

POLSCI 4FF3: RIGHTS AND JUSTICE

Spring 2020

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Lecture: Tuesday and Thursday 6:30-9:30pm
Room: TBA

Office: Virtually online
Office Hours: on Zoom by appointment

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Course Description

All of the major Canadian political parties, with slight variations, embrace Liberalism as a position or way of thinking and yet only one party calls itself Liberal, which can generate confusion. In the United States, some of those closely adhering to Liberalism use the term “Liberal” as a derogatory term against their opponents. In this course, we will move past the labels and party lines to get a grasp of Liberalism as a tool, a way of thinking through perennial questions in Western political theory. How should institutions treat various parties? Which institutions are necessary? How to address racial, gendered and other forms of injustice? What do rights, equality, authority, and justice mean? To examine the responses to these questions, and the limitations of the responses, every unit we will work through a different set of issues and how Liberal political thinkers approach them, with a particular focus on the Canadian experience. In the first unit, we will try to develop a basic idea of Liberalism, its common denominators, its historical roots, varieties and broad influence on the Canadian political system. The second unit will examine the tensions between democracy and Liberalism and allow us to discuss the meaning of those sacred Liberal values—consent, justice, equality, and individualism. This discussion will continue in the subsequent units, where we will see how the Liberal way of thinking can respond, if it can adequately respond, to the challenges of cultural diversity and history of colonialism, racism, gender differences, and finally economic crises.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Identify the historical roots, assumptions, and varieties of Liberal political thought
- Discuss and compare Liberal conceptions of equality, justice and rights
- Assess the role of individualism in Liberalism and its impact on political institutions
- Evaluate the arguments of the critics of Liberalism and the strength of Liberal responses
- Apply Liberal thinking to contemporary issues, especially in the Canadian context

Required Materials and Texts

- Readings will be posted on Avenue To Learn

Class Format

The course is an online seminar that meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays 6:30-9:30pm on Zoom. While the format of the seminars will slightly vary, it will include light lecturing, presentations, and class discussions through Zoom and discussion boards.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Forum Discussions—5% each x5= 25%, Due May 13+14; May 20+21; May 27+28; June 1+2; June 8+9
2. Presentations—20%, due date for group to be determined first day of class
3. Debate position papers—10% each x4=40%, Due May 23rd, May 30th, June 6th, June 13th, June 20th
4. My Liberal Vlog—5%, due June 18th
5. Participation—10%

Course Evaluation – Details

Forum Discussions (5% x5 times=25%)

The first step in understanding Liberalism, its uses, and its limitations, is to examine the assumptions, meanings, and implications from different perspectives. Starting with unit 2, each unit starts on Thursday. By Tuesday at noon, before the unit starts, you are to post your reading responses on the readings on the discussion forum. These responses should be about a half a page. You are to put in writing your understanding of the texts. Is there something you do not understand? Is there something you do not agree with? Is there something that you wanted to read in a text and finally found it articulated in this text? Even if you did not agree with something, briefly summarize the author's position. The reading response is supposed to show that you have read the assigned readings, even if you do not completely understand them. Please cite specific passages or at least page numbers from the texts. In addition to the paragraph/page include 2-3 questions that either just interest you having read the text or that you would like to be covered in class. This part of the reading response is worth 2.5%. The other 2.5% is for responding twice to the posts of others on the forum by Thursday at noon. These responses should be about a paragraph long, based on the texts as well, and they should be meaningful responses that either answer questions or develop the thoughts further (but certainly not just meaningless agreement with the original post).

Presentation (20%)

Presentations in groups of 3-4 students will be held on Tuesdays for units 2 through 6. You will be tasked with briefly reviewing the unit's topic and more importantly offering a critical engagement with the texts that raises a range of questions or issues that the entire class can then discuss. Ultimately, the purpose of reviewing the topic, and leading discussion for about 45 minutes is to propose and defend a policy on a contemporary Canadian issue. That policy should be formulated in response to the unit's readings and main issues raised in that unit. You are expected to be using secondary sources for this presentation as well. By Monday morning at the latest (before the Tuesday presentation), your group is to meet with me on Zoom to present your plan, notes, and materials, so we can be sure you have an excellent presentation. That Zoom meeting is worth 5% of your presentation grade.

You are very much encouraged to be creative with your seminar presentations to stimulate participation and student understanding of the material. At the beginning of the seminar you can summarize pertinent court cases for example and put students into smaller groups to work on a particular task, set up a debate or create a contest. Unless there is a significant discrepancy in contributions/effort, the entire leadership team receives the same grade.

Debate Position Paper (40%)

On Tuesday of each unit starting with unit 2, the presenting group will propose a policy. By Saturday of that week, your group's task is to use that unit's texts, theories, concepts, and examples to formulate your response to the policy. The debate position paper should be around 5-7 pages. You are responding to the proposed policy during units when you are not presenting and you may not respond to the policy one week, hence in total your group is submitting four debate position papers each worth 10% for total of 40%.

My Liberal Vlog (5%)

Detailed instructions will be released on the first day of class.

Participation (10%)

Excellent seminar participation involves consistently coming to class online, demonstrably having read the material, staying for the entire class, paying full attention to what others in the class are contributing, and making valuable contributions to the discussion.

Tentative Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Unit 1 (May 5- May12)

May 5 – Introduction and the history of Liberalism

Readings: Gerald Gaus, "Liberalism and Reason"

Notes: [ie. Assignment due, test, etc.]

May 7 – The values of Liberalism

Readings: (1) John Rawls, A Theory of Justice, selections

(2) Michael Walzer, Spheres of Justice, selections

Notes: [ie. Assignment due, test, etc.]

May 12 – Liberal impact on Canadian politics

Readings: (1) Hutchinson and Petter, "Private Rights-Public Wrongs: The Liberal Lie of the Charter"

(2) Gad Horowitz, "The Fate of the Red Tory Meme"

Notes: [ie. Assignment due, test, etc.]

Unit 2 (May 14-May 19)

May 14 – The tensions between Liberalism and democracy (I)

Readings: (1) Jurgen Habermas, Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action, selections

(2) Ilya Somin, Democracy and Political Ignorance, selections

(3) Richard Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy"

Notes: Forum Discussion due May 13-14

May 19 – The tensions between Liberalism and democracy (II)

Readings: (1) Jurgen Habermas, Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action, selections

(2) Ilya Somin, Democracy and Political Ignorance, selections

(3) Richard Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy"

Notes: Debate Position Paper due May 23

Unit 3 (May 21-May 26)

May 21 – Challenges of diversity and colonial history (i)

Readings: (1) Brian Barry, "Liberalism and Multiculturalism"

(2) Will Kymlicka, Multicultural Citizenship, selections

(3) Glen Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Recognition in Canada"

Notes: Forum Discussion due May 20-21

May 26 – Challenges of diversity and colonial history (ii)

Readings: (1) Brian Barry, "Liberalism and Multiculturalism"

(2) Will Kymlicka, Multicultural Citizenship, selections

(3) Glen Coulthard, "Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Recognition in Canada"

Notes: Debate Position Paper Due May 30

Unit 4 (May 28-June 2)

May 28 – Racial Injustice (I)

Readings: (1) Charles Mills, “Rawls on Race/Race in Rawls”

(2) Tommie Shelby, “Race and Social Justice: Rawlsian Considerations”

(3) Charles Mills, “Retrieving Rawls for Racial Justice? A Critique of Tommie Shelby”

(4) Tommie Shelby, “Racial Realities and Corrective Justice: A Reply to Charles Mills”

Notes: Forum Discussion due May 27-28

June 2 – Racial Injustice (II)

Readings: (1) Charles Mills, “Rawls on Race/Race in Rawls”

(2) Tommie Shelby, “Race and Social Justice: Rawlsian Considerations”

(3) Charles Mills, “Retrieving Rawls for Racial Justice? A Critique of Tommie Shelby”

(4) Tommie Shelby, “Racial Realities and Corrective Justice: A Reply to Charles Mills”

Notes: Debate Discussion Paper due June 6

Unit 5 (June 4-June 9)

June 4 – Is there space for women in Liberalism? (I)

Readings: (1) Susan Moller Okin, “Justice and Gender: An Unfinished Debate”

(2) Tracy Higgins, “Why Feminists Can’t (or Shouldn’t) Be Liberals”

(3) Chandran Kukathas, “Is Feminism Bad for Multiculturalism?”

Notes: Forum Discussion due June 3-4

June 9 – Is there space for women in Liberalism? (II)

Readings: (1) Susan Moller Okin, “Justice and Gender: An Unfinished Debate”

(2) Tracy Higgins, “Why Feminists Can’t (or Shouldn’t) Be Liberals”

(3) Chandran Kukathas, “Is Feminism Bad for Multiculturalism?”

Notes: Debate Position Paper due June 13

Unit 6 (June 11-16)

June 11 – To Intervene or not intervene in the economy? (I)

Readings: (1) Milton Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom, selections

(2) John Roemer, Equality of Opportunity, selections

(3) Steve Lukes, Social Justice: The Kayekian Challenge

(4) John Myles, “How to Design a Liberal Welfare State: A Comparison of Canada and the United States”

Notes: Forum Discussion due June 10-11

June 16 – To intervene or not intervene in the economy? (II)

Readings: (1) Milton Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom, selections

(2) John Roemer, Equality of Opportunity, selections

(3) Steve Lukes, Social Justice: The Kayekian Challenge

(4) John Myles, “How to Design a Liberal Welfare State: A Comparison of Canada and the United States”

Notes: Debate Position Paper due June 20

Conclusion (June 18)

June 18 – Blog Presentations

Notes: Vlog and Vlog responses due June 18

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments and Late Assignments

Written assignments aside from reading responses are due at 11:59pm in the dropbox online on the day indicated in the syllabus.

Late assignments, without proper documentation and prior agreement with your instructor when possible, will receive a 10% daily deduction including weekends. Online forum contributions cannot and will not be accepted late, because they are time-sensitive.

If you know that you will have a few assignments due in several classes on the same day, come talk to your instructor about it early (at least two weeks before the deadline) and a short extension may be granted. Extensions are official only in written form, when confirmed through email.

Reading, Email, Office Hour and Other Rules

Every student is responsible for all required readings. Some of the texts are more difficult than others. Students are expected to come to every class online having read the reading assigned for that class.

I will be happy to meet with you through zoom, please reach out, let me know what times work for you, and I'll be happy to chat. Come, sit, relax in the virtual office and if you want to talk about the university in general or the course in particular, I'll be glad to see you. My rule for both email communication and office hours is that you meet me half way. (For example, just asking what does Rawls think of equality doesn't give me anything to work with in order to help you out). Be prepared to tell me what you know and what you understand so that we can build on that basis to enrich your understanding and experience.

I will reply to emails within 24 hours (and usually much much much much quicker), so if you do not get a reply from me within 24 hours, the wires must have crossed somewhere and you should email me again to make sure your email gets through. Please don't hesitate to resend emails in those cases, as quick communication under these circumstances is paramount and I'd love to help.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

Under some circumstances, students may be granted relief in the form of completing the missed assignments one week in the following week.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](#).

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on

the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University’s Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.