

Politics 4206F/9762A: Theories of Global Justice

September-December 2026

Tuesday 2:30 – 4:20, SSC 7210

Charles Jones SSC 7213, cwjones@uwo.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00-2:00 pm, and by appointment

From Plato to John Rawls, *justice* has been a major theme in the history of political theory. But until the 1970s it was thought to be concerned only with the relations of co-citizens within a single state. The modern debates about *global justice* began with the questioning of this assumption: why shouldn't justice focus on the relations of citizens of different states or relations between human beings regardless of citizenship? This political theory course surveys several topics in the modern global justice debates, including human rights, global poverty, cosmopolitanism, global inequality, national responsibility, compatriot priority, Rawls's law of peoples, crime against humanity, colonialism, immigration, and climate change.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- (1) Describe competing answers to the question, 'What is global justice?', and understand the recent historical development of approaches to this question,
- (2) Identify and assess the arguments for and against specific theoretical perspectives on global justice, including cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and statism,
- (3) Understand the central arguments in debates on key topics in the field, including global poverty and inequality, crime against humanity, colonialism, immigration, and climate change.

How Your Final Mark is Determined

30%: *Participation*

35%: *In-Class Essays*, Tuesday October 20, 2026, 2:30-4:20, SSC 7210.

35%: *Final Examination*, two hours, to be scheduled during the final exam period.

Participation: 30%

To be eligible for this portion of the final grade, students must attend all classes except when there are medical or compassionate reasons for absence. **Students will be provided with a list of questions to discuss and will be expected to attend with pre-written answers, ready to talk about their answers.**

Students will receive a mark that reflects their **contributions to seminar discussion** – average contributions will receive marks that translate into the B range, excellent contributions will

receive marks that translate into the A or A+ range. I expect that all students will contribute to every class, or at least will not fail to contribute to two classes in a row.

In-Class Essays: 35%

Answer both questions (approximately 55 minutes per question):

1. With specific reference to Henry Shue, Charles Beitz and Robert Goodin, and Maurice Cranston, *defend a thesis* in answer to the following question: Are there any basic human rights?
2. With specific reference to Charles Beitz, David Miller, and Simon Caney, *defend a thesis* in answer to the following question: Should the difference principle be globalized?

Final Examination (two hours): 35%

This two-hour exam will require you to **choose three topics** (from a longer list of topics we covered in the course) and, for each topic, **do the following**: (1) outline the debate, (2) identify the arguments on different sides in the required readings, and (3) defend a position on the topic in question.

Potential topics: (1) John Rawls's law of peoples, (2) nationalism and partiality, (3) colonialism, (4) immigration, and (5) climate change.

Schedule of Meetings

Week 1: September 15, 2026: Introduction to the course

Joseph Heath, 'Why Philosophers Hate that "Equity" Meme', Substack, April 15, 2025, <https://josephheath.substack.com/p/why-philosophers-hate-that-equity>

Week 2: Sep 22, 2026: Basic Human Rights

Henry Shue, *Basic Rights*, 13-87 (Chapters 1-3), on security and subsistence, correlative duties, and liberty.

Charles R. Beitz and Robert E. Goodin, 'Basic Rights and Beyond', in Beitz and Goodin (eds.), *Global Basic Rights*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 1-24.

Maurice Cranston, 'Are There Any Human Rights?', *Daedalus* 112 (4), 1983, 1-17.

Week 3: Sep 29, 2026: Global Poverty

Peter Singer, *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Elizabeth Ashford, 'Obligations of Justice and Beneficence to Aid the Severely Poor', in Patricia Illingworth, Thomas Pogge, and Leif Wenar (eds.), *Giving Well: The Ethics of Philanthropy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 26-45.

Week 4: Oct 6, 2026: Should the Difference Principle be Globalized?

Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, 1979, Part Three: International Distributive Justice, 125-176.

David Miller, 'Cosmopolitanism: A Critique', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 5 (3), 2002, 80-85.

Simon Caney, 'Global Interdependence and Distributive Justice', *Review of International Studies* 31 (2), 2005, 389-399.

October 12-16, 2026: Reading Week

Week 5: Oct 20, 2026: In-Class Essays, 35%, 2:30-4:20, SSC 7210: (1) basic human rights and (2) globalizing the difference principle.

Week 6: Oct 27, 2026: Rawls's *Law of Peoples*

Gillian Brock, 'The Debate about Rawls's *Law of Peoples*: Critics and Defences', in Brock, *Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Account*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 19-44.

Joseph Heath, 'Rawls on Global Distributive Justice: A Defence,' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, supp. vol., 35, 2005, 193–226.

Nancy Bertoldi, 'Rawls on International Justice', *Tocqueville Review* 30 (1), 2009, 61-91.

Additional reading: John Rawls, 'The Law of Peoples', *Critical Inquiry* 20, 1993, 36-68. [Note: This is an early essay, a forerunner of Rawls's much longer 1999 book, *The Law of Peoples*.]

Week 7: Nov 3, 2026: Nationalism

David Miller, 'National Responsibility and Global Justice', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 11 (4), December 2008, 383–399.

David Miller, 'Nationalism', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2025, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2025/entries/nationalism/>.

Richard Arneson, 'Against Patriotism and National Partiality', in M. Sardoč (ed.), *Handbook of Patriotism*, Cham: Springer, 2020, 1-22.

Week 8: Nov 10, 2026: Crime Against Humanity

Richard Vernon, 'What is Crime against Humanity?', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10, 2002, 231-249.

Massimo Renzo, 'Crimes against humanity and the limits of international criminal law', *Law and Philosophy* 31, 2012, 443-476.

Week 9: Nov 17, 2026: Colonialism

Lea Ypi, 'What's Wrong with Colonialism', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 41 (2), 2013, 158-191.

Margaret Moore, 'Justice and Colonialism', *Philosophy Compass* 11 (8), 2016, 447-461.

Week 10: Nov 24, 2026: Immigration

Shelley Wilcox, 'The Open Borders Debate on Immigration', *Philosophy Compass* 4 (5), 2009, 813–21.

Joseph Heath, *Cooperation and Social Justice*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022, Chapter 5: 'A Unified Theory of Border Control and Reasonable Accommodation', 200-251.

Week 11: Dec 1, 2026: Climate Change

Peter Singer, *One World Now: The Ethics of Globalization*, New Haven: Yale University Press, third edition, 2016, 'One Atmosphere', 16-68.

Simon Caney, 'Two Kinds of Climate Justice: Avoiding Harm and Sharing Burdens,' *Journal of Political Philosophy* 22 (2), 2014, 125-149.

Week 12: Dec 8, 2026: Exam Review

35%: *Final Examination*, to be scheduled during the final exam period.