

******PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE******

Politics 4413G/9729B: Intergenerational Justice

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Office: SSC 4138

Office Hours: Fridays 1-2pm

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 two 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 and exam will require you to be able to argue persuasively, taking due consideration of others' arguments.

Readings

Undergraduates must read the core readings each week and graduate students must also read the supplementary readings where applicable. Graduate students should be prepared to explain the contents of the supplementary readings to the rest of the class.

Assessment

Blog Post Assignment (15%)– due **February 11** via OWL

Research Essay (55%) – due **March 31** via OWL

Essay Proposal (5%) – due **March 17** via OWL

Participation (25%) – ongoing

Blog Post Assignment

A short piece, of no more than 1000 words, responding to the question “Do we have obligations to future generations?” The piece should be aimed at an educated but non-specialist audience.

Research Essay:

3000 words (undergraduates) or 5000 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. You must submit a ½ page essay proposal (worth 5%) to me at least two weeks before the due date. In your proposal you should state what the research question you plan to address is. You don't need to know what your answer or individual arguments will be at this stage, but you should have narrowed your topic down to a particular question or aim. The essays are **research** projects meaning that you are expected to read beyond the scope of the syllabus.

Response Papers:

You are required to email to me, by 9am on the day of class, a short (no longer than one page) response paper in which you should explain what you think the strengths and weaknesses are of each reading and any questions you have about the readings. The aim of the response papers is to a) ensure that each member of the seminar group has given due consideration to the readings each week in order to improve the quality of our discussions; and b) to hone your skills in critical analysis in preparation for the research essays and final exam; c) let me know what everyone did not understand in the readings in order to guide our discussion in class.

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 do email me or come to see me in my office hours 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 and will not be accepted after one week. 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 Etiquette

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

Week 1 – Introduction to the course

Are there obligations to the future?

Week 2 – *Can future people be harmed?*

Core:

Hanser, Matthew (1990), “Harming Future People” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 19(1).

Heyd, David (2009), “The Intractability of the Non-Identity Problem” in Melinda Roberts and David Wasserman (eds) *Harming Future Persons*.

Supplementary:

Woodward, James, “The Non-Identity Problem”

Week 3 – *Do future people have rights?*

Gosseries, Axel (2008), “On Future Generations’ Future Rights” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 16(4).

Beckerman, Wilfrid and Joanna Pasek (2001), *Justice, Posterity, and the Environment*, ch. 2

Supplementary:

Reiman, Jeffrey, “Being Fair to Future People: The Non-Identity Problem in the Original Position”

Week 4 – *Reciprocity and Community*

Hugh McCormick (2009), “Intergenerational Justice and the Non-reciprocity Problem” *Political Studies*.

Avner de-Shalit (1995), *Why Posterity Matters*, chapter 1

Supplementary:

Wilfrid Beckerman, “Sustainability and Intergenerational Justice,” in Andrew Dobson ed, *Fairness and Futurity*.

What are our obligations to the future?

Week 5 – *Should there be future people?*

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

Kaczmarek, Patrick and Simon Beard, “Human Extinction and Our Obligations to the Past” *Utilitas* 2

Supplementary:

Benatar, David, *Better Never to have Been*, ch. 6.

Week 6 – *How much should we save for future people?*

John Rawls (1971), *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 284-93

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

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

Supplementary:

Jane English (1977), “Justice Between Generations” *Philosophical Studies* 31(2).

Week 7 – *Creating the best children*

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).

Week 8 – *Conferring advantage on children*

Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift (2014), *Family Values*, ch. 5

Tom Douglas (2015) “Parental Partiality and the Intergenerational Transmission of Advantage” *Philosophical Studies* 172(10).

Are there duties to the past/because of the past?

Week 9 – *Do inherited benefits create obligations?*

Daniel Butt (2014), “A Doctrine Quite New and Altogether Untenable: Defending the Beneficiary Pays Principle,” *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 31.

Richard Vernon (2006), *Justice Back and Forth*, ch. 3.

Supplementary:

Dennis Klimchuk (2004), “Unjust Enrichment and Reparations for Slavery,” *Boston University Law Review* 84.

Week 10 – *Do inherited wrongs create obligations?*

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.

Supplementary:

Nahshon Perez, *Freedom from Past Injustices* Edinburgh University Press 2012, chapter 2.

Week 11 – *Other types of redress—remembrance, truth & reconciliation, apologies*

Richard Vernon, (2006), *Justice Back and Forth*, ch. 5.

Dyzenhaus, David (2000), "Justifying the Truth and Reconciliation Commission", *Journal of Political Philosophy* 8(4).

Richard Vernon (2012), *Historical Redress*, pp. 80-87.

Supplementary:

Margalit, Avishai (2002), *The Ethics of Memory*, ch. 6.