

PHIL 835:
Liberal Neutrality and Civic Obligation

Fall 2018
Tuesdays, 3pm
Baker Hall 150

Danielle Wenner
Baker Hall 155C
dwenner@andrew.cmu.edu

This course aims to provide students with a graduate-level familiarity with contemporary political philosophy. We will begin with an exploration of the Rawlsian liberal political tradition and some of its detractors, with a special focus on the liberal commitment to neutrality and its role within liberalism. We will go on to consider the nature of voting in a democracy, with an eye towards the costs and rationality of informed political decision-making and the ethical duties of voters. Finally, we will examine the nature of civic obligation within a liberal democratic society, questioning both the strength of civic obligations and their demandingness as well as how well this demandingness comports with liberal neutrality among competing conceptions of the good.

Required Texts

Course readings will draw heavily from the following books:

Rawls, John. (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press. (original edition)

Rawls, John. (1993). *Political Liberalism*. New York, Columbia University Press.

All other required course readings will be made available electronically no later than the Wednesday before each class meeting.

Course Requirements

Short Response Pieces – 20% - 6 short response pieces, with the lowest grade dropped. No longer than 3 double-spaced pages, the goal of the response piece is not expository but analytical. Argue for a thesis, raise an objection, or clarify a point that you think is important and interesting. Short response pieces are due **no later than 8am on the day of class**, and may (will) be used during class discussion. Each student must turn in **at least one response piece during each of the months** Sept, Oct, and Nov.

Conference Paper & In-Class Presentation – 25% - A conference-length (~3000 words) paper which you will present in class on a week of your choosing. Papers must be distributed to all members of the group **no later than 8pm the night before** your presentation. Students are expected to read each other's papers and come to class ready to give constructive feedback.

Conference Paper Re-Write – 35% - A revision of your presented paper in light of our discussion on your presentation day and my comments. All students will have at least two weeks to complete their revisions.

In-Class Participation – 20% - Please complete all readings before class & come to class prepared to contribute to discussion. In particular, be prepared to explain the major theses of assigned readings, the arguments for those theses, and to critically evaluate those arguments. Each week, one participant will be responsible for leading our discussion by providing a critical précis of the reading and raising a few interesting points for discussion. Discussion leaders are encouraged to use their short response pieces as jumping-off points for discussion.

Class Policies

Late short response pieces are not accepted. Late papers will be penalized half a letter grade (5 points) for every day or portion of a day that they are late. In this class there is a zero-tolerance policy for cheating: any student found to have plagiarized on any assignment will receive a failing grade for the entire course, and all available institutional penalties will be sought.

If you wish to request an accommodation due to a documented disability, please notify me and contact Disability Resources at: access@andrew.cmu.edu or 412-268-2013 as soon as possible.

Outline of Topics & (Tentative) Schedule of Readings

Part I: Political Liberalism, Perfectionism, and the Nature of Neutrality

1st Meeting (28 Aug)

George Sher (1997). "The Principle of Neutrality," ch. 2 of *Beyond Neutrality: Perfectionism and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2nd Meeting (4 Sept)

Theory of Justice, Ch. 1, §§1-6 and Ch. 2, §§11-15.

3rd Meeting (11 Sept)

Theory of Justice, Ch. 3, §§22-29.

Charles Larmore (1987). "Liberalism and the Neutrality of the State," ch. 3 of *Patterns of Moral Complexity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4th Meeting (18 Sept)

Theory of Justice, Ch. 5, §50

Michael Sandel (1982). "Introduction: Liberalism and the Primacy of Justice" and "Justice and the Moral Subject," Intro & ch. 1 of *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

5th Meeting (25 Sept)

Thomas Nagel (1973). "Rawls on Justice." *Philosophical Review* **82**(2): 220-234.

Joseph Raz (1986). "Neutral Political Concern," ch. 5 of *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

6th Meeting (2 Oct)

Political Liberalism, Intro pp. xv-xxx & Lecture I, §§1,2,5,6,7

Martha Nussbaum (2011). "Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* **39**(1): 3-45.

7th Meeting (9 Oct)

Political Liberalism, Lecture IV, §§1-5

Samuel Scheffler (1994). "The Appeal of Political Liberalism." *Ethics* **105**(1): 4-22.

8th Meeting (16 Oct)

Susan Moller Okin (1994). "Political Liberalism, Justice, and Gender." *Ethics* **105**(1): 23-43.

Christie Hartley & Lori Watson (2010). "Is a Feminist Political Liberalism Possible?" *Journal of Ethics & Social Philosophy* **5**(1). doi:10.26556/jesp.v5i1.48.

9th Meeting (23 Oct)

Political Liberalism, Lecture V, §§1-7

Martha Nussbaum (1998). "Aristotelian Social Democracy." In Gillian Brock (ed.) *Necessary Goods: Our Responsibilities to Meet Others' Needs*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield. 135-156.

Part II: Democracy & Democratic Rationality

10th Meeting (30 Oct)

Plato's Republic, ch. VIII

Anthony Downs ([1957] 1985). "The Process of Becoming Informed" and "How Rational Citizens Reduce Information Costs," chs. 11-12 of *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper Collins.

NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO CLASS MEETING NOV. 6. THIS MEETING TO BE RESCHEDULED.

11th Meeting (13 Nov)

Russell Hardin (2009). "Democratic Participation," ch. 3 of *How Do You Know? The Economics of Ordinary Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bryan Caplan (2007). "Classical Public Choice and the Failure of Rational Ignorance," ch. 4 of *The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

12th Meeting (20 Nov)

Jason Brennan (2011). "Civic Virtue Without Politics" and "Wrongful Voting," chs. 2-3 of *The Ethics of Voting*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Part III: Civic Virtue & Liberal Neutrality

13th Meeting (TBD)

William Galston (1991). "Liberal Virtues," ch. 10 of *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Robert Audi (1998). "A Liberal Theory of Civic Virtue." *Social Philosophy and Policy* **15**(1): 149.

14th Meeting (TBD)

M. Victoria Costa (2004). "Political Liberalism and the Complexity of Civic Virtue." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* **XLII**(2): 149-170.

Christie Hartley and Lori Watson (2016). "Virtue in Political Thought: On Civic Virtue in Political Liberalism." In Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (eds.) *Virtues & Their Vices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

15th Meeting (TBD)

Philip Pettit (1997). "Civilizing the Republic," ch. 8 of *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

M. Victoria Costa (2009). "Neo-republicanism, Freedom as Non-Domination, and Citizen Virtue." *Politics, Philosophy, & Economics* **8**(4):401-419.