Advanced Paper in Theories of Justice

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Syllabus
Theories of justice often focus on adults who lack any disabilities, who live in a single society with no history of injustice and who are contemporaries. This paper aims to examine the questions that arise when we broaden the focus of justice beyond these confines. In particular, it examines what principles of justice should apply with respect to (i) global politics and those who are not co-citizens or co-nationals; (ii) historic injustice; (iii) future generations; (iv) disability; and (v) children.

Intended Learning Aims and Outcomes
The Advanced Paper in Theories of Justice aims to provide second and third year undergraduates with a thoroughgoing grounding in some of the most important debates in contemporary political theory. Building on work in political theory in Prelims and in other theory-related papers, it seeks to extend students’ knowledge and understanding of the content and scope of principles of justice, and allow them to assess the normative underpinnings of key real world policy debates. It aims to provide a significant foundation of analytical skills and theoretical knowledge for students who aspire to further study in contemporary political theory at post-graduate level.

At the end of the course, students will be expected to have:
- acquired a general knowledge of contemporary debates in political theory relating to justice, with a particular focus on questions of justice to future generations; historic injustice; global justice; justice and disability; and justice and children.
- participated in oral tutorial discussion of the subjects covered by the course.
- developed and refined analytical skills appropriate for a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of contemporary debates around extensions of justice.
- produced different forms of written work focussed on specific aspects of the subjects under consideration, demonstrating knowledge of relevant literature and reflecting the student’s own perspective on the subjects in question.

Teaching Arrangements
The provision of tutorials will be organized by the Department.

Students will have 8 tutorials and be expected to write six essays. The teaching will be organized centrally by the Department of Politics and International Relations.

Course Assessment
The course is assessed by means of a three hour unseen examination.

I: GLOBAL JUSTICE

I.1. Topics to be Studied
What principles of justice, if any, apply at the global level? In a globalized world, goods and services cross borders. This raises the question as to what are just terms of trade. What would
constitute 'fair trade'? People also often cross borders, or seek to do so and are prevented from doing so. This raises the question: Is there a human right to free movement? May states permissibly limit migration, and, if so, on what grounds? In addition to this, environmental hazards (like climate change, biodiversity loss, ocean acidification) transcend borders. This raises the question of who should bear the burdens of addressing global environmental degradation, and what would be a fair share of the world's natural resources?

I.2. Core Reading


I.3. Further Reading


II: JUSTICE TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

II.1. Topics to be Studied
What obligations, if any, do members of one generation owe to future generations? May governments discount the interests of future generations? Do those currently alive owe different duties to overlapping generations than they do to those in the far future? Do future people have rights? What are the implications, if any, of Parfit’s Non-Identity Problem for our obligations to future generations and for moral concepts such as ‘harm’? These questions will be examined at both the transnational level (for example, climate change, biodiversity loss, ocean acidification, natural resource depletion, environmental sustainability and population growth) and within states (for example, the challenges faced by ageing societies to the funding of the welfare state, education, and pensions).

II.2 Core Reading


II.3. Further Reading


### III: HISTORIC INJUSTICE

#### III.1. Topics to be Studied
What obligations do members of one generation have, if any, because of the misdeeds of previous generations? Insofar as they have such obligations, what kinds of action are appropriate (apologies, financial compensation, rights to acquire citizenship of the colonial power)? Do members of societies that were former colonial powers have duties to compensate the descendants of their former colonies? If there are duties of reparations, who owes them to whom? Can people be held collectively responsible for the actions for which they are not individually responsible? Can historic injustice be superseded? If so, when? These questions will be examined with respect to both transnational cases of historic injustice (occupation, colonialism, imperialism) and also to those that have taken place primarily within states (societies with histories of political oppression and violence, and legacies of sexism, racism and discrimination against people because of their ethnic identity).

#### III.2. Core Reading


III.3 Further Reading


IV: JUSTICE AND DISABILITY

IV.1. Topics to be Studied
What constitutes a disability? How should ‘disabilities’ be defined and conceptualized? Who determines what constitutes a disability? What does a commitment to inclusion and recognition require in the way of treating those with disabilities? Can contractarian accounts of justice give a plausible account of justice and the severely disabled? What are the implications of reciprocity-based theories of justice for the treatment of the disabled? What would constitute fair provisions and adequate accommodation for the disabled, and how should the costs be distributed? These questions will be examined with respect to the provision of medical services and socio-economic rights, the treatment of discrimination, and the organization and design of workplaces and public spaces.

IV.2. Core Reading


**IV.3. Further Reading**


Sara Goering (2009) “Mental Illness’ and Justice as Recognition” *Philosophy and Public Policy Quarterly*, vol.29 nos.1–2, pp.14–18. This is available from the journal’s website at: http://journals.gmu.edu/PPPQ/article/view/111/82.


**V: JUSTICE AND CHILDREN**

**V.1. Topics to be Studied**
What social and economic rights, if any, do children have? On what basis? What conditions have to be met before young adults are entitled to a right to vote? What enforceable obligations do their parents or society at large have to them? What does a just treatment of children require in terms of respecting their autonomy or their well-being or their interests in privacy? What are the limits of justified paternalism with respect to children’s choices? At what point does their consent, or lack of consent, have binding moral significance? Who should pay for the education of children, and on what basis? What rights, if any, do parents or society have to influence the nature of the education that children receive?

**V.2. Core Reading**


**V.2. Further Reading**


Sally Haslanger (2009) ‘Family, Ancestry and Self: What is the Moral Significance of Biological Ties?’, *Adoption & Culture*, vol.2 no.1. This is available at: https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/64650#files-area


Francis Schrag (1975) 'The Child's Status in the Democratic State', *Political Theory* vol.3 no.4, pp.441-457. [electronic copy available from SOLO Bodleian]
