

**MIDTERM TAKEHOME EXAM      PHILOSOPHY 167  
CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

**SPRING, 2005**

This exam is due at the start of class on Wednesday, May 11. Late papers will be subject to grade penalty.

Answer one of the “A” questions and one of the “B” questions below. Please indicate clearly which questions you are answering. Your complete exam should be the equivalent of seven or eight typed double-spaced pages. Your answers may be handwritten but should be legible.

A1. On p. 53 of chapter two of *A Theory of Justice* John Rawls states that along with protecting equal liberties the just society would satisfy a principle he initially states in these words: “social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone’s advantage and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.” Rawls proceeds to consider how best to interpret clauses (a) and (b) of this principle. What version of this principle does he affirm? For what reasons? Defend or criticize the principle as Rawls interprets it.

A2. In the original position argument that John Rawls develops in chapter three of *A Theory of Justice*, a crucial element is the veil of ignorance. Elucidate the idea of the veil of ignorance, its rationale, and the impact it has in shaping the content of the principles that are supported by the original position argument.

B1. In the “Preface” to *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Robert Nozick states, “Individuals have rights, and there are things no person or group may do to them (without violating their rights.)” In chapter three Nozick develops a conception of moral rights as side constraints. State the side constraint conception of moral rights in your own words and defend or attack it in the light of the criticism of it that Amartya Sen presents and that a utilitarian would raise.

B2. In chapter 7, Section 1 of *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* Robert Nozick defends an historical entitlement account of distributive justice against some rivals and indicates how people may legitimately acquire permanent, bequeathable full rights of private ownership over portions of the earth. Summarize Nozick’s position and either develop a Rawlsian criticism of it or a Nozickian criticism of Rawls’s own view of these matters.

Your answers will be graded according to the cogency of your arguments, the clarity of your prose, and the soundness of the understanding of course materials that you display. Your answers should avoid quoting course texts. To show that a course author says what you assert he says, provide precise footnote references that support your interpretations. The University and moral rules forbidding plagiarism apply to this assignment.