

# Political Philosophy

Daniel Waxman

This course provides an introduction to some of the central problems of political philosophy, many of which are the subject of deep controversies in public life. The main part of the course will explore four central topics:

1. Political authority: on what possible grounds, if any, can governments legitimately exercise political power?
2. Distributive justice: what does justice require in the distribution of goods and resources?
3. Liberty: what is social and political liberty, and why (if at all) is it valuable?
4. Equality: what is social and political equality, and why (if at all) is it valuable?

For roughly the last third of the course, we will choose some other topics (depending on the interests of the class) within political philosophy for investigation and discussion. Possibilities include meritocracy; democracy; global justice; just war theory; civil disobedience and resistance to state injustice; cultural rights; feminism and liberalism; the role of religion in public life; and the rule of law.

## Week 1: **Introduction**

Cohen: How to Do Political Philosophy

## Week 2: **The problem of political authority**

Huemer: *The Problem of Political Authority* (Chs 1-5)

## Week 3: **Democratic authority?**

Kolodny: Rule over None (part 2)

Brennan: *Against Democracy* (Chs 1-2, 6)

## Week 4: **Justice as fairness**

Rawls: *A Theory of Justice* (excerpts)

Freeman: Introduction

## Week 5: **Justice in holdings**

Nozick: *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Chs 8-9)

Nagel: Libertarianism Without Foundations

## Week 6: **Justice, desert, and merit**

Scheffler: Desert and Justice in Liberal Theory

Mulligan: *Justice and the Meritocratic State* (Chs 4-7)

## Week 7: **Conceptions of liberty**

Berlin: Two Concepts of Liberty

MacCullum: Negative and Positive Freedom

Week 8: **Moralized vs unmoralized conceptions of freedom**

Cohen: Freedom and Money

Bader: Moralised Conceptions of Liberty

Week 9: **Luck and equality**

Arneson: Equality and Equal Opportunity for Welfare

Anderson: What is the Point of Equality?

Week 10: **Equality and leveling down**

Frankfurt: Equality as a Moral Ideal

Parfit: Equality or Priority?

Temkin: Equality, Priority, and the Levelling Down Objection

Week 11: **Just war theory**

Walzer: *Just and Unjust Wars* (Chs 1-3)

McMahan: Unjust War

Week 12: **Feminism and liberalism**

Okin: 'Forty Acres and a Mule' for Women: Rawls and Feminism

McKinnon: Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory