Political Philosophy
Third Year Seminar
Winter, 2021

Course Description:

One of the greatest political philosophers of the last century, G.A. Cohen, said that the central dividing line between liberalism and socialism concerns the role of motives in political theorising. This course will provide a general introduction to this topic. We will address five different sets of related issues. Firstly, we consider a Marxian theory of non-alienation and Anderson’s theory of relational egalitarianism. Secondly, we will critically engage with two contemporary interpretations of the famous slogan, ‘from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs.’ Third, we consider the significance of active coordination in political ethics. Fourth, we will engage with Cohen’s socialist critique of John Rawls’ liberal egalitarianism. Fifth, we consider the most influential lines of response to Cohen, which will raise the general question of the limits of justice and the extent to which the ‘personal is political.’

Personnel:

Course Secretary: Ms. Ann-Marie Cowe (philinfo@ed.ac.uk)
Course Organiser: Dr. Barry Maguire (bmaguire@ed.ac.uk)
Co-Instructor: Dr. David Levy (dlevy@ed.ac.uk)
Lectures: Released online on LEARN on Mondays by 1300hrs

Tutorials:
- Monday 1110 – 1200 (online)
- Monday 1210 – 1300 (online)
- Tuesday 0900 – 0950 (online)
- Thursday 1510 – 1600 (Chaplaincy auditorium)
- Friday 1000 – 1050 (Dugald Steward, 3.10-3.11)
- Friday 1110 - 1200 (Dugald Steward, 3.10-3.11).

N.B. As of 14 December 2020, all tutorials are scheduled to be online for the first three weeks, with the Thursday and Friday thereafter in person. This is subject to change. Please check LEARN for updates.

There will be a choice between on-campus and online tutorials. All students will be allocated a tutorial group which fits in with their timetable. The tutorial will appear in your timetable before week 2, when tutorials begin. If you find that you are unable to attend the tutorials for the date and time you have been given, this is where you may request to change it. All tutorials are compulsory and attendance is monitored.

Further information about class timing and format will be available on the LEARN page for the course.

Office Hours:

Barry Maguire: Mondays from 1010 – 1110.
David Levy: To be announced on LEARN.

Course Structure:

There are weekly pre-recorded lectures and other online content equivalent to 50 minute in-person seminar, as well as a weekly fifty minute tutorial (online or in-person). The pre-recorded materials, available through LEARN, will provide explanation and critical analysis of the readings for each week. The tutorials afford the opportunity for philosophical discussion and engagement. Philosophical learning is very much a matter of engaging and thinking together with others, rather than the achievement of a state of possessing information. This is why it is extremely important that you read through the assigned texts and view the pre-recorded materials in advance so as to be prepared to actively take part in discussion. Tutorial Times and Locations, as well as office hours, will be announced on the Learn page of the course.
Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be better able to:

- Explain key ideas and debates in contemporary political philosophy, especially concerning debates between liberals and socialists.
- Relate, compare, and contrast the positions of various authors studied in the course.
- Think critically about questions central to contemporary political philosophy.
- Articulate arguments succinctly and clearly in an essay format.

Accessing Lectures & Readings

All lectures will be made available on the course’s Learn page. All readings will be available on the course’s Resource List. Read more information on using Resource Lists here.

Assessment:

There are three pieces of assessment for this course:

- Mid-term essay (maximum 1500 words) (30%): Due Thursday 25th February, by 12pm
- Final essay (maximum 2500 words) (65%): Due Thursday 15th April, by 12pm
- Participation (5%): requirements vary with tutors; check with your individual tutor for details.

More information about the expectations for the essays will be posted on LEARN plenty of time in advance.

Marking Schemes:

For Philosophy-specific marking guidelines go here: Grade-related marking guidelines for Philosophy

For the University’s general marking scheme go here: Common Marking Scheme

Learning Resources

You should regularly check your university email and check for announcements on the course Learn page. Sometimes, there will also be announcements and discussion on TEAMS. The course Learn page will provide information concerning:
• General information and announcement about the course
• Lecture notes and slides
• Tutorial arrangements
• Information about assessment arrangements

Reading Philosophy:

Everything on this syllabus has been carefully chosen. Read each piece a few times. Read once, quickly, to get the structure of the argument, the main claims, and the conclusion(s). Read a second time to study the argument more carefully, to formulate the argument in your own words, to think up your own examples to illustrate the main claims, and to think of counterexamples to these claims. Read a third time to soak up any remaining details. Some excellent reading advice can be found online here: www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading. You are encouraged to read anything else that interests you. In general, the more you read, the better a sense you will have of the strengths and weaknesses of prominent views in any given topic, and of typical forms of argument in the area.

Writing Philosophy:

Please read Jim Pryor’s ‘How to Write a Philosophy Paper’ ten times. Also read George Orwell’s ‘Politics and the English Language,’ and Angela Mendelovici’s ‘A Sample Philosophy Paper.’ Do not infer from the fact that someone is a great philosopher that it is permissible for you to try to write like they do.

Questions?

For all general questions about the course please use the GENERAL COURSE QUESTIONS discussion forum. This includes questions about the Learn page, availability of lectures and readings and general academic matters. Before you post, look in the forum to see if someone already posted the same question. Questions will be answered regularly, throughout the week.

For administrative questions (e.g. about submission of assignments), you should contact the Course Secretary. If you have a question regarding specific lecture content you should ask it - in the lecture Q&A discussion - in your tutorial group - during (online) office hours.

If you have a question about specifically academic matters that pertains only to you (e.g. special circumstances) contact the Course Organiser via email.
Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week One: Alienation

Essential:


Recommended:

- Karl Marx, *1844 Manuscripts, Comments on James Mill*, both available at Marxists.org: [https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/index.htm](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/index.htm)

Week Two: Relational Egalitarianism

Essential:


Recommended:


Week Three: From Each… to Each (Part One)

Essential:


Recommended:

Week Four: From Each...to Each (Part Two)

Essential:


Week Five: Coordination Duties

Essential:

- Stephanie Collins, ‘Coordination Duties’ chapter 4 in *Group Duties*, OUP.

Recommended:

- Anything else in that book. The whole thing is on [Oxford Scholarship online here](https://www.oxfordscholarship.com).  

Week Six: Coordination and Exchange

Essential:


Recommended:


Week Seven: Cohen on Incentives (Part One)

Essential:

Week Eight: Cohen on Incentives (Part Two)

Essential:


Week Nine: Cohen on Incentives (Part Three)

Essential:


Week Ten: Estlund on Prerogatives

Essential:


Recommended

- Samuel Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, Oxford University Press, 1994, chapters one and two (background on Estlund)


Week Eleven

Consolidation and Essay Writing Technique