

Social & Political Philosophy

Philosophy 33—Revised
Spring 2008

Schedule

PLATO

Monday, January 28 GLAUCON'S CHALLENGE
Glaucou poses a challenge for justice. We'll talk about the nature of his test. What must Socrates prove about justice in order to satisfy the challenge? Do we really have to meet such a demanding test?
READING: *Republic*, Bk. II, 357a–369b, pp. 38–44.

Wednesday, January 30 ORIGINS OF THE STATE
What problem does the state solve? That is, why would people who didn't have a state want one? What did Plato believe was the primary cause of conflict in human affairs?
READING: *Republic*, Bk. II, 368e–376e, pp. 43–52.

Monday, February 4 GUARDIANS
The guardians are the rulers in Plato's ideal city. Today, we will discuss some of his views about their selection and education.
READING: *Republic*, (1) Bk. II, 376d–386c, pp. 53–54; (2) Bk. III, editor's introduction, p. 60; (3) Bk. III, 412b–417b, pp. 88–93.

Wednesday, February 6 JUSTICE IN THE CITY
Justice in the city is defined as everyone's playing their particular role. How is that related to the question posed by Glaucou?
READING: *Republic*, Bk. IV 419–434d, pp. 95–110.

Monday, February 11 JUSTICE IN THE SOUL
Here is the answer to the question about why it's best to be a just person: a just person is good in the same way and for the same reasons that a just city is. But is the analogy between the city and the soul a good one? Members in the city are supposed to regulate themselves, but that isn't what parts of the soul do. Rather, some parts of the soul are controlled by other parts. But if the just city involves repression like that, it isn't very attractive.
READING: *Republic*, Bk. IV, 434d–445e, pp. 110–21.

ARISTOTLE

Wednesday, February 13 POLITICS AND NATURE
We will discuss Aristotle's claims that living well is the purpose of the and that the state is natural. What did he mean in saying these things?

READING: *Politics*, (1) Bk. 1, chs. 1–2, pp. 1–5; (2) Bk. 2, ch. 7, pp. 41–5; (3) Bk. 3, ch. 6, pp. 75–7; (4) Bk. 3, ch. 9, pp. 79–82; (5) a few passages from Aristotle's other writings that I will distribute.

Monday, February 18 NATURAL HIERARCHIES

Not only is the state natural, but so are the hierarchical relations among men and women and among freemen and slaves. I'm less interested in Aristotle's extremely bad reasons for thinking these things than I am in what they tell us about what he thought he had to show in order to justify these relationships. How should we think about things we can't justify but also don't know how to do without? In Aristotle's case, it was slavery; is that how we think of poverty?

READING: *Politics*, Bk. 1, chs. 3–13, pp. 5–25.

THOMAS HOBBS

Wednesday, February 20 THE STATE OF NATURE

By contrast with Plato and Aristotle, Hobbes believes that conflict is natural for human beings. Chapter 17 summarizes his view: the state is needed to prevent inevitable conflict. Chapters 11 and 13 concern the causes of conflict (Chapter 12 does as well, for what it's worth. It's about the religious origins of states and why states with a religious basis fail.) Chapter 11 appears to be quite specific: some kinds of people prefer conflict to peace, others do not. Chapter 13, though, seems to be quite general: people in general fall into conflict without political authority. We will begin by discussing the general explanation, using some basic game theory, the prisoner's dilemma. Then we will ask whether the specific and the general stories can be combined.

READING: *Leviathan*, chs. 17, 11, 13.

Monday, February 25 THE LAWS OF NATURE

The definitions of right, law, and obligation. What are covenants and how do they work? The reply to the Fool in chapter 15. Is the reply to the Fool too strong? If Hobbes had really shown that it's in everyone's interest to keep their covenants, why would we need the state?

READING: *Leviathan*, chs. 14–15.

Wednesday, February 27 JUSTICE

Hobbes says: [1] there is no such thing as justice in the state of nature (13.13), [2] justice means keeping covenants (15.2), and [3] there are valid covenants in the state of nature (14.27). But he can't say all three at the same time. Justice, meaning, "giving each his own" is impossible in the state of nature as nothing is anyone's "own". But it *is* possible to keep covenants. Hobbes's discussion of the laws of nature is about the conditions under which justice, so understood, can exist.

READING: *Leviathan*, chs. 14–15.

Monday, March 3 RIGHTS AND AUTHORIZATION

Rights are officially defined as liberties, the absence of obligations. But Hobbes needs a broader understanding of what a right is. For instance, is the ability to appoint a representative best understood as a liberty? For that matter, is the ability to lay down a right best understood that way?

READING: *Leviathan*, ch. 14 ¶6; ch. 16.

Wednesday, March 5

SOVEREIGNTY

Hobbes is said to have an “absolutist” understanding of sovereignty. Chapter 17 describes the social contract (at the end), chapter 18 gives the rights that sovereigns have, and chapter 19 argues that any kind of state will claim these rights. We will ask in what sense is a Hobbesian sovereign absolute and whether his arguments for absolutism are good ones.

READING: *Leviathan*, ch. 17 ¶13–15; chs. 18–19.

Monday, March 10

CONQUEST AND REBELLION

Conquest and rebellion are two different cases of political violence. We’ll look at how Hobbes’s theory deals with them. Also, compare Hobbes’s treatment of hierarchical relations in the family with Aristotle’s. *First paper topics distributed.*

READING: *Leviathan*, (1) chs. 20–1; (2) A Review and Conclusion, ¶1–7, pp. 489–91.

JOHN LOCKE

Wednesday, March 12

RIGHTS

What natural rights do we have and where do they come from? Compare Locke’s answers with Hobbes’s.

READING: *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. II–IV (§§1–24), pp. 7–18.

March 17–19

SPRING BREAK

No class

READING: None

Monday, March 24

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Locke was trying to show how private property could have emerged from common ownership of the world. I will begin by explaining the background to that. Then we will talk about his explanation and whether it is successful.

READING: *Second Treatise of Government*, ch. V (§§25–51), pp. 18–30.

Tuesday, March 25

FIRST PAPERS DUE

Wednesday, March 26

SOCIAL CONTRACT

How does Locke’s social contract work? Compare his limited state with Hobbes’s absolutist one.

READING: *Second Treatise of Government*, (1) §§87–94 (ch. VII), pp. 46–51; (2) §§95–100, 113–122 (ch. VIII), pp. 52–4, 61–5; (3) ch. IX (§§123–31), pp. 65–8; (4) ch. XI (§§134–42), pp. 69–75; (4) §149 (ch. XII), pp. 77–8; (5) §168 (ch. XIV), pp. 87–8.

JOHN STUART MILL

Monday, March 31

CLASSICAL UTILITARIANISM

The Utilitarians were reformers. They sought to replace the confusing mess of common laws and commonsense moral belief with one rational system: utilitarianism. We will talk about this motivation, what utilitarianism involves, and the persistent difficulty posed by its antagonistic relationship with commonsense moral beliefs.

READING: Readings from Bentham and Sidgwick that I will distribute.

Wednesday, April 2

MILL'S UTILITARIANISM

Mill's famous harm principle sharply limits what the government can do. Today, we will talk about his claim to have derived this principle on utilitarian grounds.

Justice, p. 26.

READING: Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 1–52. Rawls, *A Theory of*

Monday, April 7

MILL'S LIBERTARIANISM

Discussion of apparent counter-examples to the harm principle.

READING: *On Liberty*, pp. 53–91.

ROBERT NOZICK

Wednesday, April 9

NOZICK ON RIGHTS

Nozick argues for libertarian conclusions on the basis of a theory of rights, rather than utilitarianism. In fact, his theory of rights develops in opposition to utilitarianism.

READING: *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 26–35, 48–51.

Monday, April 14

NOZICK ON JUSTICE

Nozick maintains that there are only three classes of principles: those governing the acquisition of goods, those governing the transfer of goods, and those governing the rectification of violations of the other two. He tries to show that any principles of justice beyond these, such as the utilitarian principle, Rawls's "principle of fair equality of opportunity", or Rawls's "difference principle" objectionably limit liberty by maintaining what he calls "patterns" at the expense of innocent, free choices.

READING: *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 149–64, 167–73.

JOHN RAWLS

Wednesday, April 16

AGAINST LIBERTARIANISM

This reading is from an “informal” exposition of the principles of justice that Rawls supports. Nonetheless, it contains Rawls’s arguments against libertarianism. After discussing them, I will argue for “natural aristocracy.” See if it can be done! *Second paper topics distributed.*

READING: *A Theory of Justice* §§11–13, pp. 60–82.

Monday, April 21

RAWLS’S THEORY

Today, we lay out the machinery for Rawls’s own theory of justice. He will use this to defend an alternative to the utilitarian principle: the two principles of justice whose exposition we read about last time. It’s a complicated argument, so we need to do some setting up.

READING: *A Theory of Justice* §§1–4 (pp. 3–22); §§24–5 (pp. 136–50).

Wednesday, April 23

ARGUMENT FOR THE TWO PRINCIPLES

How Rawls uses the “maximin” rule of decision under uncertainty to argue that the parties in the original position would choose his principles of justice.

READING: *A Theory of Justice* §26, pp. 150–61.

Monday, April 28

ARGUMENTS AGAINST UTILITARIANISM

There are three arguments against utilitarianism. The first is that it is inappropriate to use the principle of insufficient reason to assume that the probabilities of being any person are equal. The second and third arguments are less technical. They maintain that the parties would want to avoid making an agreement that they might not be willing to keep.

READING: *A Theory of Justice* §§28–9, pp. 167–83.

Wednesday, April 30

RAWLS ON LIBERTY

Has Rawls explained the priority of liberty?

READING: *A Theory of Justice* §82, pp. 542–8. H.L.A. Hart, “Rawls on Liberty and its Priority”, *University of Chicago Law Review* 40 (1973).

Thursday, May 1

SECOND PAPER DUE

Monday, May 5

RAWLS ON CONSEQUENTIALISM

Consequentialists think that we should do whatever actions would produce the best consequences. Utilitarians are consequentialists who measure consequences in terms of utility. The larger class shares many of the problems of the specific instance. Pogge asks whether Rawls’s method really leads to an alternative to utilitarianism.

READING: Thomas Pogge, “Three Problems with Contractarian-Consequentialist Ways of Assessing Social Institutions” *Social Philosophy and Policy* (1995).

<i>Wednesday, May 7</i>	REVIEW AND EXTRAS We'll use this day to tie up any loose ends and to prepare for the exam.
	READING: None.
<i>Monday, May 12</i>	FINAL EXAM, 2 PM.

Materials

I ordered the following editions through the Huntley Bookstore: Plato's *Republic* (Hackett, second edition, translated by Grube and Reeve); Aristotle's *Politics* (Hackett, translated by Reeve), Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (Hackett, edited by Curley), John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (Hackett, edited by MacPherson), John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (Hackett, edited by Rapaport), and John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, original edition, not the revised one). Everything else will be made available through the Honnold-Mudd Library reserve system.

Comments on lectures and announcements will be posted on the web at the Sakai site for this course.

Instructor

My name is Michael Green. My office is 207 Pearsons. My office hours are Wednesdays, 2:30–4. My office phone number is 607-0906. I have decided that my life will be much better if I only answer email once a day. I will reply, but if you need an answer quickly, you're probably best off calling or dropping by my office.

Assignments

Grades will be based on three equally-weighted assignments: two papers and a final exam. The papers will be limited to 1800 words which is about five or six pages. They will be due on Tuesday, March 25 and Tuesday April 29. The Final Exam is scheduled for Monday, May 12 at 2 pm.

Seniors should make special arrangements to take the exam early. Your grades are due on Friday, May 9.

Late papers will be accepted *without question*. They will be penalized at the rate of one-half of a point *per* day, with grades based on the College's twelve point scale. Exceptions will be made in extremely unusual circumstances. Please be mindful of the fact that maturity involves taking steps to ensure that the extremely unusual remains extremely unusual.