

# Political Philosophy

## Third Year Seminar

### Autumn, 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](mailto:philinfo@ed.ac.uk))

Course Organiser: Dr. Barry Maguire ([bmaguire@ed.ac.uk](mailto:bmaguire@ed.ac.uk))

**Lectures:** Released online on LEARN on Mondays by 1300hrs

**Tutorials:**

- Monday 1410 – 1500
- Monday 1510 – 1600
- Tuesday 1000 – 1050
- Tuesday, 1110 - 1200

Please check LEARN for updates concerning the location of tutorials.

**Office Hours:**

Barry Maguire, Mondays from 1000 – 1100, on Teams. To set up a slot at office hours, email me any time from 9am on the relevant Monday.

**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 28<sup>th</sup> October, by 12pm
- Final essay (maximum 2500 words) (65%): Due Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> December, by 12pm
- Participation (5%): based on participation in tutorials. Individuals unable to participate in tutorials should contact instructor for an alternative assignment.

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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](http://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:

- Jan Kandiyali, "The Importance of Others: Marx on Unalienated Production," *Ethics*, 130 (4), 2020, 555-587.

Recommended:

- Jon Elster, "Self-Realization in Work and Politics: The Marxist Conception of the Good Life," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 3 (2), 1987, 97-126.
- Karl Marx, *1844 Manuscripts, Comments on James Mill*, both available at Marxists.org:  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/index.htm>

### Week Two: Relational Egalitarianism

Essential:

- Elizabeth Anderson, 'What is the Point of Equality?' *Ethics*, Vol. 109, No. 2 (January 1999), pp. 287-337 (52 pages).

Recommended:

- Samuel Scheffler, 'The Practice of Equality' in [Social Equality: On What It Means to be Equals](#), OUP, edited by Carina Fourie, Fabian Schuppert, and Ivo Wallimann-Helmer

### Week Three: From Each...to Each (Part One)

Essential:

- Allen Wood, 'Marx on Equality' in his *The Free Development of Each*, available on *Oxford Scholarship Online*.

Recommended:

- Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*. Available on Marxists.org:  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/>

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

Essential:

- Joseph Carens, 'Rights and Duties in an Egalitarian Society', *Political Theory*, vol. 14, issue 1, 1986
- Joseph Carens, 'An Interpretation and Defence of the Socialist Principle of Distribution', *Social Philosophy & Policy*, vol. 20, issue 1, Jan 2003, pages 145 - 177.

#### 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](#).

#### Week Six: Coordination and Exchange

Essential:

- Robert Sugden and Luigino Bruni, 'Fraternity: Why the Market Need not be a Morally-Free zone' *Economics and Philosophy* 24 (1):35-64 (2008)

Recommended:

- Nelson, J. A. 2009. A response to Bruni and Sugden. *Economics and Philosophy* 25: 187-93.
- Bruni and Sugden, 'Fraternity, Intrinsic Motivation, and Sacrifice. A reply to Gui and Nelson' *Economics and Philosophy*, 25: 195-198.

#### Week Seven: Cohen on Incentives (Part One)

Essential:

- G.A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality*, chapter one

### Week Eight: Cohen on Incentives (Part Two)

Essential:

- G.A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality*, chapter two

### Week Nine: Cohen on Incentives (Part Three)

Essential:

- G.A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality*, chapter three

### Week Ten: Estlund on Prerogatives

Essential:

- David Estlund, 'Liberalism, Equality and Fraternity', *The Journal of Political Philosophy*: Volume 6, Number 1, 1998.

Recommended

- Samuel Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*, Oxford University Press, 1994, chapters one and two (background on Estlund)
- Seanna Shiffrin, 'Incentives, Motives, and Talents,' *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 38, no.2, 2010

### Week Eleven

Consolidation and Essay Writing Technique