

# Contemporary Theories of Justice

Political Science 231S  
Office: Encina Hall, room 420  
Office hrs: Wed, 2 – 4pm

Professor Rob Reich  
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This course fulfills the WIM, or Writing in the Major, requirements.

Writing in the Major Teaching Assistant  
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## Course Overview:

“Justice,” writes John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*, “is the first virtue of social institutions.” Social institutions are just or unjust to the extent that they distribute goods and bads, benefits and burdens, in the appropriate manner – when they give each citizen that to which he or she is due. The goal of a theory of justice is to identify what justice demands so that we may ensure that real-life institutions are as just as possible.

This course examines prominent contemporary theories of justice: utilitarian, libertarian, egalitarian liberalism, communitarian, and feminist. The course also aspires to show the relationship between theories of justice and the values of liberty and equality.

## Course Requirements:

### A. Class participation

Because this class is a seminar, its success rests in the ongoing participation of everyone. I understand class participation to entail, at a bare minimum, coming to class having completed the reading, being willing to contribute to discussion, being willing to monitor one’s own contributions to discussion such that class is not dominated by the views of only a few persons, and being able to listen sympathetically to one’s fellow students.

*This is a reading intensive class. If you are not prepared to spend time during the week doing the reading, and thinking about the reading, do not enroll in the class.*

### B. Writing

The writing requirements of the course differ for undergraduates and graduate students. Undergraduates with significant background in political theory (and especially those currently or considering writing a senior thesis in political theory) may choose to fulfill the graduate student writing requirement, but only with my permission).

#### *Undergraduate writing requirement*

For undergraduates, this course is writing-intensive and fulfills the “Writing in the Major” requirement for political science majors. Each student is expected to complete three papers, two 2-3 pagers and a larger paper of 12-15 pages. The first two papers will have assigned questions and ask you to explicate and interpret some particularly important concept or reading passage. The third paper is a straightforward seminar paper. In keeping with the requirements of WIM courses, revisions will be required. There will be no exams.

### *Graduate student writing requirement*

One long seminar paper required, on a topic of your own choosing. The guidelines are purposefully minimal so as to allow you to write on a topic relevant to your own scholarly interests. I expect only that the paper incorporates political theorists that we read in the course, or if it does not, that you consult with me about your plans by mid-quarter.

*Both undergraduates and graduate students are expected to submit paper proposals.*

*For both undergraduates and graduate students, please note that late assignments will only be accepted if prior arrangements have been made with me.*

### C. Class Presentation

Depending on the size of class enrollment, groups of 2-3 students will be responsible for preparing a short presentation on the readings to class. Students should prepare brief handouts for fellow students and set the stage for class discussion. Further details about the presentation will be discussed in class.

### **Grading:**

Grades will be computed from the following:

2-3 pager: [15% each]	A short paper to demonstrate your philosophical writing abilities.
A seminar paper: [50% or 80%]	A substantial paper addressing a problem or question of your choosing.
Class participation: [20%]	Adequate preparation, perceptive oral participation, and empathetic listening; in-class presentation.

### **Readings:**

The following books are required texts and are also available for purchase at the Bookstore:

- Bentham, Jeremy and Mill, John Stuart. *The Classical Utilitarians: Bentham and Mill*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003.
- Kymlicka, Will. *Multicultural Citizenship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Kymlicka, Will. *Contemporary Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books, 1974.
- Okin, Susan Moller. *Justice, Gender, and the Family*. New York: Basic Books, 1989.
- Okin, Susan Moller. *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice* (revised edition). Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Rawls, John. *The Law of Peoples*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Walzer, Michael. *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

## Course Outline

Tuesday, January 10

Introduction

*[Undergraduates please submit applications to the course by Thursday, January 12.]*

Tuesday, January 17

Utilitarianism

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill

Recommended reading

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*

- Chapters 1-2 (Introduction and Utilitarianism)

Tuesday, January 24

Liberal Egalitarianism

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*.

- Part I (omit section 7-9, 18-19), and section 77 of part III

Recommended reading

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*

- Chapters 3 (Liberal Equality)

*First 2-3 page paper due, Friday, January 27*

Tuesday, January 31

Liberal Egalitarianism, continued

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*

- Part II (sections 31-40), Part III (sections 60-76, 79, 86-7)

Tuesday, February 7

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

- Preface, Chapters 1-5; 7 (only section 1)

Recommended reading

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*

- Chapter 4 (Libertarianism)

Tuesday, February 14

Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*

- Preface, Chapters 1-5, 9, 12-13

*Second 2-3 page paper due, Friday, February 17*

Recommended reading

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*

- Chapter 6 (Communitarianism)

Tuesday, February 21

Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*

Recommended Reading

Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*

- Chapter 9 (Feminism)

*Seminar paper proposal due Friday, May 9*

Tuesday, February 28

Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*

*Undergraduate seminar paper due, Monday, March 6*

Tuesday, March 7

Susan Moller Okin, *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*

Tuesday, March 14

John Rawls, *Law of Peoples*

*Graduate student paper, and revised undergrad paper, due Monday, March 20*