

Politics 4413F/9729B

Special Topics: Intergenerational Justice

Thursdays 2:30-4:00, SSC - 7210

Instructor: Professor E. Finneron-Burns (efinnero@uwo.ca)

Office Hours: Thursdays 10-11am in SSC 7211

Course Outline

This course examines what our obligations to past and future people are. We have a huge influence over several matters including who will be born, how many people will be born, and what kinds of lives they will lead (including the environment and climate change). This leads to a number of normative questions including how good a life we ought to leave future people, whether future people have rights, how many future people there should be, and what we ought to do about historic injustices. The emphasis throughout the course will be on critical review of the arguments provided in the readings and by your fellow students. Each week the readings will provide differing views on the same question. Your job is to reflect on and evaluate the persuasiveness of the arguments in each. In each seminar we will discuss the merits and demerits of each article as well as comment on the topic at large. Your essays will require you to be able to argue persuasively, taking due consideration of others' arguments.

Assessment

Presentation & Critical Analysis Paper (30%)

Term Paper (60%) – due **April 6 at 2:30pm**. Optional: Submit by March 16 for feedback and the opportunity to resubmit.

Participation (10%) – ongoing

Research Essay:

2500 words (undergraduates) or 3500 words (graduates). You may choose your own essay topic related to one or more of the topics covered in the course. You might choose to answer a particular question or to respond to a particular reading. The essays are **research** projects meaning that you are expected to read and cite sources beyond the scope of the syllabus. Sources should primarily be *academic*. This means they are books or journal articles written in a scholarly manner. They do not include blogs, websites, or newspaper articles. You may, of course, cite these latter kind of sources, but the bulk of your cited sources should be academic.

Presentation & Critical Analysis Paper:

Each week one or two students will present the week's readings. If you are on your own, you should present on one reading. If you are in a group of two, each person should present on a different paper. You should spend a short time setting out the authors' main points, but the bulk of the presentation should be on analysis. That is, what arguments did you find persuasive, and what did you find non-persuasive? Were there any holes in the authors' reasoning? Try to keep the focus on the authors' *reasoning/arguments* ("I found their argument that x unpersuasive because they

overlooked this possibility”), not on their style (e.g., “they write clearly, they use lots of examples, they use outdated language”). You will then lead the seminar discussion (with my help). **The week you present, you should also prepare an approximately 1000 word page paper outlining your critique of the reading in question. This needs to be submitted no later than the next class.** [Here](#) is an example of how to do this type of writing (although the example piece is longer than our assignment). There are also other examples of critical responses on that site.

Participation:

Participation is assessed primarily on the quality of your contributions to class discussions, but you will not do well if you attend only a few classes even if your contributions in those classes are very good. Similarly, if you simply attend every class without contributing, you will find your participation mark disappointing. Participation marks can be earned through critiquing the readings, raising questions or requesting clarification of things you did not understand (there are no stupid questions!), responding to classmates’ points, participating in in-class debates or small group discussions, among others. If you are struggling with active participation in class, please see me to discuss strategies on how to improve.

How to Do Well

The emphasis throughout is on the critical evaluation of arguments. How are important political positions supported? In our weekly discussions we will examine the arguments put forward in the readings and consider whether or not they are persuasive. Often the two readings for the week put forward conflicting views, thus inviting us to make decisions about which has the better argument. (It is taken for granted that we may not all reach the same conclusion.)

Late Submission of Work

Late essays will incur a penalty of 5% per day. In extenuating circumstances, extensions may be granted, but only if arranged in advance of the due date. If such circumstances arise, please contact Academic Counselling as soon as is practically possible. Please note that computer problems do not constitute extenuating circumstances—you are strongly advised to back up your work.

Email

I will do my best to respond to emails received Monday-Friday 9am-5pm within 24 hours. Occasionally there will be delays in replies but if you do not hear back from me within 48 hours (Monday-Friday), please do resend your email as it might have been missed (professors receive a lot of emails!). Note that I rarely work on evenings, weekends, or holidays, so emails sent at those times will take longer to receive a reply. Before you fire off an email at 2am, check and double check this syllabus to see if your question is answered here.

Schedule and Readings

January 12 – Introduction to the Course

January 19 – *The Non-Identity Problem*

[Derek Parfit, *Reasons & Persons*, ch. 16](#) (read this first)

[Woodward, James, “The Non-Identity Problem”](#)

[Supplemental:](#)

[Jeffrey Reiman “Being Fair to Future People: The Non-Identity Problem in the Original Position”](#)

January 26 – *How much should we save for future people?*

[John Rawls \(1971\), *A Theory of Justice*, section 44](#)

[Caney, Simon \(2018\) “Justice and Future Generations” *Annual Review of Political Science*, sections 3 & 4.](#)

[Supplemental:](#)

[Page, Ed \(2007\), “Justice Between Generations: Investigating a Sufficiency Approach” *Journal of Global Ethics* 3\(1\).](#)

February 2 – *Would it be wrong to let humanity go extinct?*

[Finneron-Burns, Elizabeth, “What’s Wrong with Human Extinction?” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*](#)

[Johann Frick “On the Survival of Humanity” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, s9 on](#)

February 9 - *Is it (Ever? Sometimes?) Wrong to Have Children?*

[Rivka Weinberg, *The Risk of a Lifetime*, ch. 3 & 4](#)

[Benatar, David, *Better Never to have Been*, ch. 6.](#)

February 16 – *Human Enhancement*

[Julian Savulescu \(2001\), “Procreative Beneficence: why we should select the best children” *Bioethics* 15\(5-6\).](#)

[Inmaculada de Melo-Martin \(2004\) “On Our Obligation to Select the Best Children: A Reply to Savulescu” *Bioethics* 18\(1\).](#)

February 23 – READING WEEK

March 2 – Justice between age groups

Juliana Bidadanure (2021) “Justice Between Coexisting Generations” [*Oxford Handbook of Intergenerational Ethics*](#)

Paul Bou-Habib (2011) “Distributive Justice, Dignity, and the Lifetime View” [*Social Theory and Practice*](#).

March 9 – Can historic injustice be superseded?

[Jeremy Waldron, “Superseding Historical Injustice,” *Ethics* 103 \(1992\), 4-28.](#)

[Ton van den Beld \(2002\), “Can Collective Responsibility for Perpetrated Evil Persist Over Generations?” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5.](#)

March 16 – What to do about tainted commemorations

[Chong-Ming Lim \(2020\), “Vandalizing Tainted Commemorations” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 48\(2\)](#)

[Joanna Burch-Brown \(2020\) “Should Slavery’s Statues be Preserved? On Transitional Justice and Contested Heritage” *Journal of Applied Philosophy*](#)

March 23 – Duties to the Dead?

[Kaczmarek, Patrick and Simon Beard, “Human Extinction and Our Obligations to the Past” *Utilitas* 2](#)

Geoffrey Scarre (2021) “Do we have moral duties to past people?” [*Oxford Handbook of Intergenerational Ethics*](#)

Supplemental:

[Elizabeth Finneron-Burns \(2022\) “Human Extinction and Moral Worthwhileness” *Utilitas* \(a response to Kaczmarek and Beard\)](#)

March 30 – Essay Conference

You will divide into two groups. Each student will present their essay topic, thesis, and argument structure for constructive peer comments.

April 6 – No Class

APPENDIX TO UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OUTLINES DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Prerequisite checking - the student's responsibility

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

Essay course requirements

With the exception of 1000-level courses, most courses in the Department of Political Science are essay courses. Total written assignments (excluding examinations) will be at least 3,000 words in Politics 1020E, at least 5,000 words in a full course numbered 2000 or above, and at least 2,500 words in a half course numbered 2000 or above.

Use of Personal Response Systems ("Clickers")

"Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence."

Security and Confidentiality of Student Work (refer to current *Western Academic Calendar* <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/>)

"**Submitting or Returning Student Assignments, Tests and Exams** - All student assignments, tests and exams will be handled in a secure and confidential manner. Particularly in this respect, leaving student work unattended in public areas for pickup is not permitted."

Duplication of work

Undergraduate students who submit similar assignments on closely related topics in two different courses must obtain the consent of both instructors prior to the submission of the assignment. If prior approval is not obtained, each instructor reserves the right not to accept the assignment.

Grade adjustments

In order to ensure that comparable standards are applied in political science courses, the Department may require instructors to adjust final marks to conform to Departmental guidelines.

Academic Offences

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Submission of Course Requirements

ESSAYS, ASSIGNMENTS, TAKE-HOME EXAMS MUST BE SUBMITTED ACCORDING TO PROCEDURES SPECIFIED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR (I.E., IN CLASS, DURING OFFICE HOURS, TA'S OFFICE HOURS) OR UNDER THE INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE DOOR.

THE MAIN OFFICE DOES NOT DATE-STAMP OR ACCEPT ANY OF THE ABOVE.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

EXAMINATIONS/ATTENDANCE (Sen. Min. Feb.4/49, May 23/58, S.94, S.3538, S.3632, S.04-097) A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations: 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year. 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Counselling office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a "Multiple Exam Situation" (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

Note: Missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is **not** sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty of Social Science Academic Counselling Office.

Accommodation and Accessibility

Religious Accommodation

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the

Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at

<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic Accommodation_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf).

Academic Policies

The website for Registrarial Services is <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>.

In accordance with policy,

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section1/mapp113.pdf,

the centrally administered e-mail account provided to students will be considered the individual's official university e-mail address. It is the responsibility of the account holder to ensure that e-mail received from the University at their official university address is attended to in a timely manner.

During exams/tests/quizzes, no electronic devices (e.g. a phone, laptop, iPad) are allowed and must be powered down and stored out of reach.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

If a course uses remote proctoring, please be advised that you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide **personal information** (including

some biometric data) and the session will be **recorded**. Completion of a course with remote proctoring will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at:

<https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

Support Services

Please visit the Social Science Academic Counselling webpage for information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters: [Academic Counselling - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca/academic_counselling/)

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Please contact the course instructor if you require lecture or printed material in an alternate format or if any other arrangements can make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Accessible Education at

http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

if you have any questions regarding accommodations.

Learning-skills counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre (<https://learning.uwo.ca>) are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

Western University is committed to a thriving campus as we deliver our courses in the mixed model of both virtual and face-to-face formats. We encourage you to check out the Digital Student Experience website to manage your academics and well-being: <https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/>.

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence." (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

Multiple-choice tests/exams: "Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating."

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html

PLAGIARISM*

In writing scholarly papers, you must keep firmly in mind the need to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another writer's words or ideas. Different forms of writing require different types of acknowledgement. The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of publication, and page number.

Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writers' ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source, these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases in their suspension from the University.

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Adopted by the council of the Faculty of Social Science, October, 1970; approved by the Dept. of History August 13, 1991