

Political Theory II, Winter 2017
Instructor: Richard Vernon, SSC 4162, ravernon@uwo.ca
Topic: Political Theories of Disagreement

How should political theorists think about the fact that people disagree about fundamentally important things? That question emerges in the debates over religious toleration in the late 17th century, and we will begin by discussing the issues between Locke and his most persistent critic. We will then turn to Mill's *On Liberty*, the best-known account of disagreement in the political theory canon. Discussion will be based on weekly readings from the two texts listed below. In the second half of the course, we will move to a different format, with student presentations on a selection of the following topics:

Theories of toleration today
Moral pluralism
The ethics of compromise
The idea of "recognition"
Deliberative democracy
The epistemology of disagreement
The "burdens of judgment" (Rawls)
Essential contestability

(A reading list will be provided for the topics selected)

Texts for the first half of term (in bookstore):

Locke on Toleration, Cambridge University Press 2010
J.S. Mill, On Liberty, Utilitarianism and Other Essays, Oxford University Press 2005

Evaluation:

General participation in class discussion: 20%

Presentation: 20%

Essay, due April 15: 60%. The essay may be on one of the main texts or on the topic of one of the presentations. 12-15 pages is expected.