

The Idea of Justice

Political Science 7991/7995

Fall -- 2018

August 22: The Genesis of an Idea - (of practical wisdom) - (of fairness) - (of autonomy) - (of capability)

[In our experience of the antimony of unsociable sociability] the beginning of a foundation is laid for a manner of thinking which is able, over time, to transform the primitive natural predisposition for moral discernment into definite practical principles and, in this way, to ultimately transform an agreement to society that initially had been pathologically.

I. Kant, *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective*

Reading: I. Kant, *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Perspective*

August 29: Moral Sensitivity – Moral Reasoning – Moral Imagination

The faculty of judging particulars (as Kant discovered it), the ability to say, “This is wrong,” “This is beautiful,” etc., is not the same as the faculty of thinking. Thinking deals with invisibles, with representations of things that are absent; judging always concerns particulars and things close at hand. But the two are interrelated in a way similar to the way consciousness and conscience are interconnected.

Hannah Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations”

Readings: H. Arendt, “Philosophy and Politics” (1954)
H. Arendt, “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy” (1965)
H. Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations” (1971)
J. Gordon, “Hannah Arendt’s Political Theology of Democratic Life”

September 5, 12, & 19: Human Flourishing: Sophia . . . & . . . Phronesis

If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty in vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Readings: Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*
Aristotle, *The Politics*

September 26 & October 3: Justice as Fairness: Political . . . Not Metaphysical

Thus, a conception of the good normally consists of a more or less determinate scheme of final ends, that is, ends we want to realize for their own sake, as well as of attachments to other persons and loyalties to various groups and associations. These attachments and loyalties give rise to affections and devotions, and therefore the flourishing of the persons and associations who are the objects of these sentiments is also part of our conception of the good. Moreover, we must also include in such a conception a view of our relation to the world—religious, philosophical, or moral—by reference to which the value and significance of our ends and attachments are understood.

J. Rawls, “Justice as Fairness, Political, Not Metaphysical”

Reading: J. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*

October 10 & 17: Autonomy . . . Rights . . . Ownership . . . Utopia

The minimal state treats us as inviolate individuals, who may not be used in certain ways by others as means or tools or instruments or resources; it treats us as persons having individual right with the dignity this constitutes. Treating us with respect by respecting our rights, it allows us, individually or with whom we please, to choose our life and to realize our ends and our conception of ourselves, insofar as we can, aided by the voluntary cooperation of other individuals possessing the same dignity. How dare any state or group of individuals do more. Or less.

R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, & Utopia*

Reading: R. Nozick, *Anarchy, State, & Utopia*

October 24, 31, & November 7: Equality of What? Basic Human Capabilities!

If a theory of justice is to guide reasoned choice of policies, strategies or institutions, then the identification of fully just social arrangements is neither necessary nor sufficient.

A. Sen, *The Idea of Justice*

Readings: A. Sen, *The Idea of Justice*

A. Sen, Equality of What?

http://www.ophi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Sen-1979_Equality-of-What.pdf

November 14 & 28: Human Flourishing: Sophia . . Phronesis . . . Revisited

The Capabilities approach can be provisionally defined as an approach to comparative quality-of-life assessment and to theorizing about basic social justice. It holds that the key question to ask, when comparing societies and assessing them for their basic decency or justice, is, "what is each person able to do and to be?"

M. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*

Reading: M. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*
M. Nussbaum, "Aristotelian Social Democracy."

**FINAL EXAMINATION OR RESEARCH RESEARCHPROSPECTUS
DUE ON
SATURDAY – DECEMBER 8
5:00 PM**

Course Objectives and Requirements:

This seminar is designed to acquaint you a variety of efforts to articulate the “idea” of justice. After some preliminary discussions on the nature of moral thinking, we shall examine the writings of five prominent philosophical texts on justice: Aristotle; Rawls, Nozick, Sen, and Nussbaum.

In each seminar session, the focus of our attention will be a particular set of readings. Emphasis will be placed, therefore, on a careful and thorough understanding, interpretation, and analysis of these readings. A significant part of my evaluation of your performance in the seminar will depend upon my assessment of how effectively you accomplish this exegetical and interpretive task, both in your oral presentations and in your written essays.

Each of you will be asked to write five interpretive essays of approximately 3-5 pages in length. The occasions for these essays will be the first two weeks on Aristotle, the two weeks respectively on Rawls and Nozick; the first two weeks on Sen, and the two weeks on Nussbaum. The class will be divided into two groups, with 6 presentations scheduled for each meeting on the aforementioned theorists. Each week of presentation one group of individuals will be presenting; another group will be giving critical appraisals of those presentations. The essays must follow all of the rules of formal papers, with footnotes at the bottom of the page, formal English, proper citations, double-spaced, and font no smaller than 12 pitch. Most of the time, these interpretive essays will focus on the assigned readings; on occasion you may be asked to focus on an analytical issue I raise about the readings. In preparing your interpretive essays, you may consult sources other than those assigned. Your essays will be due, via uploading on Moodle, on Monday evenings by Midnight. You will be asked to present (not read) all or a portion of your essay in class during the seminar session for that week. I will post all of the papers so that those of you who are being asked to react to them may prepare your reactions in advance.

Finally, in addition to the interpretive essays and oral presentations you will be asked to choose one of two final options. You may prepare and write an individual research proposal on a topic relating to the course subject matter; or, you may take a final examination (take-home), in which you will be asked a broad analytical question covering the course material. Either of these options must amount to a formal essay of 8-10 pages in length. What follows is a guide to how the class requirements described above will be factored into my evaluation of your class performance:

Five Essays.....	50%
Oral Presentations and Reactions	20%
Research Project or Final Examination.....	30%

My Office Hours: MWF from 9 to 10:30AM and 11:30AM to 12:30PM, Room 237 Stubbs Hall, or by appointment at your convenience.