

PHIL 446 Current Issues in Political Philosophy
Winter 2020 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:05 AM – 11:25 AM BIRKS 111

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1:00-2:00pm LEA 942 or by appointment

Topic: States, transnational relations and global egalitarian justice

Course description

The aim of this course is to provide students with a general overview of the debate between associational and humanist authors on the question of the scope of theories of justice and to consider contemporary texts on pressing transnational issues.

Accordingly, the class will be divided into two stages. First, we will consider the theoretical debate between associational and humanist authors. Both provide competing answers to the question of which features of any two persons are morally relevant for claiming that they have egalitarian duties of justice towards each other. Associational authors posit that two agents have to be connected in some way for egalitarian principles of justice to apply. Consequently, for instance, some associational authors claim that the relations existing within states are the only morally relevant relations that should be considered by egalitarian theories of justice. In contrast, humanist authors argue that it is sufficient for two agents to be human beings for egalitarian principles of justice to apply. Accordingly, they claim that we can have some duties of justice towards complete strangers. This debate will allow us to consider the fundamental question of whether or not theories of egalitarian justice should concentrate on domestic relations that exist within particular states or if egalitarian theories of justice should be global in scope.

Second, we will consider particular issues in contemporary global ethics. We will notably consider what contemporary philosophers have written about border control, global poverty, climate change and humanitarian aid. Consequently, we will consider questions such as: should states have the authority to unilaterally control their borders? Do we have duties to eradicate global poverty and, if so, how should we approach this problem? How should we conceive of the harmfulness of climate change? Which agents should be held responsible for climate change? Is global democracy achievable? Etc.

Prerequisite and Background knowledge

All students are welcome in this class. However, this is a 400-level course in philosophy. As such, it is highly recommended that students have completed at least one other course in political or moral philosophy prior to taking this course (such as PHIL 230 (Intro to Moral Philosophy), PHIL 240 (Political Philosophy), PHIL 334 (Ethical theory), PHIL 242 (Intro to Feminist theory), etc.).

Readings

There will be no textbook to purchase for this class. The required readings will all be posted on MyCourses before the beginning of the semester.

Evaluation

- Class participation: 10% (Ongoing)

Attendance and careful reading of the texts is crucial for this class. Students will be expected to submit one short question (100 words max.) per week on the texts assigned at least 24 hours before the lecture on Tuesday. The questions will be posted on a forum on MyCourses. Students have to submit 10 questions in total for full participation points (consequently, students can skip two weeks total during the semester, not counting the first week of class, without consequences).

- Midterm essay: 30% (due February 14)

A short midterm essay (1500 words) to be submitted on MyCourses. The prompts for the short essay will be posted on Mycourses on January 31.

- Final paper outline: 15% (due March 10)

A short outline of the final research paper (2 pages + bibliography). More details will be provided in class.

- Final research paper: 45% (3000 words) (due April 17)

The final paper can be on the topic of the student's choice. However, it should be directly related to the class's general topic and discuss at least five scholarly books or papers (including at least two texts from the class's curriculum). More details will be provided in class.

The grading criteria for each assignment will be discussed in class.

Please note that extensions will only be granted in exceptional cases. Justificatory documents (such as medical notes) will be required. If no extension is granted, late assignments will be penalized by 5% per late day.

Email policy

You are more than welcome to contact me directly by email if you have any general question concerning the course material, the grading criteria, or any administrative issues you may experience. However, if your question is a conceptual or philosophical one, I encourage you to come during my office hour (Thursday from 1:00-2:00pm in LEA 942) or to make an appointment. I will do my best to answer every email within 48 (business) hours. If you have not received a response after 48h please send me a short follow up. Make sure to check this syllabus and the course site for answers to your questions before emailing to ask them.

Topics and Schedule of Readings

Preliminaries

7 January Introduction & Overview

9 January Introduction to the main debates and concepts
David Miller, "Nations, states, and global justice", in *Political Philosophy: A very Short Introduction* (2003).

Rawls' Law of Peoples

- 14 January The two Rawls: From *Theory of Justice* to *Law of Peoples*
Catherine Audard, "A reasonable law of peoples for a real world", in *John Rawls* (2007), pp. 229-253.
- 16 January Rawls' *LoP* – Human rights, burdened societies and distributive justice among Peoples
John Rawls, *Law of Peoples* (extracts) (pp. 78-81; 89-91; 105-120)

Cosmopolitan critiques of Rawls' LoP

- 21 January Feminist critiques of Rawls
Martha Nussbaum, "Women and the Law of Peoples", *Politics, Philosophy and Economics* (2002).
- 23 January Rawls and contemporary issues of transnational justice
Simon Caney, "Cosmopolitanism and the Law of Peoples", *The Journal of political Philosophy* (2002), pp. 95-104 and 114-120

Egalitarian justice and states; or what is special about states?

Coercion

- 28 January Coercion within and beyond the state – Part I
Michael Blake, "Coercion and Egalitarian Justice", *The Monist* (2011).
and Michael Blake, "Distributive Justice, State Coercion, and Autonomy", *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (2001), pp. 289-294 (i.e. section VI).
- 30 January Coercion within and beyond the state – Part II
Rekha Nath, "On the Scope and Grounds of Social Equality", in *Social Equality: On What it means to be Equals*, Fourie, Schuppert and Wallimann-Helmer (eds.) (2015).

Cooperation

- 4 February Cooperation within and beyond the state – Part I
Andrea Sangiovanni, "Global Justice, Reciprocity, and the State", *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (2007), pp. 3-8; 17-29; 34-39.
- 6 February Cooperation within and beyond the state – Part II
Pietro Maffettone, "Reciprocity, Equality and International Justice", *Global Policy* (2014).

Nations and group self-determination

- 11 February Nations and group self-determination – Part I
David Miller, "National Self-Determination and Global Justice", in *Citizenship and National Identity* (2000)
- 13 February Nations and group self-determination – Part II
Kevin Ip, "Equality and the Significance of Nationality", in *Egalitarianism and Global Justice: From a Relational Perspective* (2016), esp. pp. 133-153.

Short paper due Friday February 14, 11:59pm on MyCourses.

Beyond associations

18 February A defence of extreme cosmopolitanism

Richard Arneson, "Extreme cosmopolitanisms defended", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* (2016).

20 February Balancing universal and special obligations

Simon Caney, "Humanity, Associations, and Global Justice: in defence of Humanity-centred cosmopolitan egalitarianism", *The Monist* (2011), pp. 506-510, 522-529.

Contemporary transnational issues

Individual responsibility and the global economy

25 February Individual and collective responsibility

Samuel Scheffler, "Individual Responsibility in a Global Age", in *Boundaries and Allegiances: Problems of Justice and Responsibility in Liberal Thought* (2002)

27 February A case study: sweatshops

Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice: A social connection model", *Social Philosophy & Policy Foundations* (2006), pp. 102-3, 107-130.

Study break (march 2-6)*

Humanitarian aid

10 March Harm-based vs Need-Based accounts

Alan Patten, "Should we stop thinking about poverty in terms of helping the poor?", *Ethics and International Affairs* (2005).

Final research paper outline due Tuesday March 10, 11:59pm on MyCourses

12 March Humanitarian aid and arrogance

Alison Jaggar, "'Saving Amina': Global justice for women and intercultural dialogue", *Ethics & International Affairs* (2005).

Border control and immigration

17 March The case for open borders

Arash Abizadeh, "Democratic Theory and Border Coercion: No right to Unilaterally control your own borders", *Political Theory* (2008), pp. 37-56.

19 March The case against open borders

David Miller, "Why Immigration Controls are not Coercive: A Reply to Arash Abizadeh", *Political Theory* (2010).

Global Justice and climate change

24 March The cultural harm of climate change

Avner De Shalit, "Climate Change Refugees, Compensation, and Rectification", *The Monist* (2011).

- 26 March Nature rights and environmental rights
Clare Palmer, “Does Nature matter? The place of the non-human in the ethics of climate change”, in *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*, Arnold D. (ed.), (2011).
- 31 March Who should pay for climate change? - Part I The Polluter Pay Principle
Eric Neumayer, “In defense of historical accountability for greenhouse gas emissions”, *Ecological economics* (2000).
- 2 April Who should pay for climate change? - Part II The Ability to Pay Principle: A hybrid model
Simon Caney, “Climate Change and the duties of the advantaged”, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* (2010).

Conclusion – The challenges of Politics

- 7 April Democracy and Globalization: what is the future of democracy?
David Held, “The changing contours of political community: rethinking democracy in the context of globalization”, in *Global Democracy: Key Debates*, Holden, B. (ed.) (2000)
- 9 April Moving Forward
Pablo Gilabert, “Reflections on Human Rights and Power”, in *Human Rights: Moral or Political?*, Etinson, A. (ed) (2018).

Final research paper due Friday April 17, 11:59pm on MyCourses

Language of Submission

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.”

« Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue). »

Academic Integrity

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures” (see [McGill’s guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

« L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l’honnêteté académique de McGill](#)). »

Accommodations

As the instructor of this course, I endeavour to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#), 514-398-6009.