

Theory of Politics

Preliminaries

1. Logistics I would like you to write six essays of around 1,600-2,000 words each for me across the term. It is up to you in which weeks you write these essays. For each topic I have suggested an essay question. It is up to you whether you answer this question or come up with your own. In weeks when you do write an essay, please email it to me by 19.00 the day before our tutorial to give me a chance to read through it before we meet. When emailing me your essay, I would appreciate it if you could include both your name and the essay topic in the name of the document. In the two weeks in which you do not write an essay, you should still aim to do the reading for that week's topic. If for any reason (illness, a pileup of other commitments, etc.) writing an essay proves to be difficult in a week when an essay is due, do not worry: just email me and we can sort something out (e.g. writing the essay in week 9, or whatever works best).

2. Topics We will begin by looking at Justice in week 1. After that you can choose which topics we look at each week from those remaining on the list.

3. Reading (i) *Order* I recommend reading the texts listed for each topic in roughly the order I have listed them. (ii) *Quantity* I do not expect you to get through all the texts listed for a given topic during the given week in term time, but you should aim to get through at least half. (iii) *Note-taking* It is important that as you read you take high-quality notes from which you will later be able to revise. You will be better-off in the long-run reading fewer texts while taking high-quality notes than reading more texts without taking high-quality notes. (iv) *Revising* At the end of term you should decide which four topics you will prepare to answer on in Finals, and use the vacation to get through any remaining texts listed for those topics. You should also make sure to consult the faculty reading list for those topics prior to Finals.

4. Writing I strongly recommend reading Rachel Fraser's "Essay Writing Instructions" and "What Not to Do" before writing your first essay, available here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1V-fuU89qX-JZAXVu3V3zWS1dQNz0bjQd>.

Justice

QUESTION: “Theories of justice concern the public rules of political institutions rather than the personal choices of individuals.” Discuss.

Samuel Freeman, “Introduction: John Rawls – An Overview” in Samuel Freeman ed., *The Cambridge Companion to John Rawls* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. sections I&II.

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* 2nd ed. (London: Harvard University Press, 1999), Chs.1&2.

G.A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008), Ch.1 “The Incentives Argument”.

G.A. Cohen, “Where the Action Is: On the Site of Distributive Justice” in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.26 no.1 (1997), pp.3-30.

Andrew Williams, “Incentives, Inequality and Publicity” in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.27 no.3 (1998), pp.225-247.

Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), Ch.5 “Justice as Fairness: For Whom?”.

Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), Ch.1 “Displacing the Distributive Paradigm”.

Injustice

QUESTION: Who is responsible for rectifying structural injustices?

Maeve McKeown, “Structural Injustice” in *Philosophy Compass* Vol.16 no.7 (2021).

Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Martha Nussbaum, “Forward” in Iris Marion Young, *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Corwin Aragon and Alison M. Jaggar, “Agency, Complicity, and the Responsibility to Resist Structural Injustice” in *Journal of Social Philosophy* Vol.49 no.3 (2018), pp.439-460.

David Miller, "Distributing Responsibilities" in *Journal of Political Philosophy* Vol.9 no.4 (2001), pp.453-471.

Catherine Lu, "Colonialism as Structural Injustice: Historical Responsibility and Contemporary Redress" in *Journal of Political Philosophy* Vol.19 no.3 (2011), pp.261-281.

Olúfémí O. Táíwò, *Reconsidering Reparations: Why Climate Justice and Constructive Politics are Needed in the Wake of Slavery and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), Chs.2-4.

Equality

QUESTION: "The important thing is not whether I have as much of some good as you but whether I have enough of it. Hence, equality is not itself important." Discuss.

Jonathan Wolff, "Equality: The Recent History of an Idea" in *Journal of Moral Philosophy* Vol.4 no.1 (2007), pp.125-136.

Bernard Williams, "The Idea of Equality" in *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers, 1956-1972* (Cambridge: CUP, 1973).

Harry Frankfurt, "Equality as a Moral Ideal" in *Ethics* Vol.98 no.1 (1987), pp.21-43.

Paula Casal, "Why Sufficiency Is Not Enough" in *Ethics* Vol.117 no.2 (2007), pp.296-326.

Derek Parfit, "Equality and Priority" in *Ratio* Vol.10 no.3 (1997), pp.202-221.

Larry Temkin, "Equality, Priority, and the Levelling Down Objection" in Matthew Clayton & Andrew Williams eds., *The Ideal of Equality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), pp.126-161.

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations" in *The Atlantic* (June 2014).

Democracy

QUESTION: In what sense, if any, ought democracy to be "deliberative"?

Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy" in his *Philosophy, Politics, Democracy: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp.16-37.

Jane Mansbridge et al., "A Systemic Approach to Deliberative Democracy" in John Parkinson and Jane Mansbridge eds., *Deliberative Systems: Deliberative Democracy at the Large Scale* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.1-26.

Lynn M. Sanders, "Against Deliberation" in *Political Theory* Vol.25 no.3 (1997), pp.347-376.

Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Chs.1&2.

Iris Marion Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy" in *Political Theory* Vol.29 no.5 (2001), pp.670-690.

Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), Chs.1&4.

Wendy Brown, "We Are All Democrats Now..." in *Theory & Event* Vol.13 no.2 (2010).

Liberty I: Three Concepts of Liberty

QUESTION: Is freedom best understood as the absence of constraints?

John Filling, "Liberty" in M.T. Gibbons ed., *The Encyclopedia of Political Thought* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), pp.2156-66.

Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" in his *Liberty* (Oxford: OUP, 2002), or as abridged in David Miller, *The Liberty Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp.33-57.

Gerald C. McCullum, "Negative and Positive Freedom" in David Miller, *The Liberty Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp.100-122.

Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty" in David Miller, *The Liberty Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp.141-162.

Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Chs.2&3.

Quentin Skinner, "A Third Concept of Liberty" in David Miller, *The Liberty Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp.243-254.

Barnor Hesse, "Escaping Liberty: Western Hegemony, Black Fugitivity" in *Political Theory* Vol.42 no.3 (2014), pp.288-313.

Liberty II/Feminism I: Freedom and Social Construction

QUESTIONS: What weight should feminists give to the value of individual liberty? OR Assess the claim that many theories of freedom fail to appreciate the sense in which the self is socially constructed.

Nancy J. Hirschmann, "Towards a Feminist Theory of Freedom" in David Miller, *The Liberty Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp.183-199.

Clare Chambers, *Sex, Culture, and Justice* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), Ch.5 "Two Orders of Autonomy and Political Liberalism: Breast Implants versus Female Genital Mutilation".

Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), Ch.2 "The Feminist Critique of Liberalism".

Michaele L. Ferguson, "Choice Feminism and the Fear of Politics" in *Perspectives on Politics* Vol.8 no.1 (2010), pp.247-253.

Serene Khader, *Adaptive Preferences and Women's Empowerment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Introduction and Ch.1.

Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination* (London: Routledge, 1990), Ch.5 "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power".

Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (London: Routledge, 2004), Introduction and Ch.1.

Feminism II: Intersectionality

QUESTION: Must any plausible feminism be intersectional?

Brittney Cooper, "Intersectionality" in Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.385-406.

Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement" (1977), available at: <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Colour" in *Stanford Law Review* Vol.43 no.6 (1991), pp.1241-1299.

Naomi Zack, *Inclusive Feminism* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), Ch.1 "Beyond Intersectionality".

Jennifer C. Nash, "Re-Thinking Intersectionality" in *Feminist Review* Vol.89 no.1 (2008), pp.1-15.

Vrushali Patil, "From Patriarchy to Intersectionality: A Transnational Feminist Assessment of How Far We've Really Come" in *Signs* Vol.38 no.4 (2013), pp.847-867.

Anne Garry, "Intersectionality, Metaphors, and the Multiplicity of Gender" in *Hypatia* Vol.26 no.4 (2011), pp.826-850.

Civil Disobedience

QUESTION: To what extent is violence consistent with justified civil disobedience?

Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter From Birmingham Jail" (1963), reprinted in *The Atlantic* (2006).

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (2nd ed., London: Harvard University Press, 2009), Ch.6 "Duty and Obligation".

Kimberley Brownlee, "Features of a Paradigm Case of Civil Disobedience" in *Res Publica* Vol.10 no.4 (2004), pp.337-351.

Robin Celikates, "Rethinking Civil Disobedience as a Practice of Contestation – Beyond the Liberal Paradigm" in *Constellations* Vol.23 no.1 (2016), pp.37-45.

M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (various eds., 1909), Chs.16&17.

Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (various eds., 1965), Ch.1 "Concerning Violence".

Andreas Malm, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* (London: Verso, 2021), Chs.1&2.

Libertarianism

QUESTION: "Securing and maintaining equality requires violating rights of self-ownership." Discuss.

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), Ch.7 "Distributive Justice".

Jonathan Wolff, *Robert Nozick: Property, Justice and the Minimal State* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), Chs.1&4.

Thomas Nagel, "Libertarianism without Foundations" in *The Yale Law Journal* Vol.85 no.1 (1975), pp.136-149.

Cheyney C. Ryan, "Yours, Mine, and Ours: Property Rights and Individual Liberty" in *Ethics* Vol.87 no.2 (1977), pp.126-144.

Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), Ch.4 "Libertarianism: Matriarchy, Slavery, and Dystopia".

Michael Otsuka, "Self-Ownership and Equality: A Lockean Reconciliation" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.27 no.1 (1998), pp.65-92.

Barbara Fried, "Left-Libertarianism: A Review Essay" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.32 no.1 (2004), pp.66-92.

Multiculturalism

QUESTION: Does multiculturalism pose a challenge for liberalism? Is this a challenge liberalism can meet?

Chandran Kukathas, "Are There Any Cultural Rights?" in *Political Theory* Vol.20 no.1 (1992), pp.105-139.

Will Kymlicka, "The Rights of Minority Cultures: A Reply to Kukathas" in *Political Theory* Vol.20 no.1 (1992), pp.140-146.

Chandran Kukathas, "Cultural Rights Again: A Rejoinder to Kymlicka" in *Political Theory* Vol.20 no.4 (1992), pp.674-680.

Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), Chs.3,5&8.

Joseph Raz, *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Ch.8 “Multiculturalism: A Liberal Perspective”.

Iris Marion Young, “Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship” in *Ethics* Vol.99 no.2 (1989), pp.250-274.

Charles Mills, “Multiculturalism as/and/or Anti-Racism” in Anthony S. Laden and David Owen eds., *Multiculturalism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.89-114.

Socialism

QUESTION: “Desirable but unfeasible.” Is this a fair assessment of socialism?

Lorna Finlayson, *The Political is Political: Conformity and the Illusion of Dissent in Contemporary Political Theory* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), Ch.1 “There is No Alternative”.

G.A. Cohen, *Why Not Socialism?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Miriam Ronzoni, “Life is Not a Camping Trip – On the Desirability of Cohenite Socialism” in *Politics, Philosophy, & Economics* Vol.11 no.2 (2011), pp.171-185.

Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944).

Hilary Wainwright, *Arguments for a New Left: Answering the Free-Market Right* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), Part II.

Erik Olin Wright, *How to Be an Anti-Capitalist in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Verso, 2019).

Ideal Theory and Realism

QUESTION: Is it time to stop doing ideal theory?

Laura Valentini, “Ideal vs. Non-ideal Theory: A Conceptual Map” in *Philosophy Compass* Vol.7 no.9 (2012), pp.654-664.

G.A. Cohen, “Facts and Principles” in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.31 no.3 (2003), pp.211-245.

Amartya Sen, "What do we Want from a Theory of Justice?" in *Journal of Philosophy* Vol.103 no.5 (2006), pp.215-238.

Charles W. Mills, ““Ideal Theory” as Ideology” in *Hypatia* Vol.20 no.3 (2005), pp.165-184.

Jordan Walters, “Nonideal Theory as Ideology” in *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* Vol.30 no1 (2025), pp.74-97.

Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Lorna Finlayson, “With Radicals Like These, Who Needs Conservatives? Doom, Gloom, and Realism in Political Theory” in *European Journal of Political Theory* Vol.16 no.3 (2017), pp.264-282.