ON THIS FIRST PAGE ARE BOOKS THAT YOU SHOULD TELL YOUR COLLEGE LIBRARY IT SHOULD HAVE

Overviews and Introductions

These are books that do not appear on the weekly reading lists but often provide very helpful discussions of the issues covered.

D. Knowles *Political Philosophy* (2001)
W. Kymlicka *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (2nd ed, 2001)
J. A. Simmons *Political Philosophy* (2007)
J. Wolff *An Introduction to Political Philosophy* (2nd ed, 2006)

Collections of articles

J. Raz (ed.) *Authority* (1990)
J. Waldron (ed.) *Theories of Rights* (1985)
Week 1: Political Obligation
The problem of political obligation has often been characterized as the fundamental problem in political philosophy. How do states gain the right to demand obedience and support from their citizens? What are the grounds of legitimate political authority? Do citizens have special moral ties to the members of their own political communities? Do states have the power to change citizens’ moral requirements with their decrees? If not, what are the implications of this for liberal political philosophy?

Core Reading
A. J. Simmons, Political Philosophy (2007): chs. 2 and 3.
A. J. Simmons, Moral Principles and Political Obligations (1979), ch. 5 [or ‘The Principle of Fair Play’ in his Justification and Legitimacy (2001)]

Week 2: Democracy
We survey different justifications of democracy. For some, the core claim is that democracy is the procedure for making political decisions that treats citizens as equals. Others emphasise the value of collective deliberation. We look also at the classic Schumpeterian rejection of normatively ambitious models of democracy and defence of a more realistic conception of democracy as competitive elitism, while considering the suggestion that deliberation can help to solve notorious problems in aggregating preferences.

Core reading
R. Dworkin, Justice for Hedgehogs (2011), ch. 18 (on democracy) [or if you cannot get hold of the book, R. Dworkin, Is Democracy Possible Here? (2006), ch. 5].


Week 3: Rawls and the Original Position
Rawls’ work has been central to recent debates about justice, and students are expected to grasp the central argument of *A Theory of Justice* – the derivation of two principles of justice from a hypothetical contract behind a veil of ignorance. Rawls has often been accused, by communitarians, of relying on too ‘thin’ a conception of human personality. This claim should be assessed critically, as should the claim that hypothetical contracts cannot tell us what justice requires of us in real human societies.

Core reading


Week 4: Impartiality and Neutrality
The idea that the state should be, or even can be, neutral or impartial is controversial. Who or what should the state be neutral between? If any state must appeal to some values to justify its decisions, how can any claim to impartiality be anything but a sham? We consider what kinds of claim to neutrality might be coherent and, even if some are, whether the state should indeed refrain from acting on perfectionistic judgements about what makes people’s lives go well.

Core reading


**Week 5: Libertarianism**

Rawls’ theory of justice as fairness sparked an energetic riposte from Nozick, whose libertarianism is founded on strong claims about rights to self-ownership and ownership of alienable property, and their significance for individual freedom. Other libertarians adopt a more consequentialist perspective, while some develop theories that take seriously rights to self-ownership but insist that these are compatible with egalitarian theories about how natural resources should be distributed.

**Core Reading**

- P. Vallentyne and H. Steiner (eds.) *Left-Libertarianism and its Critics* (2000): contributions by H. Steiner (‘Original Rights and Just Redistribution’) and P. Van Parijs (‘Real-libertarianism’). [This collection may be hard to find. The Steiner piece is chapters 7 and 8 of his *An Essay on Rights* (1994); the Van Parijs piece is excerpted from his *Real Freedom For All: What (if Anything) Can Justify Capitalism?* (1995): sections 1.8, 2.6, 2.7, 3.5, 4.3 and 4.4.]

**Week 6: Egalitarianism**

What metric or currency is appropriate when thinking about the justice of distributions? Does an emphasis, characteristic of what has become known as ‘luck egalitarianism’, on the distinction between responsible and non-responsible choices betray the true egalitarian ideal? Even if some conceptions of equality are valid, it is a reasonable question why distributive equality is valuable in any sense. Some argue that intuitions about the value of equal distributions are better conceived as ‘prioritarian’ than ‘egalitarian’, since equality per se is vulnerable to the levelling down objection.

**Core Reading**

**Week 7: Global Justice**

Much political theory has traditionally considered questions of distributive justice within a given bounded community, which is often assumed to be the nation-state. John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* is an obvious case in point. But this assumption is receiving increasing scrutiny and criticism from a number of scholars, who debate the extent to which we owe duties to non-nationals as well as to nationals. Reflection on the growth of international interdependence and globalization has introduced a new variable into the debate, as thinkers query not only the normative desirability but the empirical relevance of nation-state centred accounts.

**Core Reading**


**Week 8: Parents and Children**

Although feminist political theory has thrown much light on the family, there has been little focus until recently on the relationship between the rights and duties of parents (inc. guardians) and children. Is it morally permissible for parents to determine whether children will be brought up to embrace a particular religion or none? What are the limits of legitimate parental influence and the rights of children regarding their upbringing? Are parents allowed to purchase extra educational opportunities for their children through the private school system? Must parents and children take into account the impact such actions will have on other children? Can we answer such questions with reference to what is valuable in the parent-child relationship?

**Core Reading**


M.Phil Theory of Politics

Hilary Term

Format and Venue

This term’s core class follows a similar format as the previous term, save that this term’s course will focus on reading a set of primary texts, with a core reading being required for ALL participants, and with supplementary reading being advisory rather than required. The group structure, however, will continue, and each week the two groups will be set a different question which their representatives should address.

Overviews, Introductions, and Helpful Texts

These books provide very helpful discussions of many of the issues covered in this term’s course. You might want to ask your College library to order them if they do not already own them.

Seyla Benhabib (ed.), Democracy and Difference.
S Behhabib, J. Butler, D. Cornell, Nancy Fraser, Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange
Claire Chambers, Sex Culture and Justice
John Dryzek, Deliberative Democracy and Beyond.
Nancy Fraser, Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender
Raymond Geuss, Outside Ethics and Philosophy and Real Politics
Bonnie Honig, Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics.
Lois McNay, Against Recognition.
J. D. Moon and Stephen White (eds.), What is Political Theory?
Anne Phillips (ed.), Feminism and Politics.
Mark Philp, Political Conduct.
James Scott, Domination and the Arts of Resistance.
Bernard Williams, In the Beginning Was the Deed.
**Week 1: On the Political**
How should we understand the activity of politics – and (reflexively) how we understand that! How modern is our politics, and how much to be informed by older traditions. Is the orientation towards politics practical or normative, in what measures, and on what ground do we make that judgment. It is essential to read both of the core texts.

**Core reading**
Hannah Arendt *The Human Condition* Books I and II
Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*.

**Supplementary Reading**
Mark Philp *Political Conduct*, chs 3 and 4.
Dana Villa (ed) *Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (CUP ), esp essays in parts III and VI

**Questions**
Group 1 Q: Is politics best understood as the arena for the realisation of a distinctly human telos?
Group 2 Q: Is a conception of politics as centred on the issue of sovereignty normatively defensible?

**Week 2: Foucault and Power**
Michel Foucault’s work on power has been one of the major influences on radical critiques of liberal and Marxist conceptions of politics and society. His idea of a microphysics of power whose main target is the body has been central to a questioning of ideas of the autonomous self, distinctions between the public and the private, and ideas of rights and revolution. His work has also been criticized, however, for its lack of normative foundations and its nihilist implications for ideas of progressive social change.

**Core reading:**
“Two Lectures” in Colin Gordon (ed.), *Power/Knowledge.*
“What is Enlightenment?” in Peter Dews (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*; also in the Ethics volume of the Penguin edition of collected works.
“The Subject and Power”, afterword in Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics.*
‘On the Category of the Dangerous Individual’ in Penguin edition of collected works *Discipline and Punishment* ch. 1

**Supplementary Reading:** There are numerous secondary texts on Foucault.

**Questions**
Group 1 Q: What is Foucault’s account of power and how has it changed
Group 2 Q How should we understand Foucault’s account of truth and the relation of knowledge to power.
Week 3: Politics of Recognition
Ever since Charles Taylor’s influential essay, there has been a tendency to typify non-distributive social and political movements as manifestations of a fundamental human need for recognition. The idea of the politics of recognition has become particularly prevalent in debates about multiculturalism. There are concerns however, that the idea of recognition leads to a reductive psychological account of politics and also reifies cultures as fixed entities. Feminist and other critics have also raised questions about whether it is appropriate to extend the idea of ‘recognition,’ which was developed principally to explain the rise of multiculturalism, to explain other types of political movement.

Core Reading
Axel Honneth and Nancy Frazer *Redistribution and Recognition* esp chpts 1 and 2
Frantz Fanon ‘The Negro and Recognition’ in *Black Skins, White Masks*

Supplementary Reading
*Lois McNay Against Recognition* (2008), chpt 2 and 4
David Owen and Anthony Larden, *Multiculturalism and Political Theory* (essays by Mills, and Young)
Essays by Appiah and Woolf in Gutman, Amy (ed) *Multiculturalism and the politics of recognition.*

Questions:
Group 1 Q: What is the best defense of recognition as a political strategy
Group 2 Q: What is the best critique of recognition as a political strategy

Week 4: Varieties of Agonism
In recent years, there have emerged various models of agonistic democracy which reject some of the central premises of prevailing liberal and deliberative theories of democracy. The sources for these ideas of agonistic democracy are varied. One major inspiration has been the work of Hannah Arendt which is regarded as providing a model of political action that escapes from the limitations of identity politics. Critics however have argued that Arendt’s normative model of action is unfeasible and has elitist implications. Other sources have ranged from post-structural theories of language to the work of Schmitt and Wittgenstein which have been deployed to make the claim that conflict is not only an ineradicable feature of democratic politics but a desirable one.

Core reading
Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*
James Tully, *Philosophy in a New Key Vol 1*, Chapters 1 and 4

Supplementary Reading
Questions
Group 1 Q: What is an agonistic politics
Group 2 Q: Can/Must Feminism be agonistic?

Week 5: Deliberation and Discourse Ethics
Habermas’ work on inter-subjectivity and communication has been one of the central challenges to the monological conceptions of the subject in liberal thought, on the one hand, and the post-structural dispersion of the subject, on the other. There is concern, however, that Habermasian ideas of deliberative democracy rest on an idealized conception of communication which ignores, inter alia, inequalities of power between participants in debate.

Core Reading
Jurgen Habermas The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere sect II, V, VI.
On Systematically distorted communication’ Inquiry 1970 vol 13, 205-18
Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action – ch ‘Discourse Ethics’
Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (1985) chapters V, XI and XII.

Supplementary Readings
John Dryzek Deliberative Democracy and Beyond (2000)

Questions
Group 1 Q: Is Habermas’s conception of the public sphere a plausible alternative account of the Enlightenment?
Group 2 Q: Can the idea of rational communication be defended

Week 6 The Ethical Turn
Partly in reaction to proceduralist tendencies in political theory, some thinkers have turned to the issue of the ethical underpinnings of a democratic order. Is there a necessary democratic ethos? What is the relation between the political and the ethical? Does an emphasis on ethics finish by negating politics?

Core Reading
Jacques Rancière, Disagreement.
Alain Badiou Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil

Supplementary Reading
Nancy Fraser, Recognition without Ethics, Theory, Culture and Society, 2001, vol 18 (2-3), 21-42
Jurgen Habermas On the Pragmatic, the Ethical and the Moral Employments of Practical Reason’ in his Justification and Application

**Questions**
Group 1 Q: Is a politics without ethics nothing but an empty proceduralism?
Group 2 Q: Is ethics the death of politics?

**Week 7: Rights**
Are there Human Rights? How should we understand human rights discourse? Can it be defended other than on foundationalist liberal claims that bear little scrutiny? Is the historical relativizing of human rights claims problematic for the weight we accord human rights? Should we understand the discourse as one that imposes liberal values on non-liberal peoples, or as retaining a genuine emancipatory and critical edge? If the idea of human rights is at the core of liberal discourse, should they be the primary focus for critical attack?

**Core Reading**
R. Geuss, *History and Illusion* last three sections of chapter 3

**Secondary reading**
Ranciere, Jacques (2004a) ‘Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103: 2/3: 297-370,

**Questions**
Group 1 Q: ‘The discourse of (human) Rights has proved to be one of the most effective political tools in contemporary democratic struggles.’ Discuss
Group 2 Q: ‘At best ,rights discourse mitigates rather than overcomes inequality. At worst, it perpetuates an insular politics of the wound.’ Discuss

**Week 8 Violence**
Politics is variously claimed to be about ‘power’ or about ‘authority’ – about the capacity of central institutions to command compliance that is to different degrees willed. Violence is then seen as the ‘other’ of politics, what it formally excludes and marginalizes, and it becomes a tool of the excluded and marginalized against the state. Yet the exclusion is itself a process steeped in violence, and the sanctification of the state as somehow free faces substantial critiques from those who recognize the costs imposed on these ‘marginal elements.
Core Reading

Frantz Fanon (2001), *Wretched of the Earth*,
Jean Paul Sartre ‘Preface’ to Fanon above

Secondary Reading

David Miller, ‘The Use and Abuse of Political Violence’ *Political Studies* 1984, 32, 401-19
Walter Benjamin, *Critique of Violence* (1921)
*Contemporary Political Theory*, 7: 90-108
Useful resource: *On Violence: A Reader* (Duke UP: 2007) extracts from Benjamin, Zizek,, Arendt,
Fanon, Bourdieu, Hegel et al.

Secondary Viewing

Gillo Pontecorvo *The Battle of Algiers* (‘One of the most remarkable films of all time’ *The Observer*)

Questions:
Group 1 Q: Can violence be justified as well as explained?
Group 2 Q: How (far) can violence be differentiated from the exercise of power and authority?