

BA Political Philosophy (2001-2002)

Intercollegiate Lecture Course

Aims of Course: The Political Philosophy course contributes to the general aims and objectives of the Philosophy degree by giving students the resources to consider questions concerning the circumstances under which individuals organise themselves into political communities, what can justify the existence of such communities and what sort of norms should regulate the internal and external behaviour of such communities.

Objectives: Students completing the course will have:

- a) Developed a capacity for philosophical argument concerning political matters.
- b) Acquired a knowledge of the main political theorists in the western philosophical tradition, and the relations between them.
- c) Understood the nature of some central problems in political philosophy
- d) Encountered and evaluated a number of attempts to solve the philosophical problems under discussion.
- e) Acquired an understanding of how problems in political philosophy relate to human life.
- f) Acquired an ability to relate the questions discussed to the work of philosophers studied on other papers.
- g) Been encouraged to read with great care and reflect upon some difficult texts, as well as introductory and secondary material.
- h) Answered questions in finals on both historical texts and areas of contemporary interest.

Course Structure

These lectures take place in a two year cycle. In each year, however, lectures are provided on topics from both sides of the paper.

Course Schedule

Term 1: Weeks 1 to 5 S. James Mill

These lectures will focus on the problems Mill discusses in *On Liberty*, but will also relate this text to his other political writings. Topics will include liberty, utility, the harm principle, the role of government and the analysis of democracy.

Weeks 6 to 10 J. Wolff The Market and Justice

These lectures look at the nature of the free market; the types of arguments that are given to defend it by libertarians and others; and the forms of criticism the market has been subjected to, especially from the Marxist tradition.

Term Two: Weeks 1 to 5 V Munoz Darde Rousseau

This set of lectures will be devoted to Rousseau's *Social Contract*. In particular we will look at the suggestion that the content of political morality, or of justice, is understood by considering what people would (under special conditions) have reason to agree to, or what principles could be willed (from a certain point of view) to hold universally.

Weeks 6 to 10 J. Wolff Liberalism, Perfectionism and Communitarianism

The five weeks of this course will look at the idea of liberal neutrality, and how, in the last two decades, it has been challenged by communitarian theorists such as Michael Sandel, and perfectionist writers such as Joseph Raz.