

Senior Seminar

1. Tuesday, September 1 COURSE GOALS

This class has two goals. One goal is to bring work in the academic fields of philosophy, politics, and economics to bear on particular issues. The other goal is to put you in a position to have a good experience with writing your theses in the spring. Specifically, the final assignment for the class is a thesis prospectus. After going over some of the key dates for theses, we will talk about a few prospectuses from the past.

2. Thursday, September 3 SAMPLE THESIS

PPE students write a thesis in the spring. Today's reading is an example of a successful PPE thesis (Ehler 2006). Here are some things to think about when you're reading it. What worked well in this thesis? For example, I think the author was especially successful in integrating her sources into her argument: it is both thoroughly researched and also clearly her own project. What could have been better? As every author knows, there is always something. More importantly, there are probably aspects of this thesis that do not fit your style or interests. As every author knows, someone else would have written something different. What features of this thesis would you like to see in your thesis? In what ways would you like your thesis to be different?

3. Thursday, September 10 HOBBS ON RIGHTS

At least two of our members have projects that involve the state's use of violence in punishment or war. So I thought we would go back to basics and talk about how Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704) tried to make sense of these very fundamental activities of the state. Today, we will read the parts of Hobbes's book *Leviathan* that lay out the moral elements of his political theory (Hobbes [1651] 1993). We will be particularly interested in three things: (1) Hobbes's contention that there are no moral restraints in war, (2) Hobbes's claim that individuals have the right to resist force, even when it comes from the state in the form of fully justified punishment, and (3) the building

blocks of the social contract, especially authorization, as we will need to that for our discussion of punishment next time.

4. *Tuesday, September 15* HOBBS ON LIBERTY AND PUNISHMENT

Today's readings are from the parts of *Leviathan* that cover the liberty of subjects and the sovereign's right to punish (Hobbes [1651] 1993). We will focus on these points. (1) Hobbes's claim that a sovereign can kill an innocent subject without treating that person unjustly (esp. chap. 21, par. 7). (2) His claim that the subjects are permitted ("at liberty") to resist punishment even if they are guilty (chap. 21, pars. 10-15). (3) His restrictions on the definition of punishment in chapter 28, especially the distinction between punishment and hostility.

5. *Thursday, September 17* LOCKE ON PUNISHMENT AND WAR

Practically speaking, Locke's description of the state of nature is not all that different than Hobbes's. But Locke's moral theory is quite different. Locke has natural rights that offer protection against violence. This gives Locke a problem that Hobbes did not have: explaining how punishment could be permitted. We will talk about how he tried to solve that problem. We will be especially interested in Locke's treatment of punishment and war. While Hobbes drew a sharp distinction between punishment and war ("hostility"), Locke did not. We will talk about why that might be so. The reading will be selections from chapters 1-4, 7, and 9 of Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (Locke [1689] 1995).

6. *Tuesday, September 22* LOCKE ON PROPERTY

This is Locke's famous theory of property rights from chapter 5 of the *Second Treatise of Government* (Locke [1689] 1995). I want to make two passes over this. First, I want to give you the orthodox interpretation of Locke on property rights. This holds that the problem Locke faced was to explain how private property rights arose out of common ownership. Locke's answer, according to the orthodox interpretation, was that people convert common property into private property by laboring. I think this story falls apart pretty easily. But I was weirdly content with it until I had to teach PPE with an economist. After a long period of cognitive dissonance, it seemed to me that Locke's project was actually

quite different. He was trying to explain why private property is consistent with Christian equality.

7. *Thursday, September 24* LITERATURE REVIEW PREPARATION

The Philosophy Department does a literature review in the fall. That means that seniors work through a reading list during the term, write weekly summaries of what they read, and present particularly central material in class. I would like to adapt the literature review idea to our class as well. For today's class, write up the idea you are working with, a list of readings that you have so far, potential readers, and what you think the next step should be. We will talk about how to proceed during class.

8. *Tuesday, September 29* NOZICK'S ENTITLEMENT THEORY OF JUSTICE

Robert Nozick's entitlement theory is meant to be a modernized version of Locke's theory of property (Nozick 1974). Justice, according to Nozick, consists in a small set of rules governing the acquisition of property, its transfer from one person to another, and legitimate responses to violations of the first two rules. His idea is that all you need to know in order to say whether a society is just or not is the history of how goods were acquired and transferred. It does not matter whether people get what they deserve, they have equal shares, or utility is maximized. We will talk about the abstract nature of this theory and whether it leads to the libertarian view that Nozick espouses, namely, that the only function of the government is to prevent people from using force and fraud.

9. *Thursday, October 1* WALDRON ON HISTORIC INJUSTICE

One of the most obvious questions about a historical theory like Nozick's is: what about historic injustice? We may not know exactly what the rules governing the acquisition and transfer of resources are, but we can be pretty sure that they have been violated during the course of history. Waldron expresses some skepticism about the possibility of redressing historic wrongs like that (Waldron 1992). If so, there is nothing to be done for the descendants of those who were wronged.

10. *Tuesday, October 6* REPARATIONS
Boxill argues that Locke's theory requires reparations for the descendants of American slaves (Boxill 2003). He responds to Waldron's arguments in making his case.
11. *Thursday, October 8* MORE REPARATIONS
Coates's case for reparations is based less on the distant historical past than on the much more recent past and even the present (Coates 2014). How does this compare with Boxill's argument?
12. *Tuesday, October 13* PIKETTY ON INEQUALITY
Today we're reading a part of the hottest book on economics and society of the decade: Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* (Piketty 2014). Piketty does two things. First, he painstakingly constructs long data series that allow us to follow wealth and inequality across the centuries since Locke's defense of private ownership of the means of production and of inequality in holdings. Second, he worries about the societal implications of concentrations of wealth at the top of the income distribution. In particular, he believes that the relatively egalitarian 20th century may become a historical anomaly if we don't oppose the emergence of the super-rich.
13. *Thursday, October 15* TELES'S NON-PARTISAN LIBERTARIANISM
Teles argues that the state plays a significant role in generating inequality by protecting professionals and politically connected industries from economic competition (Teles 2015). He believes that both the political left and the political right should find this equally problematic and that they should be able to converge on a solution.
14. *Thursday, October 22* THESIS READINGS
At this point in the term, I would like to spend a session talking about some significant readings for your projects. Each of you should pick a reading from your literature review to present to the group. You will lead off our discussion by explaining what the reading says, why it is significant, and how you think you might use it in your thesis project. Please send the readings to me at least a week in advance.

15. *Tuesday, October 27* **THESIS READINGS**
Day two.
16. *Thursday, October 29* **THESIS READINGS**
Day three.
17. *Tuesday, November 3* **THESIS READINGS**
Day four.
18. *Thursday, November 5* **THESIS READINGS**
Day five.
19. *Tuesday, November 10* **RAWLS ON INEQUALITY**
Today we will take a one day tour of John Rawls's celebrated theory of justice (Rawls 1999). Specifically, we will go over three things: (1) the meaning of what he calls the difference principle, (2) his reasons for rejecting libertarianism and (3) the original position argument against utilitarianism.
20. *Thursday, November 12* **FRANKFURT ON EQUALITY**
Many of our authors have taken it for granted that equality is important. Frankfurt calls that into question (Frankfurt 1987). He thinks we should be concerned with the absolute quality of people's lives, not their standing relative to one another.
21. *Tuesday, November 17* **INEQUALITY IN HEALTH CARE?**
One area where we are especially sensitive to inequality is health care. Menzel uses the economist's concept of opportunity cost to argue that inequality in health care between the rich and poor is acceptable (Menzel 1990).
22. *Thursday, November 19* **ORGAN SALES IN INDIA**
Today's reading is a study of one very striking case of inequality in health care: some people sell their organs to others (Goyal et al. 2002). This article gives us the factual basis for our last reading.
23. *Tuesday, November 24* **SATZ ON ORGAN SALES**
Satz's essay is about objections to selling body parts, such as kidneys (Satz 2008). It is a nice counterpart to the Ehler thesis with which

we began. Like Ehler, Satz is concerned with a so-called repugnant market. She is also good about distinguishing different arguments from one another and offering a measured assessment of them. Satz's favored argument is that allowing some people the choice of selling their organs changes the choices that others face.

24. *Tuesday, December 1* PROSPECTUS DRAFTS
Two or three of you will present your prospectus drafts. Give me copies a week in advance so I can distribute them to the class.

25. *Thursday, December 3* PROSPECTUS DRAFTS
We finish up with the presentations of prospectus drafts.

26. *Tuesday, December 8* FINAL DAY
Prospectuses are due today. We will spend some of our class time with remarks about formatting theses.

Goals

In this course, we bring together scholarship from philosophy, politics and economics to study the philosophical underpinnings and social institutions of contemporary American society and the world in which it operates. Working across disciplinary boundaries, we examine scholarship that seeks to describe the liberties, freedoms and safeguards that promote human flourishing and that looks carefully at the roles played by market economies and political institutions in the construction of contemporary society.

One goal for the course is to prepare PPE majors to write their senior theses in the spring. Concrete work on the thesis is required at regular intervals throughout the term and the final project is a thesis prospectus. Another goal is to spend our sessions synthesizing work in the three disciplines of philosophy, politics, and economics. We will show how the work of economists, philosophers, and political scientists can fruitfully be brought to bear on specific topics such as inequality, repugnant markets, and population policy.

Materials

All of the readings for the class will be available in the resources section of the Sakai website for this course: <https://sakai.claremont.edu>. My note on our discussions and announcements will also be posted on Sakai.

Instructor

My name is Michael Green. My office is 207 Pearsons. My office hours are posted on the Sakai site. My office phone number is 607-0906.

Assignments

Grades will be based on the following written assignments. (1) Eight literature review reports, due weekly between October 1 and November 19 (20% of the final grade). (2) A thesis prospectus, due on the last day of class (60%). (3) A paper on the non-thesis parts of the syllabus, due by 10pm on Sunday, November 1 (20%). I will give you topics for this paper on Thursday, October 15.

Grading policies

I am committed to seeing that my students are able to do very high quality work and that high quality work will be recognized. I do not employ a curve and there is nothing competitive about grading in my courses.

Grades apply to papers, not to people. They have no bearing on whether I like or respect you. Nor do they measure improvement or hard work: one may put a lot of effort into trying to make a bad idea work or produce a very good paper with ease. Grades communicate where written work stands on as objective a scale as we can devise. That is all that they involve, so don't make too much of them.

What the grades mean

- A Work that is accurate, elegantly written, and innovative. It adds something original, creative, or imaginative to the problem under discussion. The grade of A is given to work that is exceptional.
- B Work that is accurate, well written, and has no significant problems. The grade of B is given to very good work. There is less of a difference between A and B work than you might think. Generally speaking, B papers are less innovative than A papers. This may be because the paper does not attempt to add much or because the attempt made is not fully successful.
- C Work that has problems with accuracy, reasoning, or quality of writing. The grade of C means that the paper has significant problems but is otherwise acceptable.
- D Work that has severe problems with accuracy, reasoning, relevance, or the quality of writing. Papers with these problems are not acceptable college-level work. A paper that is fine on its own may nonetheless be irrelevant. A paper is not relevant to my evaluation of work for this particular course if it does not address the question asked or if it does not display knowledge of our discussions. This sometimes trips up those taking a course pass/no credit.
- F Work that has not been completed, cannot be understood, or is irrelevant.

Final grades will be calculated using the College's 12 point scale.¹ The numerical average must be greater than half the distance between two grades in order to earn the higher grade.

¹ Search for "Letter Grades" here: <http://catalog.pomona.edu/>

Letter	Number	Range
A	12	$11.5 < A \leq 12$
A-	11	$10.5 < A- \leq 11.5$
B+	10	$9.5 < B+ \leq 10.5$
B	9	$8.5 < B \leq 9.5$
B-	8	$7.5 < B- \leq 8.5$
C+	7	$6.5 < C+ \leq 7.5$
C	6	$5.5 < C \leq 6.5$
C-	5	$4.5 < C- \leq 5.5$
D+	4	$3.5 < D+ \leq 4.5$
D	3	$2.5 < D \leq 3.5$
D-	2	$1.0 < D- \leq 2.5$
F	0	$0.0 < F \leq 1.0$

Letter and number grades

Late papers and academic accommodations

Late papers will be accepted *without question*. They will be penalized at the rate of one-quarter of a point per day, including weekends and holidays. 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 is genuinely extremely unusual.

To request academic accommodations of a disability, please speak with me and Dean Collin-Eaglin at 621-8017. This is never a problem, but it is best taken care of in advance.

Sources

- Boxill, Bernard. 2003. "A Lockean Argument for Black Reparations." *The Journal of Ethics* 7: 63-91.
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- Waldron, Jeremy. 1992. "Superseding Historic Injustice." *Ethics* 103 (1): 4-28.