

Phil 1901-103
Discussions of Justice: Democracy Now
Cornell University
Fall 2018 | W 7:30-8:20 | Keeton House 141

Instructor | Freya Mobus

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Office Hours | Th: 10 – 11 at Tatkon Center; by appointment in my office in Goldwin Smith Hall 219; I will also offer a couple of meetings at Temple of Zeus during lunch time.

Course Description

We will discuss urgent moral questions about what it means to live in a just society. We all have heard people criticizing economic (“the rich get richer”) and political inequality. But is it really unjust that some people have more money or political influence? Why or why not? We have also heard people discussing the limits of our moral obligation to take in immigrants (“these aren’t our kids”). Is it morally wrong to deny certain people a life in the U.S.? We will also investigate three threats to a just society: misogyny, racism, and punishment. Can women be misogynists? What about men who love their wives and daughters? Are statements like “[with Obama], you’ve got the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy” symptoms of racism? Why or why not? Finally, we will question our practice of legal punishment. Can we justify punishment? What’s the point of being “tough” or “soft on crime”?

Learning Objectives

The goal of this class is for you to develop the competency to tackle complex philosophical texts and the confidence to engage in thoughtful discussions (oral and written) about those texts. To achieve this goal, you will need to acquire the following skills: You will learn to (i) extrapolate philosophical arguments from a given text, (ii) present arguments clearly and in your own words, (iii) analyze arguments carefully and critically, (iv) weigh and evaluate objections, (v) respond to objections thoughtfully.

Required Readings:

All readings are on Blackboard.

For each session, read the texts in the order in which they are on the syllabus.

Evaluation of Student Performance and Grading

One Credit Option:

- Participation (includes participation in class discussions, attendance, professional attitude, homework assignments, in-class quizzes): 100%

Participation | You ‘participate’ when you contribute to the progress of our inquiry, not when you take up air time. Note that there are many ways to contribute to the progress of inquiry. Giving ‘correct’ answers is only one way; other extremely valuable ways include asking questions, giving ‘incorrect’ answers, and providing criticism and objections.

Attendance | Your active participation in class discussions is required both for the course to succeed and for you to succeed in the course. If you are absent, you cannot participate. You will be allowed two absences without penalty, but every subsequent absence will result in a grade deduction. Missing six or more classes will automatically result in an “F”. If you miss class, it is in your responsibility to (i) turn in whatever work is due that day, and (ii) contact colleagues to find out what you missed. There are no make-up assignments or quizzes.

Professional Attitude | I think of our classes as team meetings in which we aim at making progress together. Contributing to this progress is part of your job, and as in any other work environment, you are expected to be a mature and responsible team member. As such, you are expected to (i) read the

assigned texts before class, (ii) let me know if you cannot come to class or submit an assignment, (iii) turn off your phone in class and use your laptop for work purposes only, (iv) reach out to me if you need further support to flourish academically, and support your colleagues. Further, as in any other work environment, you will be asked to give short presentations and to exchange your work with others; you might also explicitly be encouraged to contribute (i.e. be called-on). Unprofessional attitude (such as being late, distracting, unsupportive) will be reflected in your grade.

Homework and quizzes | Homework assignments will be posted on BB (under “content”). They are due every Wednesday at 3pm on BB (under “discussion”). The purpose of those assignments is to prepare you better for our meeting. In-class quizzes will not be announced. They are a good way for me to check whether material is understood or needs to be reviewed. Those quizzes also help you to self-evaluate your performance in class.

Two Credit Option:

- All one credit requirements: 50%
- 2 papers: 50%

1st paper (max. 3 pages): 25%

2nd paper (max. 4 pages): 25%

Philosophy Papers | Philosophical writing is different from the writing you are asked to do in other courses. Before you start working on your paper, read the texts under “Writing Philosophy Papers” on Blackboard.

Paper Formatting | 1.5 spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, with 1-inch margins, Word Document. This way, the attention of your reader is on the content of your paper, rather than the formatting. A paper needs to fulfill these formatting requirements to count as submitted.

Paper Submission and Responsibility | All papers must be submitted on Blackboard. Electronic difficulties may very well happen. It is entirely in your responsibility to make sure that your papers are submitted on time. I strongly advise you to (i) save multiple drafts of your work in multiple places as you write, and (ii) after you submitted a paper on BB, download and open the file to ensure that it actually went through and is readable.

Late Papers | To ensure your progress in this class, and to leave me and your peers adequate time to give comments on your work, deadlines are strict for all assignments. Papers that are late will receive a letter grade penalty per day (i.e., if the paper is due 1pm Sunday and you turn it in 2pm Sunday, an original grade of “A” will become a “B”). If you are late turning in a draft, this grade deduction will be applied to the final paper. Final papers more than four days late receive an “F”.


Code of Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is required to adhere to Cornell’s Academic Integrity Code (<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/aic.cfm>). Plagiarism, i.e., representing the work of others as one's own, is a serious violation of the code and may result in a failing grade for the course, or for some portion of it. Code violations will be reported to the dean of the student's college, and the student's transcript will show that s/he has been "declared guilty of violation of the Code of Academic Integrity". Such an entry may have a significant impact on the student’s future career. It may, for example, decrease the chances of getting into medical or law school. To avoid plagiarism, all work submitted must be the student’s own, and all sources must be properly cited. The student is responsible for providing the source of any idea that is not his/her own, whether s/he got the idea from a written text or from talking to a peer. The ownership of the content must be unambiguously clear to the reader.

Disabilities, Special Conditions etc.:

I am committed to help every student succeed in this class. If you have a need for reasonable academic adjustments due to a physiological or psychological condition, please let me know right away.

W	Date	Topic	Readings	Due
1	8/29	What does a just society look like?	Rawls : <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (from chapter 1 : p. 3-19, 52-55)	Plagiarism Quiz due 9/2 at 11pm (https://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/exercises.cfm).
What Kind of Inequalities are Unjust? Why (not)?				
2	9/5	Some people have more <i>money</i> – anything wrong with that?	Kauppinen: <i>What is wrong with Economic Inequality?</i> Bloom: <i>People Don't Actually Want Equality.</i> (https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/10/people-dont-actually-want-equality/411784/) Empirical data: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/12/06/the-richest-1-percent-now-owns-more-of-the-countrys-wealth-than-at-any-time-in-the-past-50-years/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.4f375a835b4c	
3	9/12	Some people have more <i>political power</i> – anything wrong with that?	Plato: <i>Republic</i> 488a-489a (The Ship Analogy) Gutting: <i>Should Everybody Vote?</i> (https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/25/opinion/should-everybody-vote.html) Estlund: <i>Why not Epistocracy?</i> 🎵 Brett Hennig: <i>Should We Replace Politicians With Random Citizens?</i> (https://www.npr.org/2018/10/12/656598660/brett-hennig-should-we-replace-politicians-with-random-citizens)	
4	9/19		Barclay: <i>Cognitive Impairment and the Right to Vote.</i>	
5	9/26	Some people are not allowed to <i>live</i> in the U.S. – anything wrong with that?	Miller : <i>Immigration : The Case for Limits.</i> 🎵 Planet Money: <i>If Economists controlled the Borders.</i> (https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=514152963)	Get 1 st Paper Assignment
6	10/3		Singer: Excerpt from: <i>Famine, Affluence, Morality.</i> Carens: <i>Refugees.</i>	
Threats to Justice				
7	10/10	What is misogyny?	Manne: <i>Down Girl</i> (chapter 1-2) 🎵 This American Life : <i>Five Women.</i>	1st Paper due

			(https://www.thisamericanlife.org/640/five-women)	
8	10/17		Manne: <i>Down Girl</i> (from chapter 3: 78-84, 91-98; chapter 4 complete; from chapter 6: 196-205; from chapter 7: 223-240; from conclusion: 301-307)	
9	10/24	What is Race? What is Racism?	Appiah: <i>Race Culture Identity</i> (p.30-31) Sesardic: <i>Race: A Social Destruction of a Biological Concept</i> . Blum: Defining “ <i>Racism</i> ” (p.8-11). Appiah: <i>Racist Propositions</i> (p.4-6, 15-16).	
10	10/31		Block: <i>How Heritability Misleads about Race</i> . (https://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/faculty/block/papers/Heritability.html) 🎵 Hidden Brain: The 'Thumbprint Of The Culture': Implicit Bias And Police Shootings (https://www.npr.org/2017/06/05/531578107/the-thumbprint-of-the-culture-implicit-bias-and-police-shootings) The Implicit Bias Test: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html	
11	11/7	Can we Justify Punishment?	Kadish, Paulsen (2017 ^{10th}): <i>Why Punish?</i> In: <i>Criminal Law and Its Processes</i> .  Norwegian Prisons: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0IepJqxRCZY Empirical Data: <i>Criminal Justice Facts</i> https://www.sentencingproject.org/criminal-justice-facts/ https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/press/18upr9yfup0514pr.cfm	Get 2 nd Paper Assignment
12	11/14		Brennan: <i>Corporal Punishment as an Alternative to Incarceration</i> . 🎵 Reveal: “Does the Time fit the Crime?” (https://www.revealnews.org/episodes/does-the-time-fit-the-crime/)	
13	11/21	THANKSGIVING (no class)		
14	11/28	Summary: What does a just society look like?		2nd Paper due 12/4