Contemporary Liberal Theory

Political Science 379  
University of Notre Dame  
Prof. Gerry Mackie  
Spring 2004

PURPOSE
The purpose of the course is to introduce students to the methods and styles of contemporary Anglo-American political theory, and to survey some of the major work in that tradition on the question of liberalism. What is liberalism? An imperfect definition: liberty is presumed, any limits on liberty must be justified, and wide limits on liberty are not justified. By liberalism, we do not mean its American usage as a term for someone on the left-hand side of the political spectrum (in Australia, the “liberals” are the right party); rather, we mean those thinkers who assign a priority to liberty, whether left, center, or right.

Within contemporary liberalism, the major cleavage is between classical liberalism, or libertarianism, and revisionary liberalism, or social-democratic liberalism. We shall, critically and fairly, examine both sides of this divide. Also, we shall pay special attention to the idea of liberty.

In this course, although criticism of any kind is always welcome, we won’t be reading thinkers who challenge the priority of liberty, for two reasons. First, liberalism, in one form or another, is today the dominant political creed in the developed world, and perhaps in the world (in the developed world, this has only been true since the 1950s, and in the world, since the 90s). Second, in the future, I’ll offer a course on liberalism and its critics.

CONTACTS
My office is at 405 Decio Hall, tel. 631-7570, email g.mackie@nd.edu. Office hours are Wednesday 10:00-11:30, Thursday 2:00-3:30, or by appointment. I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity for office consultations.

ASSESSMENT
Participation, including preparation and attendance, 18%
One three-page paper, 10%
Three four-page papers, 18% each
Final exam, 18%

I will provide paper topics, or (except on the first paper) you might consult me in advance to write on a topic of your choosing. Papers will be due a week after we have finished up a topic or set of topics. One page means 250 words, three pages 750 words, four pages 1000 words. Don’t try to get a better grade by writing over limit: papers more than 110% of length will be strongly penalized.
Papers should be well-organized, well-considered, and well-written. Poor writing brings down the grade quickly. Please make use of the Notre Dame Writing Center. At my discretion, I may require rewrites, in which case the grade is an average of the original and the rewrite.

The final exam will contain short identifications, and a selection from among questions distributed in advance.

PERFORMANCE
Papers are due no later than the beginning of class on the due date; no papers will be accepted after the beginning of class; do not miss class to finish writing the paper. Late papers will be penalized ½ grade for 5 minutes to 24 hours late, 1 grade for up to 48 hours, etc. Papers must have complete and proper citations.

You are expected to be completely prepared for each session, and to participate actively in discussion. You are expected to keep current or ahead of the readings as listed in the syllabus. Lack of preparation or nonparticipation results in a lower grade.

Roll will be kept. If you miss more than three classes without proper university documentation, I reserve the right to lower your course grade by 1/2 point for each additional day you miss; for example, five unexcused absences would lower a B to a C.

HONESTY
We will abide strictly by the Academic Code of Honor. That means you must not cheat on exams, must not plagiarize on the writing assignments, and must provide proper citations for written work that you submit. Review the Code in DuLac. If you have any questions about what is permitted, consult with me, as ambiguities will be construed against the violator. I do not have a forgiving attitude about academic dishonesty.

REQUIRED TEXTS, AND ON RESERVE
- Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State and Utopia.
- Joseph Raz, Morality of Freedom.
Note: I ordered paperback, and if possible used, editions.

READING PACKETS
Packets of readings (all material not in the required books) will be available from the Copy Center, 301 O’Shaughnessy Hall, in two installments. The first installment is ready now.

COURSE SCHEDULE

What is liberalism?
Jan 13, Gaus, Liberalism (10 pages)
Jan 15, Holmes, The Liberal Idea (28 pages); begin John Gray, Liberalism, xi-69 (70 pages)
Jan 20, Gray continued;
Jan 22, Gray continued; Shklar, The Liberalism of Fear (22 pages)

Liberty
Jan 27, FIRST PAPER DUE, Green, Liberal Legislation and the Freedom to Contract (10 pages); Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty, Sections 0,1,2,5,6,7,8 (42 pages)
Jan 29, Berlin, continued; Hayek, Constitution of Liberty, Ch. 1.1-1.5, Ch. 9.1-9.8 (20 pages); Berlin, response to critics, 37-42 (5 pages)
Feb 3, MacCallum, Negative and Positive Freedom (22 pages); begin Christman, Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom (16 pages)
Feb 5, Christman continued; Taylor, What’s Wrong with Negative Liberty? (21 pages);
Feb 10, Pettit, Liberty as Nondomination, in his Republicanism, 4-7, 17-50, 272-273 (37 pages)

Rawls’s Theory of Justice– Social Liberalism
Feb 12, Rawls, TOJ, Sections 1-5, 9, 11-15 (42 pages)
Feb 17, SECOND PAPER DUE, continued, 17, 20-26 (40 pages)
Feb 19, continued, 29, 32, 33, 39, 82, 87 (44 pages)
Feb 24, Rawls, continued

Libertarianism
Feb 26, Hayek, Mirage of Social Justice, Ch. 9, 62-91, 96-100, also 132, 188-189 (35 pages)
Mar 2, Nozick, Anarchy State and Utopia, Preface, Ch. 2, Ch. 3 (38 pages)
Mar 4, Ch. 7.1, also 213-238 (58 pages)
--Spring Break--
Mar 16, Nozick, continued
Mar 18, Vallentyne, Left-Libertarianism: A Primer (20 pages); Hillel Steiner, Original Rights and Just Redistribution (25 pages).

Dworkin – Equality of Resources
Mar 23, THIRD PAPER DUE, Dworkin, Equality of Welfare, selections TBA (about 35 pages)
Mar 25, Dworkin, Equality of Resources, selections TBA (about 35 pages)
Mar 30, Dworkin, The Place of Liberty, selections TBA (about 35 pages)

Political Liberalism
Apr 1, Nagel, Moral Conflict and Political Legitimacy (35 pages); begin Rawls, Political Liberalism, Preface (xxv-xxix),
Apr 6, Rawls continued, I.1-4 (3-28), I.6 (35-40), II.1-2 (47-57); (48 pages)

Raz – Perfectionist Liberalism
Apr 8, Raz, Morality of Freedom, Ch. 1, Ch. 5 (35 pages)
Apr 13, Ch. 6, Ch. 9 (50 pages)
Apr 15, Ch. 10.1, Ch. 14.1, Ch. 15 (37 pages)

Liberalisms: Postmodernist, Neonaturalist
Apr 22, Gray, Against the New Liberalism; After the New Liberalism; Postliberalism, in his Liberalism, second edition (31 pages)
Apr 27, Sen, Introduction to his Development as Freedom, and Freedom and the Foundations of Justice (39 pages)

POLITICAL THEORY LINKS

political theory digests
http://www.politicaltheory.info/
http://www.politicalthought.com
http://www.politicaltheory.blogspot.com/
http://www.bostonreview.net/ndf.html

social and political philosophy bibliography, comprehensive
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/sefd0/bib/polphil.htm

humanities digest
http://www.aldaily.com/

philosophy links
http://www.epistemelinks.com/

organizations
http://www.political-theory.org/
http://www.cspt.tulane.edu/
http://organizations.oneonta.edu/apt/
http://poltheory.uchicago.edu/asplp.html

chicago
http://ptw.uchicago.edu/
http://home.uchicago.edu/~pmarkell/cpt.html
http://cptgrad.uchicago.edu/

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