

Political Theory

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Tutorials are on Teams – I will send you invitations.

You should write **6 essays** in total. Please email me your essays by **2pm on the day before our meeting**. Your essay should be about **1,000 to 1,500 words** in length. Don't tackle everything in a single essay and be selective about your readings. The reading lists below are quite extensive, so that you can follow up on the issues you find interesting. Pick one interesting aspect of the topic, pick an argument/view that you like or dislike, and try to come up with interesting arguments. Try to have a clear structure and write in a simple and concise manner.

Useful resources:

<https://philpapers.org>

<https://plato.stanford.edu>

Podcasts:

<http://www.philosophybites.com>

Advice on writing philosophy essays:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

<http://oyc.yale.edu/sites/default/files/philosophy-paper.pdf>

Week 1

Ideal Theory and Realism

Essay topic:

1. Must the recommendations of political theories be feasible?

Key reading

-Cohen, G. A., *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (2008), ch 6. [Previously appeared as ‘Facts and Principles’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 31(3) (2003), pp. 211–245.]

Further reading

-Miller, David, ‘Political Philosophy for Earthlings’ in his book *Justice for Earthlings: Essays in Political Philosophy* (2013), as well as in David Leopold and Marc Stears (eds.), *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches* (2008), pp. 29-48.

- Sen, Amartya, ‘What do we Want from a Theory of Justice?’, *Journal of Philosophy* 103(5) (2006), pp. 215-238, or his *The Idea of Justice* (2009), esp. the Introduction.

Week 2

Liberty

Essay topic:

1. Is freedom best understood as the absence of constraints?

Key reading

- Berlin, I. (1958) “Two Concepts of Liberty.” In Isaiah Berlin (1969) *Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Further reading

-Skinner, Quentin, ‘The Idea of Negative liberty: Philosophical and Historical Perspectives’, in Rorty, Schneewind, and Skinner (eds.), *Philosophy in History: Essays in the Historiography of Philosophy* (1984)

Week 3

Equality

Essay topic:

1. Does the Levelling Down Objection give us reason to reject equality?

Key reading

- D. Parfit 'Equality or Priority?', *Ratio*, (1997), or A. Williams and M. Clayton (eds.) *The Ideal of Equality*, (2000).

Further reading

-Larry Temkin, *Inequality*, (1993), Chapter 9 - 9.5.

-Michael Otsuka and Alex Voorhoeve, 'Why it Matters that Some are Worse Off than Others: An Argument against the Priority View', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, (2009).

Week 4

Feminism

Essay topic:

1. What weight should feminists give to the value of individual liberty?

Key reading

-Nussbaum, Martha C., *Sex and Social Justice* (1999), chs. 2 'The Feminist Critique of Liberalism'

Further reading

-Hirschmann, Nancy, *The Subject of Liberty: Towards a Feminist Theory of Freedom* (2003).

-Chambers, Clare, 'Feminism', in Michael Freeden, Lyman Tower Sargent, and Marc Stears (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (2013).

Week 5

Rights

Essay topic:

1. Are there any natural rights and, if so, are there any which are absolute?

Key reading

-Hart, H. L. A., 'Are There Any Natural Rights?', *The Philosophical Review* 64(2) (1955), pp.175-191. Reprinted in Jeremy Waldron, *Theories of Rights* (1984).

Further reading

- Kamm, Frances, 'Rights', in Jules L. Coleman, Kenneth Einar Himma, and Scott J. Shapiro (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Jurisprudence and Philosophy of Law* (2002).
- Wenar, Leif, 'The Nature of Rights', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 33(3) (2005), pp.223-252.

Week 6

Justice and Injustice

Essay topic:

1. 'Theories of justice concern the public rules of political institutions rather than personal choices of individuals.' Discuss.

Key reading

- Cohen, G. A., *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're so Rich?* (2000), chs 8 and 9.

Further reading

- Walzer, Michael, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (1983).
- Williams, Andrew, 'Incentives, Inequality and Publicity', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 27(3) (1998), pp. 225-247.

Week 7

Democracy

Essay topic:

1. Is democracy intrinsically just?

Key reading

- Arneson, R. J. (2004). Democracy is not intrinsically just. *Justice and democracy*, 40-58.

Further reading

-Cohen, Joshua, 'Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy', in his *Philosophy, Politics, Democracy: Selected Essays* (2009), or in James Bohman and William Rehg (eds.), *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (1997).

-Dworkin, Ronald, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (2011), ch. 18.

Week 8

Libertarianism

Essay topic: What is left-libertarianism and how plausible is it?

Key reading

-Valentynne, Peter, 'Left-Libertarianism', in David M. Estlund (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Philosophy* (2012).

Further reading

-Nozick, Robert, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, rev. edn (2003).