A seminar on the most prominent views of global justice in recent political theory and on some major contested issues in that field.

Looking back at the history of political thought it is a truly remarkable fact that in the whole range of canonical writings, from Plato to Rawls, justice was taken to be something that ought to apply only to the relations among citizens of a state – not to the relations among citizens of different states. That assumption was not to be seriously challenged until the late 20th century, thanks to the pioneering work of Peter Singer and Charles Beitz (some of whose work we shall read). Since then the field has grown dramatically, and a one-term seminar can only be selective. For the first four weeks, after our initial meeting, we shall discuss four major general views: Singer’s humanitarianism, the global “harm principle” approach, statism (the view that justice can apply only within states), and nationalism (the view that justice can apply only within nations). In each case, we read an exponent and a critic of the view. We then move on to discuss seven issue areas in which we can see these general views in collision with one another.

Evaluation:
A major essay, worth 70%, due on April 1 (before midnight!). It is to be on one of our week’s topics, drawing on the assigned readings plus the third “supplementary” reading listed. Other readings should not be used except incidentally. If you wish to vary this requirement, for example by writing on a topic that brings two of the weekly topics/readings together, that is entirely acceptable, but clear the idea with me first. 12 pages is suggested as a length for undergraduate essays, 15 pages for graduates. Any form of referencing is acceptable

Minor essay: 15%, due February 7 (before midnight!). This is to be a five-page (double-spaced) essay on one of the topics discussed so far, drawing on all three readings. Briefly outline the issues (2 pages) and defend one position critically (3 pages).

Both essays are subject to a late penalty of 2% per day including weekends.

Participation: 15%. To be eligible for this portion of the mark, you must submit an acceptable one-page (single-spaced) report on the main readings each week from Jan 13 to March 31. (If you miss one or two weeks that will be forgiven without question.) The report should briefly summarize the main points in each reading and conclude with a question that you think should be discussed: you may be called on to introduce it to the seminar. The report is to be emailed to me by 4 p.m. on the day before the class. The mark itself will be based on the helpfulness of your contributions to seminar discussion. While frequency itself is not a criterion, if you let two weeks go by without contributing your participation mark is likely to be disappointing.
Participation for graduate students: as above, except that your weekly report should be 1.5 pages and should include some consideration of what the third weekly reading might contribute to the topic at hand. You may be given a week’s notice to present a 10-minute commentary on what the third reading contributes.

Learning outcomes: I hope that, at the end of the course, students will have a better understanding of the issues discussed than they had before!


Jan 13: Does distance make any difference?


Jan 20: A global harm principle?


Jan 27: Statism vs. global liberalism


Feb 3: Cosmopolitanism vs Nationalism


Feb 10: Should borders be open?


Feb 17: What’s wrong with colonialism?


March 3: Justice and Intervention


March 10: What is exploitation?


March 17: Beyond the Nuremberg crimes?


March 24: Can whole societies be held accountable?


March 31: What does climate justice require?
