

Political Liberalism Spring 2012

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Political Liberalism is the view that the principles of justice must be acceptable to reasonable citizens who disagree with one another on basic questions of morality and religion. In this course we will explore whether a commitment to Political Liberalism is compatible with a commitment to ideal theory, the aspiration to provide an account of the ideal political community. On the face of it there seems to be a tension, for the widespread acceptance of false practical doctrines seems pretty squarely non-ideal. On the other hand, defenders of Political Liberalism have argued that the persistence of practical error is inevitable given a commitment to a free society, and surely, we might think, the ideal political community is free. Can and should this circle be squared? And if not, what are we to say about the freedom of an ideal society?

COURSE WEBSITE: This course has a chalk. You should get in the habit of checking the website at least once a week. To access the chalk go to www.uchicago.edu and click on “student”. Chalk should appear as a button on the left hand side. Clicking on that should take you to a list of chalks for the courses in which you are enrolled. Readings, aside from the required texts can be found on the chalk for this course under the “assignments” button, grouped in folders by week. You will also be able to find this syllabus.

REQUIREMENTS: To complete this course, you must regularly attend lectures and submit one term paper on a topic of your choosing, 15-30 pages in length. If you wish to receive a grade in spring quarter, you must email me your paper no later than Wednesday May 30th by 5pm. You are strongly encouraged to come see me and talk about possible paper topics well in advance of the due date. I may or may not circulate possible paper topics for inspiration.

REQUIRED TEXTS: All required texts are available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore. They are also broadly available, from Amazon, the library, etc.

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice: Original Edition*

John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*

SYLLABUS

Part I: What is Political Philosophy?

WEEK 1: Introductions

3/26 INTRODUCTIONS

WEEK 2: *The Aims of Political Philosophy*

4/2 THEORY OF JUSTICE, PP. 3-22 & 244-247
POLITICAL LIBERALISM, PP. 3-8 & 15-35
JUSTICE AS FAIRNESS, PP. 3-18

OPTIONAL: JOHN SIMMONS, "IDEAL AND NON-IDEAL THEORY"

WEEK 3: *Ideal Theory as the Theory of Justice for a Well-Ordered Society*

4/9 THEORY OF JUSTICE, PP. 118-150 & 453-458
POLITICAL LIBERALISM, PP. 66-81 & 140-150

OPTIONAL: JUSTICE AS FAIRNESS, PP. 26-29

WEEK 4: *Reflective Equilibrium and Rawls' Early Anti-Metaphysical Views*

4/16 THEORY OF JUSTICE, PP. 46-53
RAWLS, "THE INDEPENDENCE OF MORAL THEORY"
SCANLON, "RAWLS ON JUSTIFICATION"

Part II: Political Liberalism

WEEK 5: *Political Liberalism: A Project of Reconciliation*

4/23 POLITICAL LIBERALISM XIII-XXXIX & 3-15 & 35-66
JUSTICE AS FAIRNESS, 1-5

WEEK 6: *AN EPISTEMIC CASE FOR LIBERALISM: THE BURDENS OF JUDGMENT*

4/30 THOMAS NAGEL, "MORAL CONFLICT AND POLITICAL LEGITIMACY"
JOSHUA COHEN, "MORAL PLURALISM AND POLITICAL CONSENSUS"
POLITICAL LIBERALISM, 47-66.

WEEK 7: *ALTERNATIVE BASES FOR LIBERALISM*

5/7 CHARLES LARMORE, "PLURALISM AND REASONABLE DISAGREEMENT"
MARTHA NUSSBAUM, "PERFECTIONIST LIBERALISM AND POLITICAL LIBERALISM"

WEEK 8: *Overlapping Consensus*

5/14 POLITICAL LIBERALISM 133-172
THOMAS NAGEL, "LIBERALISM"

Part III: Critics

WEEK 9: JOSEPH RAZ I

5/21 RAZ, "FACING DIVERSITY: THE CASE FOR EPISTEMIC ABSTINENCE", PP. 3-31

WEEK 10: JOSEPH RAZ II

5/28 RAZ, "DISAGREEMENT IN POLITICS"