: Political Liberalism

-Lecture VI (if you have not already read it).

Justice and Culture

Class 24: Liberalism, Community, and Culture

-Will Kymlicka, "The Value of Cultural Membership" in *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*

-Will Kymlicka, "Equality for Minority Rights", *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*

Class 25: The Cosmopolitan Critique

-Jeremy Waldron, "Minority Cultures and the Cosmopolitan Alternative"