

**Politics 9503A/Philosophy 9119A: Central Problems in Political Theory**

**September-December 2020**

**Tuesday 3:30-5:20, SSC 4112**

Charles Jones, 661-2111 x85060, cwjones@uwo.ca, SSC 4129

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:00 & by appointment

This course examines some central problems in political theory: political authority, property and the market, distributive justice and equality, liberty, and democracy. We will study both classic works and recent scholarship on these issues. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- (1) Describe the problem of political authority and explain (and evaluate) the main arguments in its favour,
- (2) Assess the case for and against private property rights,
- (3) Explain the pros and cons of markets in goods and services as a means of organizing an economy,
- (4) Describe the problem of distributive justice ('who should get what?') and explain the relative merits of the approaches to this problem by Rawls, Nozick, and van Parijs,
- (5) Evaluate the value of equality and sufficiency as competing goals of just distribution,
- (6) Explain the arguments on both sides of the debate between distributive egalitarians and relational egalitarians in their answers to the question, 'What is the point of equality?',
- (7) Identify the competing conceptions of liberty in the history of political theory and adjudicate between them,
- (8) Evaluate the case for and against 'libertarian paternalism' as an approach to public policy,  
and
- (9) Outline the most important arguments against and for democracy as a form of public and private decision-making.