



Power, Oppression, and Justice

Winter 2016/2017 (Semester Ib)

MA Philosophy

INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

If individuals or groups of persons are oppressed by others, this is almost always perceived as injustice. But what is oppression and why exactly is it an injustice? Are there forms of unequal social power which are morally neutral or even good? This course will focus on three questions: First, what social power is, what role power plays in social reality, and how we can distinguish problematic from unproblematic forms. Second, how we should empirically describe existing phenomena of social oppression, such as the oppression of persons in virtue of their economic position, of their gender or of their race, such as to capture what is wrong about such oppression. Third, in what ways contemporary theories of justice help us to understand the wrongness of oppression and to answer the question of who has which obligations to abolish oppressive social relations or to resist oppression.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Topic specific objectives:

- to acquire knowledge about different conceptions of social power and oppression and their theoretical context,
- to acquire the ability to evaluate and contextualize claims to the effect that certain groups or persons suffer from oppression,
- to acquire the ability to reason philosophically about the justice or injustice of social power relations,
- to acquire knowledge about how different theories describe and evaluate structures of class-based, gendered and racial oppression.

General philosophical objectives:

- to improve skills in identifying and evaluating philosophical arguments,
- to improve skills in finding relevant literature and to critically evaluate the arguments of different theories,
- to improve skills in communicating philosophical arguments in written form,
- to improve skills in summarizing philosophical arguments in the course of a presentation.

COURSE FORMAT AND GENERAL RULES

This is an intensive course that requires you to read a certain amount of literature, both during the course and while preparing your essay.

I expect to enjoy this seminar very much and I hope that you will, too. To maximize the chances of this happening, there are a few ground rules in terms of obligations that we have towards each other: I accept the obligation to arrive on time and well-prepared to each session. I will do my utmost to design the course material and my contributions in a way which leads your learning as much as possible and to structure the discussion according to your interests. You can approach me about all questions of an academic or administrative nature in person and (to a reasonable extent) via e-mail. I will communicate expectations clearly and will evaluate you fairly. My goal is to prepare you all for finishing the course with an excellent result. In return, I expect from you to regularly attend all sessions, to excuse yourself in person or via e-mail in case you cannot attend a session, to arrive on time, to read all the required material, to come prepared with relevant questions and objections and to participate in the discussion with your fellow students. I also expect you to refrain from any kind of academic dishonesty and from any behavior which makes it more difficult for fellow students to learn or which makes them feel uncomfortable.

I am aware that students have different needs in order to be able to learn and face different challenges and that the general rules of this course might not be best designed to ensure everyone's success. If you think you may have reason to ask for a modification of the course rules for your specific case, please do not hesitate to talk to me in private.

REQUIREMENTS AND EXAMINATION

The examination requirements consist of two parts:

1. You have to participate in two group presentations, in sessions 3 and 5 respectively. This entails that you prepare the assigned text at home, that you come to class with a written overview of the main arguments and of the questions that you have. You will then have (as a group) some time in class to prepare a presentation that should approximately take 5-10 minutes (but under no circumstances more than 10 minutes) and you will lead the discussion after the presentation as a group. The point of this is to practice identifying the central argument in a longer text and to present it succinctly to an audience that is unfamiliar with the text.
2. You have to write a final essay of up to 5,000 words. The essay is to discuss, on the basis of our conversation in the seminar, a research question. You are expected to do some literature research on your own, especially if you want to discuss a question which relates to political issues or phenomena.

TUTORIAL

For research master students, there is the option to extend this course with a tutorial in the third quarter. If you want to do this, please let me know.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

I suggest the following topics for essays. All of them are only general areas within which you should formulate a research question of your own.

1. Can the liberal tradition in political philosophy adequately deal with racist or sexist oppression? Do critics of that tradition have challenges that it is required to answer?
2. How can we adequately describe forms of oppression in contemporary society? Which theory of power or oppression is best suited to do so? [This question should be adapted to a concrete form of oppression]
3. Does Foucault provide us with an adequate theory of power to criticize contemporary forms of oppression and resistance?
4. Is the republican ideal of non-domination adequate for criticizing contemporary forms of oppression?
5. What conception of power, domination and oppression is most suitable for a political theory that aims to give an adequate conception of social justice?

If you want to discuss another question, you are free to do so after consulting with me. You have three weeks after the Christmas break to write the essay. In the first week, we will have a meeting where we discuss your conception for the essay and your literature research. The exact structure will depend on the number of students choosing to write an essay. In the second and third week, we will have more personalized meetings, discussing your drafts of sections.

The essay is due on **30 January 2017** on **Student Portal**.

READINGS

Due to regulations on copyright, I cannot provide a course reader nor put the texts for the course online. You will therefore have to acquire all necessary texts yourself. In the first session, we will discuss how to best do this so that it is not too much work.

The readings for the first session will be made available on Nestor.

If you think of acquiring some books, the following choices are excellent:

- Mark Haugaard (ed.), *Power. A Reader* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002). This is a collection of 20 or so of the most important authors who wrote on power, with a short introduction and additional references for each of them.
- Thomas E. Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power* (Temple University Press, 1990). Perhaps the most comprehensive text about power theory. A good introduction to the topic.
- Amy Allen, *The Power of Feminist Theory. Domination, Resistance, Solidarity* (Boulder, Westview, 1999).

Also very helpful as an introduction is:

- Amy Allen, "Feminist Perspectives on Power", in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-power/>>.

STUDY LOAD

This course has 5 ECTS, translating to 140 hours of work. They distribute as follows:

20h	Seminar sessions and essay planning
90h	Reading 450 pages of literature (medium difficulty)
30h	Writing the final essay.

SYLLABUS

Session 1: Power and Justice I – Rawls vs. Young (14 November)

1. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Original Edition, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1971), Sections I.1-3; II.10-11; II.16
2. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999), ch. 1 and 2.

Session 2: Power and Justice II - Republicanism (21 November)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

1. Philip Pettit, *Republicanism. A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 51-58, 61-69, 80-97 and 110-119.
2. Frank Lovett, *A General Theory of Domination and Justice*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 111-123, 157-179.

Further readings for essay and own study:

- Philip Pettit, *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- Frank Lovett, "Domination and Distributive Justice", in *The Journal of Politics*, 71: 817–830, 2009.
- Cécile Laborde and John Maynor (eds.), *Republicanism and Political Theory* (Malden, Blackwell, 2008).

Session 3: Analyzing Power I: Individual, structural, radical and noumenal power (28 November)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

Everyone:

- Max Weber: Excerpts from *Economy and Society* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978), pp. 22, 26-27, 53-54.

Each group (to be formed in session 1) prepares and presents *one* of the following texts:

1. Jeffrey C. Isaac, *Power and Marxist Theory* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 33-40, 72-101.
2. Frank Lovett, *A General Theory of Domination and Justice* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 34-74.
3. Steven Lukes, *Power. A Radical View, 2nd ed.* (Houndmills Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2005), pp. 25-44.
4. Rainer Forst, "Noumenal Power", in *Journal of Political Philosophy* (online first, 2014).

Further readings for essay and own study:

- Peter Morriss, *Power* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 8-35.
- Thomas Hobbes, Richard Tuck (ed.), *Leviathan* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), chap. 10.
- Peter Bachrach, Morton S. Baratz, “The Two Faces of Power”, *The American Political Science Review* 56(4), 1962, pp. 947-952.
- Thomas E. Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power* (Temple University Press, 1990)
- Ruth Zimmerling, *Influence and Power* (Dordrecht, Springer, 2005), pp. 31-73.
- Stewart R. Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, (London, Sage, 1989).
- Martin Saar, “Power and Critique”, in *Journal of Power* 3(1), 2010, pp. 7-20.
- Clarissa Ryle Hayward, *De-Facing Power* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (Verso, London, 1980)
- Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), ch. 1 and 5
- Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981), ch. 2 and 7

Session 4: Analyzing Power II: Disciplinary Power (5 December)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

1. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1 (New York, Pantheon, 1978), pp. 92-102.
2. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Writings 1972-1977* (New York, Pantheon, 1980), pp. 92-108.
3. Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power”, in: *Power. The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Vol. 3 (New York, The New Press, 2000), pp. 326-348.
4. Amy Allen, *The Power of Feminist Theory. Domination, Resistance, Solidarity* (Boulder, Westview, 1999), pp. 31-58.

Further readings for essay and own study:

- Generally, everything else in Foucault 1980 and 2000, as well as many articles by Allen.
- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York, Vintage, 1977).
- Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1991), ch. 4-6.
- Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender, and the Self*, (Boston, Northeastern University Press, 1992).
- Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, Routledge, 1990).
- Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997).
- Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
- Johanna Oksala, *Foucault on Freedom* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Session 5: What is Oppression? (12 December)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

Everyone:

1. Ann E. Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), ch. 1, sections 2 and 3 (available at Oxford Scholarship Online).
2. Marilyn, Frye "Oppression", in *The Politics of Reality* (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1983).

Each group (to be formed in session 1) prepares and presents *one* of the following texts:

1. Sally Haslanger, "Oppressions: Racial and Other", in *Resisting Reality. Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 311-338.
2. Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), chapters, 1 and 7 (pp. 9-29, 147-169).
3. Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1989), chs. 8, 9, 12. (Note: these chapters extensively discuss rape).
4. Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), chs. 1 and 4.

Further readings for essay and own study:

- The remainder of Cudd (2006).
- Ann E. Cudd, "How to Explain Oppression", in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 35, 2005, pp. 20-49.
- Amy Allen, "Rationalizing Oppression," in *Journal of Power*, 1 (1), 2008, pp. 51–65.
- Judith Andre, "Power, Oppression and Gender", in *Social Theory and Practice* 11(1), 1985, pp. 107-122.
- Miranda Fricker, "Epistemic Oppression and Epistemic Privilege", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 29 (Suppl.), 1999, pp. 191-210.
- On gender oppression and capitalism, see also Ann E. Cudd and Nancy Holmstrom, *Capitalism, For and Against: A Feminist Debate* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Session 6: Oppression and Responsibility (19 December)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

1. Carol Hay, "The Responsibility to Resist Oppression", in *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 42(1), 2011, pp. 21-45.
2. Ann E. Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), chapter 7 (available at Oxford Scholarship Online).

Further readings for essay and own study:

- Bernard R. Boxill, "The Responsibility of the Oppressed to Resist Their Own Oppression", in *Journal of Social Philosophy* 41(1), 2010, pp. 1-12
- T. L. Zutlevics, "Towards a Theory of Oppression", *Ratio*, 15(1), 2002, pp. 80-102.

- Mark Navin, “Luck and Oppression”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 14(5), 2011, pp. 533-547.
- Jean Harvey, “Justice Theory and Oppression”, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 29 (Suppl.), 1999, pp. 171-190.

Essay Planning Session (9 January)

Individual Feedback Sessions (16-29 January)