

Social & Political Philosophy

Plato

1. *Monday, January 26.* QUESTIONS ABOUT JUSTICE
What is justice and why does it matter? Plato worried that the superficial answers given by respectable citizens, such as Cephalus and Polemarchus, led to doubts about justice, such as those presented by Thrasymachus and Glaucon. The *Republic* tries to meet Glaucon's challenge so we will be especially interested in it. What must be shown about justice in order to satisfy the challenge? Do we really have to meet such a demanding test?

(1) *Republic*, Bk. I-II, pp. 1-44; especially Bk. II, 357a-369b, pp. 33-44. (2) The editor's introduction, pp. viii-xviii, and summaries at the beginning of each book, pp. 1, 32, 60 ... (see p. v).
2. *Wednesday, January 28.* WHY GUARDIANS?
The guardians are the rulers in Plato's ideal city. (1) He explained their role by showing why an imaginary city that didn't have them would create them. But has he explained why they must govern the *internal* affairs of the city? (2) The guardians' education is not a liberal one. Plato worried about non-rational influences on character, such as those from the arts, and he did not think that the truth is best taught by triumphing over falsehood. Is he onto something or not? (3) What is the purpose of the myth of the metals at the end of Book III? Is it acceptable for a society to rely on falsehoods?

Republic, Bk. II-III, 368e-417b, pp. 43-93; especially 368e-376e, 376d-383c, 412b-417b.
3. *Monday, February 2.* 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 Glaucon?

Republic, Bk. IV, 419-434d, pp. 95-110.

4. *Wednesday, February 4.* 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.
Republic, Bk. IV, 434d-445e, pp. 110-21.
5. *Monday, February 9.* TWO QUESTIONS ABOUT GUARDIANS
First, why are they the ones to rule? Answer: they are philosophers, with special knowledge. Second, why would they want to rule? Answer: they benefit from the education that gives them this special knowledge.
Republic, (1) Bk. V, 471c-480, pp. 146-56; Bk. VI 484-506b, pp. 157-179; (2) Bk. VII, 514-521c, pp. 186-93.
6. *Wednesday, February 11.* INJUSTICE IN CITY AND SOUL
Plato argued that different kinds of city would tend to decay into other, worse kinds. I'm less interested in the specific details than in his general view about the relationship between individual personality and the nature of cities. Why? It bears on the point about justice in the soul.
Republic, Bk. VIII-IX, pp. 213-63.
Note First paper topics distributed.

Thomas Hobbes

7. *Monday, February 16.* THE STATE OF NATURE
Plato imagined human society beginning in order to accomplish something through specialization. Hobbes believed that conflict is natural for human beings and that society begins to avoid violent death. Chapter 17 summarizes his view. 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.

Leviathan, chs. 17, 11, 13.

8. *Wednesday, February 18.* 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?
Leviathan, chs. 14-15.

9. *Monday, February 23.* JUSTICE
Hobbes said the following: [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, contractually understood, can exist.
Leviathan, chs. 14-15.

10. *Wednesday, February 25.* RIGHTS AND AUTHORIZATION
Rights are officially defined as liberties, the absence of obligations. But Hobbes needed a broader understanding of what a right is. For instance, the ability to appoint a representative is not best understood as a liberty nor is the ability to lay down a right.
Leviathan, ch. 14 ¶16; ch. 16.
Note First paper due Thursday, February 26.

11. *Monday, March 2.* 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 Hobbes’s sovereign absolute and whether his arguments for absolutism are good ones.
(1) *Leviathan*, ch. 17 ¶13-15; chs. 18-19. (2) Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 18.
12. *Wednesday, March 4.* CONQUEST AND REBELLION
Conquest and rebellion are two different cases of political violence. We’ll look at how Hobbes’s theory deals with them.
Leviathan, (1) chs. 20-1; (2) A Review and Conclusion, ¶1-7, pp. 489-91.

John Locke

13. *Monday, March 9.* RIGHTS
(1) What natural rights do we have and where do they come from? Compare Locke’s answers with Hobbes’s. (2) Locke was trying to show how private property could have emerged from common ownership of the world. The handout explains what the project was.
(1) *Second Treatise of Government*, chs. II-IV, §§1-24, pp. 7-18. (2) Handout on property rights.
14. *Wednesday, March 11.* PROPERTY RIGHTS
Locke has general and specific arguments for private property. The general arguments hold that there has to be *some* way of legitimately acquiring private property. The specific arguments hold that private property is legitimately acquired in a specific way, by laboring. We will concentrate on the specific arguments. These arguments have to show that laboring is a way of making something that *had* belonged to others into your private property. That’s not easy!

Second Treatise of Government, ch. V, §§25-51, pp. 18-30.

15. *Monday, March 23.* NO CLASS

16. *Wednesday, March 25.* SOCIAL CONTRACT

Locke's social contract differs from Hobbes's in at least two ways. First, Locke favored limited government while Hobbes was an absolutist. Second, Locke believed there was a right to revolution significantly broader than anything Hobbes would have accepted. Finally, I put an article by Jared Diamond on reserve. It gives a wonderful explanation of why people would prefer a modern state over a relatively structured social life without one. I can't guarantee that we'll discuss it at great length, but it conforms so closely to Locke's views that I thought it would be worth looking at.

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) §§123-31 (ch. IX), pp. 65-8; (4) §§134-42 (ch. XI), pp. 69-75; (5) §149 (ch. XIII), pp. 77-8; (6) §168 (ch. XIV), pp. 87-8; (7) ch. XIX, §§ 211-43, pp. 107-24. (8) Jared Diamond, "Vengeance is ours," *The New Yorker* April 21, 2008.

Note Second paper topics distributed.

The Utilitarians

17. *Monday, March 30.* 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.

(1) Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ch. 1-4. (2) Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, selections.

18. *Wednesday, April 1.* **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.
(1) Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 1-52. (2) Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 26.
19. *Monday, April 6.* **MILL'S LIBERTARIANISM**
Last time, we talked about whether Mill's libertarianism is consistent with his utilitarianism. This time, we will talk about objections to the harm principle that are independent of utilitarianism.
On Liberty, pp. 53-91.

Robert Nozick

20. *Wednesday, April 8.* **NOZICK ON RIGHTS**
Nozick argues for libertarian conclusions on the basis of a theory of rights, rather than utilitarianism. In fact, he developed his theory of rights in contrast with utilitarianism.
Anarchy, State, and Utopia, pp. 26-35, 48-53.
Note Second papers due Thursday April 9.
21. *Monday, April 13.* **NOZICK ON JUSTICE**
Nozick maintains that principles of justice fall into three broad categories: 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.
Anarchy, State, and Utopia, pp. 149-64, 167-82.

John Rawls

22. *Wednesday, April 15.* **RAWLS 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 defend “natural aristocracy.” See if it can be done!
A Theory of Justice §§11–13, pp. 60–82.
23. *Monday, April 20.* **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 we encountered last time. It’s a complicated argument, so we need to do some setting up.
A Theory of Justice §§1–4, pp. 3–22; §§24–5, pp. 136–50.
24. *Wednesday, April 22.* **ARGUMENT FOR THE TWO PRINCIPLES**
 Rawls’s argument turns on deciding between two rules for making decisions with limited information. Rawls argues that the parties in the original position should use the maximin rule rather than the rule that tells them to maximize expected utility. If they follow the maximin rule, he claims, would choose his principles of justice rather than utilitarianism.
A Theory of Justice §26, pp. 150–61.
 Note Third paper topics distributed.
25. *Monday, April 27.* **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.
A Theory of Justice §§28–9, pp. 167–83; §82, pp. 542–8.

26. *Wednesday, April 29.* NO CLASS
27. *Monday, May 4.* RAWLS ON LIBERTY
Rawls proposes a rule that liberty can be limited only for the sake of liberty. Hart argues that this is inadequate since most political decisions involve sacrificing liberty one way or the other and there is no way to say which sacrifice is more extensive. Hart also questions why the parties in the original position would insist on liberty rather than material wealth. He argues they cannot know that this is what they really want.
H.L.A. Hart, "Rawls on Liberty and its Priority", *University of Chicago Law Review* 40 (1973).
28. *Wednesday, May 6.* LESS PHILOSOPHY?
Rawls's next major work, *Political Liberalism* maintained that political philosophy in liberal democratic societies should aim for a kind of 'overlapping consensus' among views rather than seeking to show that one philosophy is preferable to the others. He dubbed this "political liberalism" to emphasize the political goal of agreement over the philosophical goal of truth. Today's reading uses this basic idea to reach a conclusion about a controversial political issue: whether there is a right to abortion.
Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Abortion" *Boston Review* 20 (Summer 1995).

Materials

I ordered the following editions through the Huntley Bookstore: Plato's *Republic* (Hackett, second edition, translated by Grube and 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 electronically.

Comments on lectures, announcements, and readings will be available through the Sakai website for this course: <http://sakai.claremont.edu>

Instructor

My name is Michael Green. My office is 207 Pearsons. My office hours are Tuesdays, 2-4. My office phone number is 607-0906. 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 four assignments: three 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 Thursday, February 26, Thursday, April 9, and Tuesday, May 5. The Final Exam is scheduled for Friday, May 15 at 9 am.

Seniors should make special arrangements to take the exam early. Your grades are due at noon on Friday, May 8.

Late papers will be accepted *without question*. They will be penalized at the rate of one-quarter 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.

