**POL 307: The Just Society**

**Professor Alan Patten, Spring 2017**

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In recent years, economic inequality has risen to startling new levels in the United States and in the world as a whole. The course explores the relationship between economic inequality and justice. Are the levels of economic inequality observed in our society unjust? By what standards? Does using the law and the tax system to ameliorate economic injustice introduce a new and distinct injustice? Is justice even relevant to thinking about who gets what?

The theme of the course, then, is *economic*justice. Justice has been called the first virtue of social institutions, and it is arguably the core concept of contemporary political philosophy. Questions of economic justice concern how goods such as income, wealth, power, and opportunities should be distributed, and what social, economic, and political institutions (e.g. the market, private property, the welfare state) are needed to achieve a just distribution.

The course examines different approaches to answering these questions. It draws on some classic works of political theory, including:

John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*.

Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto* and *Capital, volume I*.

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*

In addition to reading works by these canonical figures, we will examine a range of contemporary writings related to economic justice.

By the end of the course, students should have substantive knowledge of concepts and debates relating to economic justice and of their development in key historical and contemporary texts. They should also have learned how to apply some of the methods and techniques of analysis that are important in political theory, such as rigor, precision, textual interpretation, critical thinking, and clarity of expression and communication.

The course is accessible to students with no previous background in political theory or philosophy. Students who have studied, in a survey course, some or all of the major texts to be covered are also welcome in the course. The course is narrower in its focus than standard surveys of modern political thought, and thus is able to explore its central questions in considerable depth. In addition to the primary texts by canonical authors you may have encountered elsewhere, the syllabus also includes a number of important secondary works, as well as important contemporary works on justice and equality. The two final weeks of the course consider questions of economic justice in a more applied context.

*Course Requirements*

Essay #1 (15%) (1500 words maximum), due Friday, March 3rd, 4 pm, in Politics main office in Corwin. Questions to be distributed.

In-Class Quiz (15%), on Thursday, March 30th during the regularly scheduled class time. The quiz covers the weeks on Marx.

Essay #2 (20%) (2000 words maximum), due on Friday, May 5th 4 pm, in Politics main office in Corwin. Questions to be distributed.

Precept participation (10%)

Final Exam (40%), during May exam period. The 3-hr exam will be closed-book and in-class. It will include a mix of short answer and essay questions, and will test you on your understanding of the readings and lectures, and on your capacity to formulate and defend your own position on the issues discussed in the course.

Note on medical excuses: Late papers will be subject to a penalty of 1/3 letter grade per two-day period. Requests for the waiver of late penalties will be considered if they are made in a timely fashion and supported by a valid, documented reason (typically of a medical nature).

*Readings and Lecture Timetable*

A handful of books have been ordered to Labyrinth Bookstore. Other required readings will be posted on Blackboard.

**Week 1**

**Lectures:**

1. The Problem of Justice

2. Locke’s Project

**Required Readings** :

Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapters 1-4, 8-10

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- Organization

- How does Locke understand the “state of nature”? What purpose is played by this device?

**Week 2**

**Lectures:**

3. Rights and Property

4. The Justification of Private Property: Examining the Arguments

**Required Readings**:

Locke, *Second Treatise*, chapters 5, 11, 15, sec. 222; *First Treatise*, sec. 42 (<http://files.libertyfund.org/files/222/Locke_0057_EBk_v5.pdf>)

Jeremy Waldron, *The Right to Private Property*, pp. 137-41, 157-62, 168-91, 201-07

A. John Simmons*, The Lockean Theory of Rights*, 264-77, 288-98, 307-21

**Further suggested reading**:

James Tully, *Discourse on Property*,

Gopal Sreenivasan, *The Limits of Lockean Rights of Property.*

Alan Ryan, *Property and Political Theory*.

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- How, in general, does Locke understand rights?

- What is a right to private property? How does Locke justify such a right?

**Week 3**

**Lectures:**

5. Justice, Property and Government in Locke

6. Nozick and Entitlement Theory

**Require Readings:**

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Preface (first 3 paragraphs, pp. ix-x), and pp. 149-164, 167-174

A. John Simmons*, The Lockean Theory of Rights*, 321-27.

Thomas Nagel, “Libertarianism Without Foundations,” *Yale Law Journal* (1975)

**Further Suggested Reading:**

T.M. Scanlon**, “**Libertarianism and Liberty:How Not to Argue for Limited Government and Lower Taxes,” *Boston Review* (2011), access at: <http://bostonreview.net/archives/BR36.5/ndf_t_m_scanlon_libertarianism_liberty.php>

Jeremy Waldron, “Nozick and Locke: Filling the Space of Rights,” *Social Philosophy and Policy* (2005)

John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, Lectures on Locke

Jeffrey Paul (ed.) *Reading Nozick*.

Jonathan Wolff, *Robert Nozick: Property, Justice, and the Minimal State*.

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- How persuasive is Locke’s account of property?

- What is the purpose of government in Locke’s view? Can government legitimately pursue goals of economic justice?

**Week 4**

**Lectures**

7. Nozick and Appropriation

8. Marx’s Theory of History

**Required Readings:**

Nozick, *Anarchy State and Utopia*, pp. 174-182

G.A. Cohen, “Nozick on appropriation,” *New Left Review*

G.A. Cohen, “Freedom, Justice and Capitalism”, *New Left Review*

Karl Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, chapters 1-2 (pp. 218-44 of Penguin ed.)

**Further Suggested Readings:**

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

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, chapter on libertarianism.

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- What is the “entitlement” theory of justice?

- How successfully does Nozick justify original appropriation?

- Is there a special connection between freedom and libertarianism?

**Week 5**

**Lectures:**

9. Historical Materialism

10. Marx and labor theory of value

**Required Readings:**

Marx, *German Ideology*, pp. 175-195 in David McLellan (ed.) *Selected Writings* (*SW*);

Marx, *Preface to Critique of Political Economy*, pp. 425-26 in *SW.*

Marx, *Capital*, ch. 1.1-1.2 (pp. 125-37 of Penguin edition), 1.4 (163-77), ch. 4 (247-57), ch. 6 (270-80).

**Further Suggested Readings:**

G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History*

Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx*

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- What does it mean for a theory of history to be “materialist”?

- What does Marx mean by the following distinctions: “forces” and “relations” of production; “base” and “superstructure”?

- Where does morality fit into Marx’s understanding of history?

**Week 6**

**Lectures**

11. Marx and Exploitation

12. Evaluating Marx on Exploitation

**Required Readings:**

Marx, *Capital*, chs. 7-8 (pp. 283-319), ch. 9.1 (320-29), ch. 10.1-10.2 (340-353), ch. 10.5 (375-84), and final paragraph of ch. 10 (415-6)

**Further Suggested Readings:**

John Roemer, “Should Marxists Be Interested in Exploitation?” Excerpt in Roemer (ed.) *Analytical Marxism*, pp. 260-82. (full original is from *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (1985)).

G.A. Cohen, “The Labor Theory of Value and the Concept of Exploitation,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs*.

Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx*

Alan Wertheimer, *Exploitation*

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- What is the labor theory of value?

- What, according to Marx, accounts for surplus value?

- How persuasive is Marx’s theory of exploitation?

**Week 7**

**Lectures:**

13. Marx, Justice, and History

14. In-class test

**Required Readings:**

Marx, *Capital*, chs. 26-27 (pp. 873-895), chs. 31-32 (925-30).

Marx, *Critique of Gotha Program,* pp.610-6 in *SW*.

Cohen, G.A. *Why Not Socialism?* (electronic access through library)

**Further Suggested Readings:**

Allen Wood, *Karl Marx: Revised Edition*, pp. 127-47, 242-64 (plus endnotes).

G.A. Cohen, Review of Allen Wood, *Mind* (1983), pp. 442-45

Norman Geras, “The Controversy About Marx and Justice,” *New Left Review* (1985).

John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, “Lectures on Marx”

G.A. Cohen, “Equality: From Fact to Norm,” in *If You’re An Egalitarian, How Come You’re So Rich?*

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- Did Marx believe capitalism to be unjust? By what standard of justice?

- How persuasive is Cohen’s case for socialism?

**Week 8**

**Lectures:**

15. What is Utilitarianism?

16. Justice and Utilitarianism

**Required Readings:**

Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation* in *The Classical Utilitarians*, pp. 8-12, 19-22.

J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, in *The Classical Utilitarians,* chs. 1, 2, 5.

J.S. Mill, *On Liberty,* in *The Classical Utilitarians,* ch. 1.

**Further Suggested Readings:**

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, chapter on utilitarianism

Bernard Willams, “A Critique of Utilitarianism,” in J.J.C. Smart and B. Williams, *For and Against Utilitarianism,* secs. 1-2.

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- What is utilitarianism? What is the difference between act and rule utilitarianism? Between direct and indirect utilitarianism?

- Does utilitarianism provide a good way of thinking about justice?

- How does Mill reply to objections to the utilitarian approach to justice?

**Week 9**

**Lectures**

17. Rawls and the Original Position

18. Rawls and Fair Equality of Opportunity

**Required Readings**:

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice, revised edition*, secs. 1-8, 11-17.

Bernard Williams, “The Idea of Equality,” in *Problems of the Self*, pp. 239-49.

**Further Suggested Readings:**

Samuel Freeman (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*

Samuel Freeman, *Rawls*.

Norman Daniels (ed.) *Reading Rawls*

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- What is the “original position”? Why does Rawls employ this device?

- What are Rawls’ main objections to utilitarianism? Are they convincing?

- How does Rawls understand equality of opportunity?

- Why do this week’s authors think that equality of opportunity (especially formal equality of opportunity) is insufficient for justice?

**Week 10**

**Lectures**

19. Rawls and Difference Principle

20. Assessing the Difference Principle

**Required Readings:**

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice, revised edition*, secs. 20, 22-26, 29, 43, 48, 81, and pp. xiv-xvi of the “Preface for the Revised Edition.”

Harry Frankfurt, “Equality as a Moral Ideal,” *Ethics* (1987)

**Further Suggested Readings**

Paula Casal, “Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough?” *Ethics* (2007)

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- Does the difference principle require too much equality or not enough?

- Is “sufficiency” enough for justice?

**Week 11**

**Lectures:**

21. Race, Justice, and Integration

22. Assessing the “Imperative of Integration”

**Required Readings:**

Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, pp 1-21, 25-40, 69-73, 75-88, 112-27, 180-91.

**Further Suggested Readings:**

Tommie Shelby, “Inequality, Integration, and Imperatives of Justice: A Review Essay,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (2015)

Tommie Shelby, *Dark Ghettos: Injustice, Dissent, and Reform*

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- What if anything is distinctive about economic disparities between black and white Americans?

- Is there an “imperative of integration” in the United States?

**Week 12**

**Lectures**

23. Future generations and environmental justice

24. Economic justice across borders

**Required Readings:**

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice, revised edition*, secs. 44-5

Brian Barry, “Justice between generations,” pp. 268-284 in *Law Morality and Society: Essays in Honour of HLA Hart*

John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, pp. 3-5 and secs. 15-6.

Charles Beitz, “Justice and International Relations,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (1975).

**Further Suggested Readings:**

Derek Parfit, “Future Generations: Further Problems” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (1987), esp. sec. 1.

Brian Barry, “Sustainability and Intergenerational Justice,” pp. 93-117 in *Fairness and Futurity. Essays on Environmental Sustainability*. Available here: <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~dss4/BARRY1.PDF>

Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, Part III: secs. 1-4. (revises and expands the 1975 article)

Thomas Nagel, “The Problem of Global Justice” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (2005)

**Precept Discussion Questions:**

- What is the correct way to think about justice towards future generations?

- Is it morally arbitrary to maintain that we are under a fuller set of duties of economic justice towards fellow citizens and residents than we have towards people in other countries?