

PHIL2355 Theories of Justice**Summer Term 2018/19**Start Date: July 15th 2019End Date: July 26th 2019

Class time: Mon – Fri 09:30-12:30

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Course description

Social justice, or distributive justice, has become a prominent topic in contemporary political philosophy. This course will begin with an elaboration of the nature of the problem that a theory of social justice takes upon itself to address. It will then proceed to elaborating, comparing and assessing various competing approaches towards justice within the tradition of liberalism, in particular Rawls's theory of justice as fairness, Dworkin's luck egalitarian theory, and Nozick's libertarian theory of entitlement. It will also examine some specific issues that have preoccupied justice theorists, including the relationship between justice and nature, the site and scope of distributive justice, and the defensibility of ascribing to the right to subsistence the status of human right.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- Describe the function of distributive justice and explain its normative significance
- Explain the two major approaches – patterned and unpatterned – to distributive justice in political philosophy
- Identify and explain the central principles and supporting arguments of the major conceptions of justice adopting either of the two approaches, how such principles are to provide moral guidance to our evaluating a society' institutions and distributions, and how these conceptions are to be critically appraised
- Identify and explain the major positions in the philosophical debates concerning the scope of distributive justice and the right to subsistence, and critically assess the relative merits of these positions
- Achieve better understanding of and unification among their judgments about justice at various levels of generality

Assessment

- 1) First In-class test (25%). Short questions covering first half of course topics.
- 2) Second in-class test (25%). Short questions covering second half of course topics.

3) Research essay (50%). Essay conducting a sustained philosophical analysis of one of the course topics. About 2,500 words.

Workload and Learning Activities

- 1) Lectures and Tutorials (30 hours)
- 2) Readings for each topic