INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT PHILOSOPHY 167 SPRING, 2005  
CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
Professor: Richard Arneson.
Course web page accessible at  
http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/Courses/

Lecture MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. in Warren Lecture Hall 2112.
The final exam for this course will take place on Monday, June 6, from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.. If you enroll in this class, you must be free to take a regular final exam for this course at this time.

This is a course in normative political theory. Its aim is to discover moral principles suitable for the regulation of a modern, diverse, democratic society. Here “suitable” principles are taken to be those whose implications for policy best satisfy our considered moral judgments, after reflection, all things considered. The course is text-centered; we’ll spend considerable time examining the view of the main course authors.

This course explores conflicting contemporary views on social justice. What set of institutional and political arrangements, in a modern society, is fair? The topics this question gathers include the proper role of the state and the moral limits of state authority, economic justice, freedom versus equality, the welfare state, civil liberties, the nature and justification of political democracy, and rights of groups to secession, self-determination, local autonomy, and the like.

John Rawls argues that justice requires democratic equality--equal civil liberties and democratic citizenship rights for all, a strong equality of opportunity for positions of advantage, and the political economy to be set so that over time the worst off social group is as well off as possible.

Robert Nozick argues for a libertarian conception of justice. Individuals have rights not to be harmed in certain ways (force, theft, fraud) by others, and rights to live as they choose so long as they do not harm others in these certain ways. In Nozick's view, the egalitarian rights Rawls endorses are bogus, because they conflict with the basic rights to liberty.

Ronald Dworkin holds that justice requires equal consideration and respect for all members of society and that this equal consideration implies equality of resources. This last ideal must be interpreted in a way that is compatible with personal responsibility. Equality for responsible individuals demands compensation for unchosen bad luck but not for the outcomes of individual choice given fair initial conditions.
Besides shedding light on the arguments and assumptions that underlie conflicting conceptions of justice, we will also more directly examine a variety of perspectives on the justification of democracy. What is political democracy? To qualify as morally legitimate, to what extent, if at all, must the process of government be democratic? Is political democracy intrinsically just, good or bad depending on its results, or what? Should democratic procedures be limited to protect rights; if so, which rights?

Discussions of the justification of democracy tend to presuppose a group of people living on a common territory who are to be members of a single state, which might be democratic or nondemocratic. A prior question is: How should people and territories be put together to form states? Theories of secession and the right of nations to self-determination try to answer this question. We examine some proposed answers.

A single state at a time might contain groups united by ethnicity, culture, language, religion, or some combination. Some of these groups might see themselves as nation-like, or even nations in their own right, and on this ground to possess special rights to autonomy, resources, or representation. How should we assess such claims?

The goals of the course are to improve our skills at interpreting difficult texts and assessing their arguments, to understand a variety of approaches to the theory of justice, and to gain a more reflective understanding of our own political values.

COURSE TEXTS: John Rawls, A Theory of Justice; Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia; Ronald Dworkin, Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality; George Sher and Baruch Brody (eds.), Social and Political Philosophy: Contemporary Readings; plus a few essays that will be accessible at the course web page http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/Courses then click spring 2005, then Philosophy 167.

All course handouts, assignments, study questions, advance information on the final exam, and similar material will be available on the course web page.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: A midterm take-home exam (Friday of week 6), a short writing assignment, five to seven pages in length, topics to be assigned in class, and a regular comprehensive final examination. On your exams and the writing assignment you will be graded according to the clarity of your prose, the cogency of your arguments, and the soundness of the understanding of course materials that you exhibit. The final examination will comprehend all course materials including required readings, lectures, and handouts distributed in class.
(This means that merely recommended readings will NOT be covered on exams.)

GRADING: If you are taking the course on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you must get (1) a C- or better on the final examination as well as (2) an overall C- average on all course work in order to achieve a PASS grade, with one exception: If you have an A- or better average on the midterm exam, writing assignment, and adequate participation in class discussion and are enrolled on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you need not take the final exam in order to earn a PASS grade.

The midterm take-home exam and the writing assignment will each count for 30 percent and the final examination will count for 40 percent of your overall course grade.

Only medical excuses certified by a note from your physician or a comparable certified excuse will be accepted for late submission of the writing assignment or absence from the midterm exam, or to justify the assignment of an Incomplete course grade.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES, DISCUSSIONS, AND READINGS

Week 1. March 28-April 3.
MON: Introduction. Reading: none.
WED: Rawls versus utilitarianism; justice as fairness; the role of political philosophy. Reading: Rawls, A Theory of Justice, chapter 1.
FRI: Two principles of justice: (1) equal basic liberty, and (2) fair equality of opportunity and the difference principle. Reading: Rawls, A Theory of Justice, chapter 2.

Week 2. April 4-10.
MON: The original position argument for Rawls’s principles. Reading: Rawls, A Theory of Justice, chapter 3.
WED: The original position argument. Reading: same as for Monday.
FRI: Rawls on liberty and the priority of liberty. Reading: Rawls, A Theory of Justice, chapter 4 and section 82 from chapter 9. [Please note: This class may have to be rescheduled.]
Week 3. April 11-17.
MON: Distributive shares, justice between generations, and Rawls versus “desert” and “perfection.” Reading: Rawls, A Theory of Justice, chapter 5.


Week 5. April 25-May 1.
WED: Lockean natural rights and the minimal state. Reading:: Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia, chapters 1-3.

Week 6. May 2-8
WED: The principle of fairness; the argument for the minimal state. Reading: Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia, chapter 5; also A. John Simmons, “The Principle of Fair Play,” available at course web page.
Week 7. May 9-15

WED: **MIDTERM TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE IN CLASS.** Personal responsibility and distributive equality. Reading: Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, chapter 2, pp. 65-119.


Week 8. May 16-22.


Week 10. May 30-June 5.
MON: NO CLASS. HOLIDAY.

**Arneson’s office hours: Tuesdays 2-3 and Thursdays 1-3 in HSS 8057. Office phone 534 6810. Email rarneson@ucsd.edu**