

PHIL 446-001 Current Issues in Political Philosophy
Winter 2020 – Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:05 AM – 11:25 AM BIRKS 111

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Office Hours: TBA

Topic: States, transnational relations and Global Justice.

Course description:

While theories of justice typically focus on particular states, theories of global justice are a rapidly expanding field in political philosophy. They tackle the question of what should be the proper scope of theories of justice and try to provide solutions to pressing international questions including global poverty, border control, the protection and promotion of human rights, and climate change. The aim of this course is to provide students with a general overview of the debate between associational and humanist authors on the question of the scope of theories of justice and to consider contemporary texts considering pressing issues in our current global context.

Accordingly, the class will be divided into two moments. First, we will consider the debate between associational and humanist authors. Both positions provide competing answers to the question of what features of any two persons are morally relevant for claiming that they have duties of justice towards each other. Associational authors contend that two agents have to be connected in some way for principles of justice to apply. Consequently, for instance, some associational authors contend that the relations existing within particular states are the only morally relevant relations that should be considered by theories of justice. In contrast, humanist authors argue that it is sufficient for two agents to be human beings for some principles of justice to apply. Accordingly, they argue that we can have some duties of justice towards complete strangers. Considering this debate will allow us to consider the fundamental question of whether or not theories of justice should concentrate on domestic relations that exist within particular states, or if this focus on the state is arbitrary and problematic because it might exclude strangers from considerations of justice.

Second, following the consideration of this theoretical debate, we will consider particular issues in contemporary political philosophy. We will notably consider what philosophers have written about border control, global poverty, climate change and about the role of non-state actors in transnational justice such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Prerequisite and Background knowledge:

All students are welcome in this class. However, this is a 400-level course in philosophy. As such, it is highly recommended that students have completed at least one other course in political or moral philosophy prior to taking this course (such as PHIL 230 (Intro do Moral Philosophy), PHIL 240 (Political Philosophy), PHIL 334 (Ethical theory), PHIL 242 (Intro to Feminist theory), etc.).

Readings:

There will be no textbook to purchase for this class. The required readings will all be posted on MyCourses before the beginning of the semester.

Requirements:

- Class participation: 10%

Attendance and careful reading of the texts for this class is crucial. Students will be expected to submit one short question (100 words max.) per week on the texts assigned at least 24 hours before the lecture on Thursday. The questions will be posted on a forum on MyCourses. Students have to submit 10 questions in total for full participation points (consequently, students can skip two weeks total during the semester, not counting the first week of class, without consequences).

- Midterm essay: 30%

A short midterm essay to be submitted on MyCourses.

- Final paper outline: 15%

A short outline of the final paper, more details will be provided in class.

- Final paper: 45%

Language of Submission:

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.”

« Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue). »

Academic Integrity:

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures” (see [McGill’s guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

« L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l’honnêteté académique de McGill](#)). »

Other :

As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#), 514-398-6009.

Weekly Readings : TBA