4AANB006 Political Philosophy I
Syllabus – Academic year 2014-15

Basic information

Credits: 15
Module Tutor: Dr Sarah Fine
Office: 902
Consultation time: TBA
Semester: Second
Lecture time and venue: TBA

Module description (plus aims and objectives)

This module introduces students to some of the central concepts, questions, approaches, and debates in political philosophy. Under which conditions, if any, should we submit to political authority? What, if anything, makes the exercise of coercive power legitimate? What is the value of democracy? What is the value of equality? What kind of liberty should a just society aim to protect?
The module is designed complement (and lay the groundwork for) the Level 5 and Level 6 political philosophy modules.
Aims:
• To introduce students to political philosophy.
• To engage with some of the enduring questions and controversies in political philosophy.
• To consider why these questions continue to occupy political philosophers.
• To read texts carefully, closely, and critically.
Objectives:
By the end of the module, the students will be able to demonstrate intellectual, transferable and practical skills appropriate to a Level 4 module and in particular will be able to demonstrate:
• A good understanding of some central debates in political philosophy.
• The ability to engage critically with the relevant literature.
• The ability to develop and defend arguments of their own.

Assessment methods and deadlines

• Formative assessment: 2 x 1,000 word essay.
  Deadlines: essay 1 -- Fri 20 Feb 2015; essay 2 -- Fri April 3 2015
• Summative assessment: 1 x 2 hour exam in May/June 2015 (100%)
Be sure to familiarise yourselves with the College’s guidelines on plagiarism and correct referencing:
http://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/help/plagiarism/index.aspx

Outline of lecture topics (plus suggested readings)
Week One <15 January 2014>: Political obligation
Suggested reading:

Week Two <22 January 2014>: Liberty
Suggested reading:

Week Three <29 January 2014>: Power
Suggested reading:

Week Four <5 February 2014>: Democracy
Suggested reading:

Week Five <12 February 2014>: Justice: Rawls
Suggested reading:

Week Six <26 February 2014>: Justice: Nozick

Week Seven <5 March 2014>: Equality
Suggested reading:

Week Eight <12 March 2014>: Multiculturalism
Suggested reading:

Week Nine <19 March 2014>: Feminism

Week Ten <26 March 2014>: Global Justice
## Suggested essay questions

1. What is the best response to the philosophical anarchist?

2. What, if anything, is wrong with negative liberty?

3. ‘Power is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one individual’s consolidated and homogenous domination over others, or that of one group or class over others... Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain’ (Foucault). Discuss.

4. Should we value democracy because of its results, or in spite of its results?

5. What is the best argument for adopting the difference principle?

6. What is the problem with taxation of earnings, according to Nozick? Is he right?

7. Do ‘luck egalitarians’ miss the point of equality?

8. Are cultural minorities entitled to any group-differentiated rights?

9. What would a feminist state look like?

10. ‘The full standards of justice... apply only within the boundaries of a sovereign state, however arbitrary those boundaries may be’ (Nagel). Discuss.
Suggested additional readings

Introductions

Political Obligation

Liberty

Power
Michel Foucault (1975) Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (various editions).

Democracy

Justice: Rawls

Justice: Nozick

Continued...
Equality

Multiculturalism

Feminism

Global Justice