

Political Theory

Tutorial Questions and Readings

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Overview

In these tutorials, we will cover some of the biggest questions in political theory. In the first four weeks, we will focus on questions about ruling and its proper limits: what if anything is the state allowed to do? (week 1) Can it demand obedience? (week 2) Should it be democratic? (week 3) What rights do people have, and why? (week 4)

In the second four weeks, we will look at a slightly looser set of topics, centered on how our societies ought to be structured: what is justice, and what does it demand? (week 5) Should goods be distributed equally? (week 6) What does justice require in a global context? (week 7) And how should we revise common theories of justice in response to feminist insights? (week 8)

We'll not look explicitly at liberty and the two views taking its name from that value, liberalism and libertarianism. We'll ignore a bunch of other isms: socialism, perfectionism, communitarianism, conservatism. We'll also mostly bypass two pressing issues in modern societies, race and gender. These topics are as important as the ones we cover; but unfortunately, political philosophy is too big for us to look at everything. If you wish to discuss one of these topics, I'm happy to change some of the tutorials.

Organisation

We will meet in eight tutorials, and you will need to write an essay for each. In tutorial groups of more than one student, we will set up a system in which one student presents their essay, while the other gives a critical response in a rotating scheme—we will organise this before tutorials start.

LITERATURE

I expect you to read the literature I mark as “primary”. The secondary literature is for suggestions and usually helps to deepen your knowledge. Feel free, however, to look at whatever other literature catches your fancy. If there are specific articles or books you wish to focus on, say so and I'll see how we can modify the topic or essay question. Everything goes, as long as I think that it has instructive and philosophical value.

READING OVER THE BREAK

I strongly suggest that you do some reading over the break. Political theory is a very wide option that covers a lot of ground, and it is useful to get a “feel” for the field before you start. Some good starting points are the following:

General	Kymlicka, Will (2002). <i>Contemporary Political Philosophy</i> .
Modern Classics	Arendt, Hannah (1958). <i>The Human Condition</i> . Rawls, John (1972). <i>A Theory of Justice</i> . Nozick, Robert (1974). <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> . Raz, Joseph (1986). <i>The Morality of Freedom</i> .
Recent Works	Young, Iris Marion (2000). <i>Inclusion and Democracy</i> . Ypi, Lea (2011). <i>Global Justice and Avant-Garde Political Agency</i> . Huemer, Michael (2012). <i>The Problem of Political Authority</i> . Conly, Sarah (2013). <i>Against Autonomy</i> .

Contact me for any other suggestions. Another good way to prepare is to have a look at the readings suggested in the reading list.

DEADLINES

I have set topics and questions for each tutorial (see below). You will be required to send your essay to me at *10 am the day before the tutorial*. (E.g., if your tutorial is on Monday, send it to me Sunday 10 am at the latest.)

Please raise all difficulties and problems you have with your essay as soon as possible. If I do not receive your essay on time, I might not read it. If your essays reach me repeatedly late or not at all without reasonable excuse, other disciplinary steps might follow.

Please send all essays by email, in a Word-compatible format (.doc, .docx, or .rtf), to the email address given above. Please do not send me PDF documents, as I can not annotate them conveniently.

COMMENTS

I will usually provide written feedback for your essays. I tend to write lots of comments, but the quantity of my comments says nothing about the quality of your essay: even excellent essays will receive a lot. Furthermore, my main aim is to help you improve your essays. So more than 90% of my comments will be criticisms, questions or suggestions.

I will provide you with a guide on how to write philosophy essays—the guide sets the standards by which I assess essays.

Always talk to me if you feel you don’t understand my comments. Rewriting your essay can be one of the best things you can do to improve. Also, try to answer for yourself all questions I ask in my comments. If you are confident you can answer them well, you’re usually on a good track.

FEEDBACK

I will not give tentative grades for your papers, though I will aim to provide you with clear and helpful feedback on your progress.

Please raise any issues you have with my teaching or the topics we are dealing with immediately so that I can do better.

Week 1. Legitimacy

ESSAY QUESTION

Is consent necessary for legitimacy?

REMARKS

In this session we start with a classic question: what, if anything, justifies the state (or any other entity that rules over others)? When can the state coerce us, and why? We will later focus on the more specific question of whether democracy is necessary for legitimacy, so you can put questions of democracy aside for now. The same goes for questions of authority and obedience—we will look at the question whether we ought to obey the state in the next session.

The question is obviously huge, so (as always) try to break down your essay to something manageable.

PRIMARY READINGS

Peter, Fabienne. "Political Legitimacy", SEP. ([Start here for an overview.](#))

Simmons, John. "Justification and Legitimacy." *Ethics* 109, no. 4 (1999): 739–771. ([Gives some useful clarifications regarding the concept of legitimacy, and argues for a consent-based view.](#))

Buchanan, Allen. "Political Legitimacy and Democracy." *Ethics* 112, no. 4 (2002): 689–719. ([Argues against linking legitimacy with obedience, against consent views, and in favour of a justice-centred view. Set aside Buchanan's claims about democracy for now.](#))

Wellman, Christopher. "Liberalism, Samaritanism, and Political Legitimacy." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 25, no. 3 (1996): 211–37. ([Claims that the state is justified because it is necessary to save us from the perils of the state of nature.](#))

Huemer, Michael. *The Problem of Political Authority* (2012). Chapters 1-3, 5. ([Huemer defends anarchism: the claim that there is no legitimate political authority. Huemer writes clearly and convincingly, and it's worth reading more than the chapters I have given. Use his "analytic table of contents" to decide what to read.](#))

SECONDARY READINGS

Estlund, David. *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework* (2008). Chapter 3, "An Acceptability Requirement." ([An influential defender of a hypothetical acceptance view.](#))

Finnis, John. *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (1979). Chapter 9. (A natural law approach to authority. Argues that legitimate authority is needed for coordination.)

Shklar, Judith. "Liberalism of Fear." In *Political Liberalism: Variations on a Theme* (2004), edited by Shaun Young, 149–66. (A very different approach, focussing on the historical experience of liberalism.)

Nagel, Thomas. "Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 16, no. 3 (1987): 215–40. (Similar to Estlund: another "justificatory" approach which advocates legitimacy as higher-order impartiality.)

EXAMPLES OF PAST EXAM QUESTIONS

- Are 'authority' and 'legitimacy' wholly descriptive terms? (2011)
- If anarchic society is not possible, does anarchism have a point? (2008)
- Is the state a necessary evil? (2007)

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

- What is legitimacy?
- What is the link between authority and legitimacy? What is the link between these two concepts and political obligation?
- Do all states/does law necessarily claim authority for itself—i.e., is that one of the characteristic features of law?
- Is there a difference between agreement and consent? What does it consist in?
- What is the relationship between tacit or hypothetical consent, and actual consent? Could legitimacy be based on hypothetical consent?
- Is it a problem that most people have not consented to their government?
- Are good or just outcomes enough to make an authority legitimate?

Week 2. Authority and Obedience

ESSAY QUESTION

What is the best argument for the claim that we have a duty to obey the law? Does it succeed?

REMARKS

Last week we looked at whether the state could be justified. Now we turn to a more specific, though related question: do we have a duty to obey the law, or a duty to obey our rulers? What could, in principle, ground such a duty? Do rulers have authority over us, in that mere saying-so can give us reason to act?

When answering this question, please focus on one *specific* argument or position regarding the duty to obey, rather than writing a survey. This will require you to choose selectively from the reading list. In preparation for this week, it's useful if you first gain a general over-

view of the different positions which exist, and then pick the one you find most convincing and look at it in-depth. The literature below is, for this reason, split into a “general” reading list, and a six-part “special” reading list. In the tutorial, we will both discuss the general issue and the specific argument you have chosen to highlight in your essay.

GENERAL READINGS*

Wellman, Christopher, and John Simmons. *Is There a Duty to Obey the Law?* (2005) Chapters 5 & 6. ([The best book on the issue; consider it mandatory.](#))

Dagger, Richard and David Lefkowitz. “Political Obligation”. SEP.

Knowles, Dudley. *Political Obligation: a Critical Introduction* (2010). (Use either of these if you want more overview; alternatively, go directly to specific articles.)

SPECIAL READINGS

(1) Consent

Simmons, John. “Political Obligation and Consent.” In *The Ethics of Consent: Theory and Practice* (2010), edited by Franklin Miller and Alan Wertheimer.

Simmons, John. *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (1979). Chapters 3 and 4.

Green, Leslie. *The Authority of the State* (1988). Chapter 6.

(2) Fairness

Klosko, George. “The Principle of Fairness and Political Obligation.” *Ethics* 97, no. 2 (1987): 353–362.

Hart, H. L. A. “Are There Any Natural Rights?” *The Philosophical Review* 64, no. 2 (1955): 175–191.

Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974). Nozick’s discussion of fairness, p. 90–95.

Simmons, John. “The Principle of Fair Play.” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 8, no. 4 (1979): 307–337.

(3) Associative Accounts

Horton, John. “In Defence of Associative Political Obligations”; part one in *Political Studies* 54, no. 3 (2006): 427–443; part two in *Political Studies* 55, no. 1 (2007): 1–19.

Dagger, Richard. “Membership, Fair Play, and Political Obligation.” *Political Studies* 48, no. 1 (2000): 104–117.

Simmons, John. “Associative Political Obligations.” *Ethics* 106, no. 2 (1996): 247–273.

(4) Samaritanism

Wellman’s essay in Wellman/Simmons, see under “General Readings”.

* The selection of readings for this week borrows from Tom Porter’s reading list.

Renzo, Massimo. "Duties of Samaritanism and Political Obligation." *Legal Theory* 14, no. 3 (2008): 193–217.

Knowles, Dudley. "Good Samaritans and Good Government." *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 112, no. 2 (2012): 161–178.

(5) Natural Duties

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Chapter 6, "Duty and Obligation".

Simmons in Wellman/Simmons (see under "General Readings"), Chapter 7, "Natural Duties and the Duty to Obey the Law".

Waldron, Jeremy. "Special Ties and Natural Duties." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22, no. 1 (1993): 3–30.

(6) Other Accounts

Walker, A. D. M. "Obligations of Gratitude and Political Obligation." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 18, no. 4 (1989): 359–364.

Gilbert, Margaret. *A Theory of Political Obligation: Membership, Commitment, and the Bonds of Society* (2006).

Klosko, George. "Multiple Principles of Political Obligation." *Political Theory* 32, no. 6 (2004): 801–824.

EXAMPLES OF PAST EXAM QUESTIONS

- What, if anything, is wrong with philosophical anarchism? (2013)
- When, if ever, should citizens disobey the law? (2011)
- 'If everyone else obeys the law, it is only fair that you do too.' Could this be a good argument? (2009)

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

- What is authority? What is the difference between practical and theoretical authority, and on which side falls political authority?
- If I know better than you in some area, does that give me authority over you?
- What are the general features of duties to obey?
- What practical difference would it make if there were no duties to obey?
- What is philosophical anarchism, and how is it different from political anarchism? Is there any plausible defence of *a priori* philosophical anarchism?
- Imagine that you come to a red light at an empty intersection at night. The law forbids you to cross. Should we seriously say that you acted wrongly in case you crossed? Would a police man be (morally, not merely legally) justified if he fined you for crossing?
- What is civil disobedience? Is civil disobedience ever justified? Might it sometimes be required? On what basis?

Week 3. Democracy

ESSAY QUESTION

Is the value of democracy purely instrumental?

REMARKS

In the last two sessions we asked general questions about legitimacy and obedience. Assume that we have somehow settled this question in favour of the permissibility of ruling. We can now ask a more specific question: who should rule? In particular, is democracy the only legitimate form of government? Or is there no particular reason to single out democracy as the uniquely legitimate form of government? To these questions we turn here.

One particular way of approaching the issue is whether democracy has merely instrumental value, or whether it also has intrinsic value. The primary readings are structured around this question. There are some wider topics we can discuss in the tutorial as well: e.g., what is the best way of understanding democracy? What are the necessary features to call some regime democratic? etc.

PRIMARY READINGS

Arneson, Richard. "Democracy Is Not Intrinsically Just." In *Justice and Democracy: Essays for Brian Barry* (2004), edited by Keith Dowding, Robert Goodin, and Carole Pateman, 40–58. ([Claims that we should value democracy merely instrumentally](#). Arneson has given similar defences elsewhere—e.g., "The Supposed Right to a Democratic Say" in Christiano/Christman, *Contemporary debates in political philosophy* [2009].)

Christiano, Thomas. "The Authority of Democracy." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 12, no. 3 (2004): 266–90. ([Elaborate argument that we should value democracy intrinsically](#). See also Christiano's book, *The Constitution of Equality* [2008].)

Anderson, Elizabeth. "Democracy: Instrumental Vs Non-Instrumental Value." In *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy* (2009), edited by Thomas Christiano and John Philip Christman. ([Some doubts about whether the debate is drawn in the right way, defending a broadly intrinsic account](#).)

Valentini, Laura. "Justice, Disagreement and Democracy." *British Journal of Political Science* (2012). ([A compromise account which stresses the importance of reasonable disagreement](#). Also builds on the important distinction between "ideal" and "non-ideal" theory.)

SECONDARY READINGS

Peter, Fabienne. *Democratic Legitimacy* (2008). ([Extensive treatment of different theories of democratic legitimacy](#). Consult if you want more detail.)

Estlund, David. "Political Quality." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 17, no. 1 (2000): 127–60. ([Another compromise position; argues that political quality matters, but that it's not the only thing which matters](#). You can also look at Estlund's book, *Democratic Authority*, for a more extensive account.)

Gutmann, Amy, and Dennis Thompson. *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (2004). ([A very clear and readable defence of a particular approach to understanding democracy](#).)

Brennan, Jason. "The Right to a Competent Electorate." *The Philosophical Quarterly* (2011). ([Defends the controversial claim that "incompetent" people should not have a right to vote.](#))

Christiano, Thomas (ed.). *Philosophy and Democracy: An Anthology* (2003). ([A collection of various articles on democracy; gives a good overview of controversial topics.](#))

EXAMPLES OF PAST EXAM QUESTIONS

- To what extent does the ideal of democracy require that collective decision-making strives for consensus? (2013)
- Does democracy require majority-rule as a decision procedure? (2012)
- Is representative democracy the best system or only the best attainable? (2011)

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

- What is the best way to conceptualise democracy?
- Is deliberation central to democracy?
- Is restricting the right to vote ever justified?
- Does democracy stand in tension with other values, such as liberty? How should we resolve conflicts if there are any?
- Can decisions be undemocratic even if they have been decided democratically?
- Is there a human right to democracy?
- Is it rational to vote, given that my vote almost never makes a difference?
- Would a society of angels need democracy?
- Is democracy a way to respect those we disagree with?
- Is judicial review compatible with core democratic ideals?

Week 4. Rights

ESSAY QUESTION

What does it mean to say that we have a right? Why do we have rights?

REMARKS

Assume now that a state—democratic or not—exists. Every modern commentator would object to absolutism, the idea that the state could do whatever it wanted to do to citizens. So there have to be principled limits to state action. But what are they, and how we can determine them? There are different ways to approach the issue—via the notion of liberty, or through Mill's harm principle, or the idea that the state should act in ways that are justifiable to everyone. (We can focus on these ideas in another tutorial if you like.) In this tutorial, we will single out the idea of individual rights in particular.

What does it mean to have a right? Philosophers have developed a huge wealth of fine-grained conceptual distinctions. We will look at some of these, and how rights language can be applied to political conflicts.

PRIMARY READINGS

Raz, Joseph. "On the Nature of Rights." *Mind* 93 (1984): 194–214. (A classic defence of the so-called "interest theory" of rights.)

Wenar, Leif. "The Value of Rights." In *Law and Social Justice* (2005), edited by Joseph Campbell, Michael O'Rourke, and David Shier, 179–211. (Considers how interest and status theories might be applied in a particular example.)

Feinberg, Joel. "The Nature and Value of Rights." *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 4, no. 4 (1970): 243–60. (Explains what rights add to our moral language through the example of "Nowhereville".)

Nagel, Thomas. "Personal Rights and Public Space." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 24, no. 2 (1995): 83–107. (A defence of rights on the basis of moral status; for a more recent defence, see Kamm.)

SECONDARY READINGS

Kamm, Frances. *Intricate Ethics* (2007). Chapters 2, 8 and 9. (Kamm gives the philosophically most precise statement of a theory of rights.)

Griffin, James. *On Human Rights* (2008). (An account of human rights based on moral agency.)

Waldron, Jeremy. *Liberal Rights: Collected Papers, 1981-1991* (1993). (A collection of very influential articles which cast a light on various issue regarding rights.)

Fabre, Cécile. *Whose Body Is It Anyway? Justice and the Integrity of the Person* (2006). (Starts from an interest account of rights, and continues to defend various controversial results on that basis.)

EXAMPLES OF PAST EXAM QUESTIONS

- On what basis should we distinguish human rights from other kinds of rights? (2013)
- Can we justify rights to do wrong? (2011)
- Is it ever permissible to violate individual rights? (2010)

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

- What is "the point" of rights? Why should we use them in political discourse?
- Do rights protect our interests or our choices? Or some mix of the two?
- Do animals have rights? Is there anything conceptually different to animal rights, when compared to human rights?
- Is it paradoxical that we cannot permissibly violate one right to avoid five other rights being violated? How can this result be defended?
- Are there any positive rights? Are positive rights strange?
- Does Hohfeld's schema help us to understand rights?
- Are human rights rights?
- Are human rights a Western invention? Are they insensitive to the differences between cultures?
- If people have rights, how can the state be legitimate?
- Can rights conflict? How do we resolve such conflicts?

Week 5. (Distributive) Justice

ESSAY QUESTION

Why should the application of principles of justice only be restricted to the ‘basic structure’ of society?

OR Is Rawls’s argument for his two principles of justice convincing?

REMARKS

In the first four weeks, we have focussed quite extensively on what possibly limits and in principle might justify the state. Now we turn to a more positive way to look at the issue: what is it that we should aim at in politics? What would an ideal distribution of liberties, rights, wealth and other goods look like? Answers to these questions we give in a theory of (distributive) justice. One of the most famous answers, of course, is provided by Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*. In this week, we will focus heavily on Rawls, but also pave the way to focus more broadly on distributive justice.

(NOTE: If you have already had substantial contact with Rawls, please tell me so in advance—I’ll then tweak the contents of this tutorial so that we can look more at other philosophers.)

PRIMARY READINGS

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice* (preferably the revised edition from 1999). Focus on chapters 1 to 3, especially sections 1–5, 11–13, 15, and 20–30. (It can be helpful to read this book in conjunction with Samuel Freeman’s *Rawls* [2007, chapters 1–4], which is the best existing general introduction to Rawls.)

Cohen, G. A. *If You’re an Egalitarian, How Come You’re so Rich?* (2000). Chapters 8 and 9. (Cohen claims that it’s insufficient to claim that justice is merely a virtue of institutions, and not also of people.)

Young, Iris Marion. *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990). Chapter 1, “Displacing the Distributive Paradigm”. (Argues that Rawls’ and other philosophers’ focus on “distribution” obscures the importance of other issues relevant to justice.)

Okin, Susan Moller. *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (1989). Chapter 5. (Claims that Rawls’s approach ignores important issues about justice in families.)

SECONDARY READINGS

Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974). Chapter 7, “Distributive Justice”. (A libertarian critique of distributive justice.)

Hampton, Jean. “Contracts and Choices: Does Rawls Have a Social Contract Theory?” *Journal of Philosophy* 77, no. 6 (1980): 315–338. (A methodological worry about Rawls’s approach.)

Waldron, Jeremy. “The Primacy of Justice.” *Legal Theory* 9, no. 4 (2003): 269–94. (A clear defence of why justice might be primary.)

Sandel, Michael. “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self.” *Political Theory* 12, no. 1 (1984): 81–96. (The “communitarian”

critique, developed at greater length in *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* [1982].)

Daniels, Norman, ed. *Reading Rawls: Critical Studies on Rawls' A Theory of Justice* (1975). (The articles by Dworkin, Nagel, Hare, and Hart contained in this collection are all famous responses to Rawls.)

EXAMPLES OF PAST EXAM QUESTIONS

- Is it sufficient for a just society that its coercive institutions are just? (2009)
- To what extent (if at all) is justice a matter of distributing goods and bads according to desert? (2008)
- Does a hypothetical social contract provide a satisfactory way to identify principles of social justice? (2006)

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

Rawls's Methodology:

- Why assume that the contractors in the Original Position are self-interested?
- Does the veil of ignorance alienate us from our real selves? Can moral thinking operate under the highly abstract "view from nowhere" of the Original Position?
- The contract made in the Original Position is not a real contract. But hypothetical contracts are not binding. Is this a problem for Rawls?

Rawls's principles of justice:

- Why would the contractors in the Original Position not choose utilitarianism?
- Is the difference principle a plausible principle for distributing goods? Is it too risk-averse?
- Does the difference principle give an unfair advantage to people who are too egoistic or amoral to share?
- Is it true that "justice is the first virtue of institutions"? Could there not be other things, such as security, efficiency or economic growth that sometimes outweigh justice?
- Why would justice merely be a virtue of institutions?

Criticism of Rawls:

- Why should justice be only a virtue of institutions, as Rawls claims? Does justice not also make demands on individuals?
- Does Rawls ignore the importance of community? Does his liberalism rest on an implausible picture of "atomistic" individuals?
- Does Rawls fail to adequately take into account the historical and current disadvantages women suffer from?
- Is it a problem for Rawls that "liberty upsets patterns"?

Week 6. Egalitarianism

ESSAY QUESTION

What should egalitarians seek to equalise?

OR Should we focus on equal relations between people, rather than equal distributions?

REMARKS

A crucial ingredient in justice appears to be equality. So an important question is how we should best conceive of equality. An influential view on this issue has been developed by Ronald Dworkin and others, which is often called luck egalitarianism. This is the view we'll focus on this week.

PRIMARY READINGS

Knight, Carl. "Luck Egalitarianism." *Philosophy Compass* 8, no. 10 (2013): 924–34. (Brief overview of luck egalitarianism and its varieties.)

Dworkin, Ronald. *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality* (2002). Chapters 1 and 2. (The most famous statement of luck egalitarianism.)

Anderson, Elizabeth. "What Is the Point of Equality?" *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (1999): 287–337. (Criticises that Dworkin misunderstands why we value equality.)

Frankfurt, Harry. "Equality as a Moral Ideal." *Ethics* 98, no. 1 (1987): 21–43. (Argues that the rhetoric of equality really masks a concern to fulfil everyone's basic needs.)

Parfit, Derek. "Equality and Priority." *Ratio* 10, no. 3 (1997): 202–21. (States Parfit's "levelling down objection" against the intrinsic value of equality.)

SECONDARY READINGS

Cohen, G. A. "On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice." *Ethics* 99, no. 4 (1989): 906–44. (Looks somewhat closer at how we should understand egalitarianism.)

Casal, Paula. "Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough." *Ethics* 117, no. 2 (2007): 296–326. (Argues against sufficiency theorists such as Frankfurt and Crisp.)

Scanlon, Thomas. "When does equality matter?" 2013 Uehiro Lectures. Online at <http://blog.practicaethics.ox.ac.uk/2013/12/2013-uehiro-lectures/> (Scanlon is sceptical about whether equality has any global value, though he accepts that equality matters in various other ways.)

Parijs, Philippe Van. "Why Surfers Should Be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 20, no. 2 (1991): 101–31. (An applied take on some of the issues discussed so far.)

EXAMPLES OF PAST EXAM QUESTIONS

- Do inequalities of income and wealth matter only insofar as they contribute to inequalities of power or status or both? (2013)
- Do the industrious owe anything to the lazy or the reckless? (2012)
- 'It is important to reduce some inequalities in society, but not because equality itself is of value.' Discuss. (2007)

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

- What is it that we should equalise—ressources, well-being, opportunities, rights?
- Does any deviation from equality need to be justified?
- How should a moral view take into account that some people are more naturally talented than others, without having done anything to deserve such greater talent?
- If there was no free will, would luck egalitarianism cease to be attractive?
- Does egalitarianism lead to 'levelling-down'? Should we accept levelling-down?
- Can any political theory be stated as demanding some form of equality?
- Are luck egalitarianism and relational egalitarianism really competitors, or can they be made compatible?

Week 7. Global Justice

ESSAY QUESTION

Are the principles of justice that apply within states different from the principles of justice that apply in the international realm?

REMARKS

The last two sections, and most of the first four tutorials as well, focussed on justice in a national context—that is, a classic, bounded state. This is certainly the context we best know. But there are clearly pressing questions of justice (and of legitimacy?) in a global context—issues about borders, immigration, war, trade relations, and the legacy of colonialism. It's more difficult to say what the relevant principles of global justice are. Rawls famously suggested a relatively minimal set of principles for global justice in his *Law of Peoples* (1999). But most philosophes have not followed Rawls, and advocated much more extensive principles for global justice. In this tutorial, we will discuss what these principles might be, and how questions about justice might structurally and substantively differ when transposed into a global context.

PRIMARY READINGS

Fabre, Cécile. *Justice in a Changing World* (2007). Chapter 5, "Global Distributive Justice". ([Informative discussion of main approaches to global distributive justice.](#))

Caney, Simon. *Justice Beyond Borders* (2005). Chapters 1 & 4. ([One defence of a cosmopolitan view.](#))

Miller, David. "Justice and Boundaries." *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 8, no. 3 (2009): 291–309. ([Argues against the main cosmopolitan arguments.](#) Miller is a prolific author who has defended the nationalist side on many occasions—e.g., in *On Nationality* [1995] and *National Responsibility and Global Justice* [2007].)

Ypi, Lea. "Statist Cosmopolitanism." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (2008): 48–71. ([A “compromise” position,](#) arguing that for various reasons, cosmopolitans will still rely on states. This also introduces issues of “non-ideal” theory which are of broader interest as to how one should do political philosophy.)

Ronzoni, Miriam. "The Global Order: A Case of Background Injustice? A Practice-Dependent Account." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 37, no. 3 (2009): 229–56. ([An ingenious argument sketching how we might derive principles of global justice.](#))

SECONDARY READINGS

Abizadeh, Arash. "Cooperation, Pervasive Impact, and Coercion: On the Scope (not Site) of Distributive Justice." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35, no. 4 (2007): 318–58. ([Long, but usefully outlines and criticizes the main options one might take regarding justice on a global level.](#))

Nagel, Thomas. "The Problem of Global Justice." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33, no. 2 (2005): 113–47.

Sangiovanni, Andrea. "Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35, no. 1 (2007): 3–39. ([Two influential articles.](#))

Kukathas, Chandran. "The Mirage of Global Justice." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23, no. 1 (2006): 1–28. ([A critical view.](#))

Nussbaum, Martha. *Frontiers of Justice.* Chapter 5, "Capabilities across Natural Boundaries".

EXAMPLES OF PAST EXAM QUESTIONS

- Does justice recognise borders? (2010)
- ‘Thanks to globalisation, our duties to foreigners are now as strong as those to our fellow citizens.’ Discuss. (2009)
- To what extent does the value of national self-determination limit what people in poor countries can justly demand of those in rich countries? (2006)

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

- Do we have special duties to our compatriots? How strong are these duties?
- Should cosmopolitans advocate a world state?
- Do countries have a right to unilaterally control their borders?
- Is there a human right to immigration?
- Can patriotism be morally defended?
- What special claims, if any, to colonized people have on their former colonizers?

Week 8. Feminism

ESSAY QUESTION

Is liberal feminism too accommodating?

OR Are feminists right to claim that the “personal is political”?

REMARKS

Feminism is not really a topic which is separate from the rest of the topics we have considered so far. It's probably better to say that there are feminist perspectives on all big topics in political philosophy. Neither is feminism a unified body of thought: it comes in various forms, postmodernist, radical, liberal, Marxist and so on. Still, what unifies many different feminist thinkers is their tendency to challenge mainstream (especially liberal) thought, with its biases and blind corners.

In this tutorial, we will ask what we can learn from these challenges, though we will not be able to give an account of feminism in its full breadth. A more specific issue which we can discuss concerns the private/public distinction, which feminists have famously challenged.

PRIMARY READINGS

Okin, Susan Moller. *Justice, Gender, and the Family*. New York: Basic Books, 1989. Chapter 1, “Justice and Gender”. (Gives a good overview of feminist themes in political philosophy.)

Pateman, Carole. “Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy”. In *The Disorder of Women* (1989), 118-140. (One of the most classic critiques of mainstream liberalism.)

Nussbaum, Martha. *Sex and Social Justice* (1999). Chapters 1 and 2. (Nussbaum is a liberal feminist, and here turns to a nuanced defence of liberal feminism. The whole book is excellent, so have a look if you find the time.)

Benhabib, Seyla. “Feminism and Postmodernism.” In *Feminist Contentions* (1995), by Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler et al., 17-34. (Objects to the alliance of feminism with certain strong forms of postmodernism.)

SECONDARY READINGS

MacKinnon, Catharine. “Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence.” *Signs* 8, no. 4 (1983): 635–58. (MacKinnon is a “radical feminist”. This article gives a good impression of the main themes in her philosophy. Read this if you want a contrast to the authors from the primary reading.)

Mouffe, Chantal. “Feminism, Citizenship, and Radical Democratic Politics.” In *Social Postmodernism* (1995), edited by Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990).

Eaton, A. W. 'A Sensible Antiporn Feminism.' *Ethics* 117, no. 4 (2007): 674–715. (An applied issue which we can discuss in the tutorials if you like.)

Benatar, David. *The Second Sexism: Discrimination Against Men and Boys* (2012). (As the title says—argues that, if we understand sexism correctly, then we should also care about some forms of discrimination men suffer from.)

EXAMPLES OF PAST EXAM QUESTIONS

- Does the claim that gender is socially constructed help the feminist? (2012)
- Should feminists demand equality or insist on 'difference'? (2009)
- Does feminist thought fail to appreciate the value of the private sphere? (2007)

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

- Most of the history of political philosophy has been dominated by white men. Does this mean we shouldn't trust it?
- Should feminists endorse postmodernism? Marxism?
- Would there be a need for feminism in an ideal society? Does our answer to this question matter?
- What does it mean to say that gender is socially constructed?

Alternative Topics

The following are some alternative topics which can be substituted for existing ones. Contact me in advance if you want to do any of them. I usually consider the topics in week 1-3 and 5 as "core topics" which I would be slow to replace.

Alternate 1. Perfectionism & Neutrality

ESSAY QUESTION

Should the state be neutral between citizens' competing conceptions of the good?

PRIMARY READINGS

Waldron, Jeremy. "Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism." *Philosophical Quarterly* 37, no. 147 (1987): 127–50.

Nussbaum, Martha. "Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 39, no. 1 (2011): 3–45.

Wall, Steven. "Perfectionism in Politics: A Defense." In *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy*, edited by Thomas Christiano and John Philip Christman. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

SECONDARY READINGS

Larmore, Charles. "The Moral Basis of Political Liberalism." *Journal of Philosophy* 96, no. 12 (1999): 599–625.

Peter, Fabienne. "Epistemic Foundations of Political Liberalism." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 10, no. 5 (2013): 598-620.

Gaus, Gerald. "Liberal Neutrality: A Compelling and Radical Principle." In *Perfectionism and Neutrality: Essays in Liberal Theory*, edited by George Klosko and Steven Wall, 137–66. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

Arneson, Richard. "Liberal Neutrality on the Good: An Autopsy." In *Perfectionism and Neutrality: Essays in Liberal Theory*, edited by George Klosko and Steven Wall, 191–218. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

EXAMPLES OF PAST EXAM QUESTIONS

- Should the state try to be neutral with respect to its citizens' views about how they should live their lives? (2012)
- Can paternalism in politics ever be defended? (2011)
- Is there a distinctive liberal conception of the good life? (2010)

Alternate 2. Conservatism

ESSAY QUESTION

'Let's hang on to what we've got.' Is there more to conservatism than this principle? (2010 exam question)

PRIMARY READINGS

Robin, Corey. *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism From Edmund Burke To Sarah Palin* (2013). Introduction.

Oakeshott, Michael. *Rationalism in politics and other essays* (1961). Chapter 1, "Rationalism in politics".

Hayek, F. A. *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960). "Postscript: Why I am not a Conservative".

Sandel, Michael. "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self." *Political Theory* 12, no. 1 (1984): 81–96.

SECONDARY READINGS

Scruton, Roger. *The Meaning of Conservatism* (2001).

Gutmann, Amy. "Review: Communitarian Critics of Liberalism." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (1985): 308–22.

Freeden, Michael. *Ideologies and political theory* (1996). Chapter 8, "Theorizing about Conservative Ideology".

EXAMPLES OF PAST EXAM QUESTIONS

- Can conservatives offer coherent criteria for evaluating political options? (2012)
- Is liberal conservatism a contradiction in terms? (2011)

- 'Only liberals really care about freedom.' Should either conservatives or socialists be willing to concede this? (Answer with reference to conservatives, or to socialists, but not to both.) (2009)

Alternate 3. Liberty

ESSAY QUESTION

What is our best conception of liberty? On that conception, is liberty the supreme value in politics?

REMARKS

This essay topic splits up into two halves, and you should spend roughly equal time and space on each. Note that the first question does not ask you to *define* the *concept* of freedom (which might well be impossible), but it rather asks you defend a particular *conception* of freedom. It might help if you reflect on what makes one conception of freedom superior to another.

The second question again uses a technical term, "supreme value", which you should briefly explain. In trying to answer the question, ask yourself what an alternative view would look like—i.e., a view which doesn't regard liberty as a supreme value, or as a value at all—and how it would differ.

PRIMARY READINGS

Kukathas, Chandran. "Liberty." In *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, edited by Robert Goodin and Philip Pettit, 685–698. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. (Use as an overview.)

Berlin, Isaiah. "Two Concepts of Liberty", in *Four Essays on Liberty*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Ryan, Alan, ed. *The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honour of Isaiah Berlin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979. In particular:

Cohen, "Capitalism, Freedom and the Proletariat", 9–26.

Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty?", 175–194.

Pettit, Philip. *Republicanism: a Theory of Freedom and Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Chapter 2. (For secondary reading, chapters 1 and 3.)

SECONDARY READINGS

MacCallum, Gerald C., Jr. "Negative and Positive Freedom." *The Philosophical Review* 76, no. 3 (1967): 312–334.

Raz, Joseph. *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. Chapters 14 & 15.

Wolff, Jonathan. "Freedom, Liberty, and Property." *Critical Review* 11, no. 3 (1997): 345–357.

Parijs, Philippe Van. *Real Freedom for All: What (if Anything) Can Justify Capitalism?* New Ed. Clarendon Press, 1997.

FURTHER QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

- Is the distinction between “positive” and “negative” liberty helpful? Does McCallum’s scheme give us any additional insight into the idea of liberty?
- Is the debate between different conceptions of liberty a merely conceptual debate amongst philosophers, or already a political debate?
- Is there a meaningful difference between liberty and freedom?
- Under what conditions are we unfree? Is a lack of freedom always bad?
- Can we measure freedom? Can we weigh the freedom of one person against that of another? Are we allowed to?
- Does the concept of *political* freedom depend on *metaphysical* forms of freedom—e.g., free will?
- What is the connection of freedom with responsibility? With autonomy? With choice?
- Is it always better to have more choice than less?
- If we acknowledge liberty as the supreme value, what should we be—liberals, libertarians, anarchists?
- Is valuing liberty compatible with being a socialist?
- Does freedom matter by itself, or only insofar as it makes our lives go better?