

Phil 115: Political Philosophy

Lecture: W, Th, F, 10–12:30 in 109 Dwinelle

Discussion section: Tu, 10–12:30 in 109 Dwinelle

Website: <http://sophos.berkeley.edu/kolodny/Su07Phil115.htm>

Instructor:

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Office hours: W 2–4 144 Moses Hall, or by appointment

Graduate Student Instructor:

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Description:

What is political philosophy? How does it differ from political science? In political science, one seeks to describe, explain, and predict political phenomena. (Why did Italy and Germany unify when they did? What impact will demographic shifts have on the presidential election?) These questions must be settled empirically: by consulting history, observing differences between countries, taking polls, and so on.

Political philosophy asks different questions, which it is less clear that we can settle empirically. Some of these questions are conceptual. What makes a particular form of human interaction political? Other questions are normative. What sort of government should we have? How should we, as individuals, relate to it?

This course focuses on the political philosophy of John Rawls, 1921–2002.

Readings:

1. Reader, available at Copy Central, 2560 Bancroft Way. Included readings are marked with a “*”.
2. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice, Original Edition*
3. Rawls, *Political Liberalism, Paperback Edition*
4. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*
5. Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*
6. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*
7. Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*

Requirements:

1. For each lecture, [download the handout](#) and bring it to class.
2. Section participation: 10% of course grade.
3. First paper: 15% of course grade. Three pages.
4. Second and third papers: 25% of course grade each. Five pages each.
5. Final exam: 25% of course grade. The exam questions will be selected from a longer list that you will get beforehand.

Note: The GSI will not give extensive comments on the last paper and final exam. However, the GSI will be available to meet to discuss them in person.

Syllabus:

1. Wednesday, May 23

Two interpretations of Rawls's project
Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§1–4, 7–9

2. Thursday, May 24

The threat of utilitarianism

Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Bk. III, Ch. V §§ 1–6; Ch. XI §§1–2, 5, 9;
Bk. IV, Ch. I–II, III §§1, 4, 7

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. xi–xii, xvii–xviii, §§5–6

3. Friday, May 25

Justice as fairness as reconstruction of the social contract

*Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Ch. I–II, VIII

**The Declaration of Independence*

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§3–6 (review), 18–19, 51–52

Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, §6

First paper assigned

First paper due: At the start of section Tuesday, May 29.

4. Wednesday, May 30

The principles of justice as fairness

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§11–15, 17

5. Thursday, May 31

Contrast with libertarianism

Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. ix, 9–35, 48–53

6. Friday, June 1

Contrast with libertarianism

Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 149–164, 167–182, 280–294, 331

7. Wednesday, June 6

Contrast with libertarianism

Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, lect. VII

Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, §§6 (review), 14–16

8. Thursday, June 7

Criticism of Rawls's treatment of natural endowment

Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 183, 198–204, 213–231

*Gauthier, "Justice and Natural Endowment"

9. Friday, June 8

Rawls on legitimate expectations, desert, and natural endowment

Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Bk. III, Ch. V §6 (review)

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§17 (review), 47–48

Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, §§20–22, 48

Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, lect. VII §§7–8 (review)

Second paper assigned

Second paper due: At the start of section Tuesday, June 12.

10. Wednesday, June 13

The argument from the original position: set-up and intuitive presentation and the two principles over average utility

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§20–29

11. Thursday, June 14

The equality and priority of the basic liberties

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§31–37, 39, 54, 82

*Hart, “Rawls on Liberty and Its Priority,” §§III, VI

*Excerpt from the revised edition of *Theory*, §82

Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, lect. VIII

12. Friday, June 15

The argument from the original position: the difference principle over a social minimum; and a summary of the stability and congruence arguments

*Cohen, “Democratic Equality”

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§40, 69, 75–77, 86

Third paper assigned

Third paper due: At the start of section Tuesday, June 19.

13. Wednesday, June 20

Justice as fairness as a political conception: the fact of reasonable pluralism and recasting the ideas of *Theory*

Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Introduction, lect. I, II §§1–3, V §§3–4

14. Thursday, June 21

Justice as fairness as a political conception: overlapping consensus and public reason

Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, lect. IV, VI, pp. li–lvii

15. Friday, June 22

The claims of nations and the claims of persons

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §19 (review)

*Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, ch. II, §1; VI

*Scheffler, "Liberalism, Egalitarianism, and Nationalism"

*Pogge, *Realizing Rawls*, ch. 6

Final exam questions distributed

16. Wednesday, June 27

The law of peoples

Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, Introduction, parts II–IV, Conclusion

17. Thursday, June 28

Review

18. Friday, June 29

Final Exam

Course Policies:

Extensions:

Plan ahead. You may request extensions from your GSI *up until 72 hours* before papers are due. After then, extensions will be granted *only for medical and family emergencies*.

Submitting Work:

Papers must be submitted, on paper, by you, to your GSI, in discussion section, by 10:10am. Papers submitted later will lose *one step* (e.g., B+ to B) *immediately* and then an *additional step every 24 hours*. If you cannot come to lecture on the due date, you may request to make other arrangements with your GSI, so long as you do so well before the deadline. Whatever the circumstances, you are responsible for ensuring that your GSI gets your paper. Forgotten or unopenable attachments, bounced or lost emails, and so on, are your responsibility.

"Re-grading":

You are strongly encouraged to discuss grades and comments on papers with your GSI or me. However, *grades on particular papers and exams will not be changed under any circumstances*. While there is no perfect system, selective "re-grading" at students' request only makes things worse. "Second" grades are likely to be less accurate and less fair than "first" grades. This is because, among other things, the GSI does not have access to other papers for purposes of comparison, the student will inevitably supply additional input (clarifications, explanations, etc.) that the original paper did not, and there are certain biases of self-selection.

The only exception, to which none of these concerns apply, is a suspected arithmetical or recording error in your final course grade. Please do not hesitate to bring this to your GSI's or my attention.

Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism, cheating, and other kinds of academic dishonesty will result in an “F” in the course as a whole and a report to Student Judicial Affairs. You are expected to be familiar with the definitions of academic dishonesty, from the Student Code of Conduct, that can be found at the following URL: <http://students.berkeley.edu/osl/sja.asp?id=983&rcol=1202>.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you have an official accommodation letter that is relevant to this course, please notify both me and your GSI at a reasonable time. We will do whatever we can to help.