

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

VALUES 512: JUSTICE MATTERS: AN EXPLORATION OF JUSTICE AS A SOCIAL IDEAL

This course aims to introduce graduate and professional students from a wide range of backgrounds to some basic moral questions about social structures and institutions. In particular, most of the discussion will center on various questions about justice, broadly construed as the basic virtue of social institutions. As with Values 511: Ethics Matters, with which it is paired, it is assumed that the perspectives brought from different fields will prove mutually illuminating for all. Students will be provided with a conceptual framework for thinking about the increasingly familiar difficulties that arise in any attempt to fashion fair and decent policies in various areas of our lives.

BOOKS

Martha Nussbaum, **Sex and Social Justice**, Oxford University Press, 1999.

Matthew Adler and Eric Posner (eds.), **Cost-Benefit Analysis: Economic, Philosophical, and Legal Perspectives**, Chicago University Press, 2001.

Avishai Margalit, **The Decent Society**, Harvard University Press, 1996.

Deen Chatterjee (ed.), **The Ethics of Assistance: Morality and the Distant Needy**, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

The other readings for the course are either available through electronic journals or will be provided in a course reader.

ASSESSMENT

Students will be asked to bring to class a short (2-3 page) response to some issue raised by that week's reading assignments seven times (of the student's choosing) during the term. (25%)

Small groups (2-4 persons) will be asked to make a presentation to the class. (15%)

Each student will write a final paper and submit a draft of that paper for approval and comment three weeks prior to the end of the term. (60%)

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Week One: Cultural Relativism

The Asian Values Challenge to human rights and the debate over female genital mutilation as a way of investigating cultural relativism.

Jack Donnelly, "Human Rights and Asian Values: A Defense of 'Western' Universalism." In **The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights**, edited by Joanne Brauer and Daniel Bell, 60-87. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Michele Moody-Adams, "Morality and Culture through Thick and Thin." In **Fieldwork in Familiar Places: Morality, Culture, and Philosophy**. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Martha Nussbaum, "Judging Other Cultures: The Case of Genital Mutilation." In **Sex and Social Justice**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Amartya Sen, "Human Rights and Asian Values," *The New Republic*, July 14-July 21, 1997.

Week Two: Some Conceptions of Justice

Conceptions of justice vary in part because of differences in political perspectives. We will take a look at some representatives from these different perspectives.

Jurgen Habermas, "The Rule of Law and Democracy." *European Journal of Philosophy* 3:1 (1995): 12-20.

John Hospers, "What Libertarianism Is." In **The Libertarian Alternative: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy**, edited by Tibor Machan. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1974.

Alasdair MacIntyre, "Justice as a Virtue: Changing Conceptions." In **After Virtue**. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.

Edward Nell and Onora O'Neill, "Justice Under Socialism." *Dissent* 18 (1972): 483-491.

John Rawls, "Institutions of a Just Basic Structure." In **Justice as Fairness: A Restatement**, edited by Erin Kelly. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2001.

Weeks Three and Four: Cost-Benefit Analysis

On the view that justice is giving each his or her due, one fundamental question is what is owed to each. Cost-benefit analysis is a predominant method of assessing the acceptability of distribution. What is it? What are some of its advantages and disadvantages?

Milton Friedman, "Value Judgments in Economics." In **Human Values and Economic Policy**, edited by Sydney Hook, p. 85-93. New York: New York University Press, 1967.

Selected readings from **Cost-Benefit Analysis**, edited by Matthew Adler and Eric Posner. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001. To include:

John Broome, "Cost-Benefit Analysis and Population." p. 117-134.

Robert H. Frank, "Why is Cost-Benefit Analysis So Controversial?" p. 77-94.

Martha Nussbaum, "The Costs of Tragedy: Some Moral Limits of Cost-Benefit Analysis." p. 169-200.

Henry S. Richardson, "The Stupidity of Cost-Benefit Analysis." p. 135-168.

Amartya Sen, "The Discipline of Cost-Benefit Analysis." p. 95-116.

Week Five: Justice and Beneficence

In addition to asking what is owed, we can ask to whom it is owed. What are our moral responsibilities regarding the distant needy? Should we seek to achieve domestic justice before looking beyond our own borders? What would a global theory of justice entail? Do the demands of justice exhaust our moral obligations?

Onora O'Neill, "Lifeboat Earth." In **International Ethics**, edited by Charles Beitz, et al., p. 262-281. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.

Katherine Wilson, "On Some Alleged Limitations to Moral Endeavor," *Journal of Philosophy* 90 (1993): p. 275-289.

Selected readings from, **The Ethics of Assistance: Morality and the Distant Needy**, edited by Deen Chatterjee, p. 123-146. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. To include:

Richard Arneson, "Moral Limits on the Demands of Beneficence." p. 33-58.

Judith Lichtenberg, "Absence and the Unfond Heart: Why People are Less Giving Than They Might Be." p 75-100.

Peter Singer, "Outsiders: Our Obligations to Those Beyond Our Borders." p. 11-32.

Week Six: Equality

Equality is often considered the touchstone of a just society. But what is equality? What sort of social system does a commitment to equality entail? What ought we seek to make equal?

Anderson, Elizabeth, "What Is the Point of Equality?" *Ethics* 109:2 (1999) p. 287-337.

Ronald Dworkin, "Justice and the High Cost of Health." In **Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality**. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Robert Erikson, "Descriptions of Inequality: The Swedish Approach to Welfare Research." In **The Quality of Life**, edited by Nussbaum and Sen, p. 67-83. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Amartya Sen, "Equality of What?" In *Inequality Reexamined*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Laurence Thomas, "Moral Equality and Natural Inferiority." *Social Theory and Practice: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal of Social Philosophy* 31:3 (2005): p. 379-404.

Week Seven: Difference

As a follow-up to our readings in equality, the question arises about how a just society should deal with difference. How should differences, in themselves, be conceptualized? Is difference contrary to the ideal of equality?

Susan Okin, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" In **Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?** edited by Joshua Cohen, p. 9-24. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Anita Silvers, "Reconciling Equality To Difference: Caring For People With Disabilities". *Hypatia*, Special Issue on Feminist Ethics and Social Policy, edited by Patrice DiQuinzio and Iris Marion Young. 10:1 (1995).

Iris Marion Young, "Social Movements and the Politics of Difference." In **Race and Racism**, edited by Bernard Boxill, p. 383-421. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Week Eight and Nine—Unjust Societies

Historically, there have been some serious problems with, and omissions from, what may have at the time been considered just societies. What does this tell us about our conceptions of justice? For that matter, are our conceptions of justice themselves unacceptable?

Buchanan, Allen, "Choosing Who Will Be Disabled: Genetic Intervention and the Morality of Inclusion." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 13:2 (1996)

Charles Mills, "Revisionist Ontologies: Theorizing White Supremacy." In **Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race**. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1998.

Charles Mills, selections from **The Racial Contract**. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997.

Martha Nussbaum, "The Feminist Critique of Liberalism." In **Sex and Social Justice**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Carole Pateman, selections from **The Sexual Contract**. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

Peter Singer, "Speciesism Today." In **Animal Liberation**. New York: Avon Books, 1990.

Laurence Thomas, "Sexism and Racism: Some Conceptual Differences." *Ethics* 90:2 (1980) p. 239-247.

Richard Wasserstrom, "Racism and Sexism." In *Philosophy and Social Issues: Five Studies*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980.

Week Ten: The Just Society and Its Limits

We end by looking at justice in the context of the good society. Is justice alone sufficient for a good society or are there other necessary qualities? Is there room for decency and mercy? Is mercy opposed to justice?

Stephen Elkin, "Judging the Good Society." In **The Constitution of Good Societies**, edited by Karol Sultan and Stephen Elkin. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996.

Avishai Margalit, "Decency as a Social Concept." In **The Decent Society**, translated by Naomi Goldblum. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Avishai Margalit, "Putting Social Institutions to the Test" In **The Decent Society**, translated by Naomi Goldblum. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Martha Nussbaum, "Equity and Mercy." In **Sex and Social Justice**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.