

The University of Chicago

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy 21600, GNDR 21601

Spring 2010

Instructor: Bart Schultz

Office: Gates-Blake 126

Office Hours: Fridays, 12:45-2 pm, or by appointment

Contact Information: Phone, 773-702-6007, e-mail, rschultz@uchicago.edu

In times of crisis, political philosophy is especially relevant. It calls for critical clarification of and reflection on the most fundamental terms of our political life, and suggests new possibilities for the future. According to political philosopher A. John Simmons, “What is distinctive about political philosophy ... is its *prescriptive* or evaluative concern with justifications, values, virtues, ideals, rights, obligations—in short, its concern with how political societies *should* be, how political policies and institutions can be justified, how we and our political officeholders ought to behave in our public lives.” What does a justifiable or legitimate political order involve? In particular, what, if anything, makes a “liberal democratic” political order justifiable or legitimate? Is it the claim to justice, and if so, how are we to understand such a claim? What are the most compelling and reasonable theories of justice, and how does justice relate to rights, obligations, duties, virtues, freedoms, democracy, patriotism, citizenship, political ideals, and the other terms of political philosophy and civic knowledge? How utopian or distant from present realities is the political philosophizing behind such justifications? How, for example, should a “just society” reconstruct notions of gender and sexuality, forms of political participation, our relations to the environment, and our relations to the global order, especially the global poor? And what should citizens do when their political order falls short of the justificatory ideal? Can we agree with this statement from the philosopher Bernard Williams? “There are indeed universal paradigms of injustice and unreason. They consist of people using power to coerce other people against their will to secure what the first people want simply because they want it, and refusing to listen to what other people say if it goes against their doing so.”

Required Readings:

A. John Simmons, *Political Philosophy* (Oxford UP)

Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education* (Chicago UP)

Henry Richardson, *Democratic Autonomy: Public Reasoning about the Ends of Policy* (Oxford UP)

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Harvard UP)

Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (Yale UP)

Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Harvard UP)

Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Chicago UP)

Note: All of these works are available at the Seminary Cooperative Bookstore. Additional required (and recommended) readings will be available on e-Reserve!

Course Requirements:

- 1. *Class participation and group presentation—20%***
- 2. *A five page (1000-1100 word) midterm essay—30%***
- 3. *A ten page (2000-2200 word) final essay or project—50%***

Note: This is a discussion class, and you will be expected to participate regularly, in an informed and thoughtful manner. Please be prepared for some lively, critical discussions and debates! Also, please be sure to submit the assigned work on time—unexcused late work will be penalized!

Reading Schedule:

3/29—Introduction

*3/31—Simmons, *Political Philosophy*, pp. 1-66*

*4/5—Simmons, *Political Philosophy*, pp. 67-128*

*4/7—Allen, *Talking*, Part 1*

*4/12—Allen, *Talking*, Parts 2 and 3*

4/14—Richardson, *Democratic Autonomy*, pp. 1-75

4/19—Richardson, *Democratic Autonomy*, pp. 73-192

4/21—Rawls, *Justice as Fairness, Parts 1 and 2*; Nagel, “Rawls and Liberalism” (on e-Reserve)

4/26—Rawls, *Justice as Fairness, Parts 3, 4, and 5*; Freeman, “Introduction” (on e-Reserve)

4/28—Singer, *One World*, pp. 1-50; Rawls, selections from *The Law of Peoples* (on e-Reserve)

5/3—Singer, *One World*, pp. 51-149, and Singer, “An Intellectual Autobiography,” “About Ethics,” and “Moral Experts” (on e-Reserve)

5/5—Singer, *One World*, pp. 150-201; Pogge, “Assisting’ the Global Poor” (on e-Reserve)

5/10—Sen, *Idea of Justice, Part 1*

5/12—Sen, *Idea of Justice, Part 3*

5/17—Sen, *Idea of Justice Part 4*

5/19—Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, 4-5

5/24—Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice, Chaps. 6-7*; Simmons, pp. 128-57

5/26—Selections from Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth* (on e-Reserve)

5/31—Memorial Day

6/2--Review