

Public Policy and Political Theory

Instructor: Zoltan Miklosi

The course is organized to discuss selected issues in public policy from the perspective of normative considerations of justice. More specifically, the course will explore the implications of liberal egalitarianism, now the dominant philosophical outlook within contemporary political theory, for a number of policy problems that have attracted significant public attention in recent decades. The choice of policy problems will be guided either by their centrality from the point of view of the overall justness of society, such as healthcare or education, or by the special nature of the theoretical challenges they represent, such as genetic intervention and long-term climate change. Liberal egalitarianism has been developed into a number of distinct and well-specified rival versions over the last three decades, and its internal controversies may occasionally have important consequences for the policies different versions recommend, but all versions share a couple of central commitments that significantly constrain the range of policies that they may regard as acceptable from the point of view of justice. All of them are committed to some variation of the following ideas: that 1) every individual should have the opportunity to develop and realize her own conception of the good life, that 2) the state should be neutral regarding these conceptions, that 3) from the point of view of the government the success of each individual life is equally important, and 4) that as far as the distribution of the resources necessary for the realization of different life plans are concerned, no one should be disadvantaged by such unchosen circumstances that are beyond their control. The course will mainly be devoted to discussing the policy implications of these general commitments. The range of questions to be discussed will include the following: What does educational equality mean? Is it compatible with school choice? Does health, and health inequalities have special moral significance? How healthcare resources ought to be allocated under circumstances of resource constraint? Is it permissible to take into consideration the age or the expected quality of life of the potential recipients of such resources? Is access to genetic enhancement on the basis of ability to pay compatible with liberal equality? How should the burden of averting catastrophic climate change be distributed between generations?

Evaluation: the final grade will be based on active participation in the seminar discussions (25%), a short position paper (25%) and a final paper (50%).

Week 1: Introduction: Liberal Egalitarianism

- Will Kymlicka, "Liberal Equality" in *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 55-79.
- Onora O'Neill, "Applied Ethics: Naturalism, Normativity, and Public Policy," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 26:3 (2009), pp. 219-230 (recommended).

I. Justice in Education

Week 2: What Does Educational Equality Mean?

- Harry Brighouse: "Liberal Theory and Education Policy" in Brighouse, *School Choice and Social Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 3-18.
- Brighouse: "The Case for Educational Equality", in *School Choice and Social Justice*, pp. 113-140.

Week 3: Equality or Adequacy? Objections to Educational Equality

- Brighouse: "Objections to Educational Equality," in *School Choice and Social Justice*, pp. 141-162

- Debra Satz: "Equality, Adequacy, and Education for Citizenship," *Ethics* 117 (2007), pp. 623-647.

Week 4: Is School Choice Compatible with Educational Equality?

- Adam Swift "Choosing the school rules" in Swift, *How not to be a hypocrite: School choice for the morally perplexed parent* (Routledge, 2003), pp. 9-47.
- John Roemer: Providing Equal Educational Opportunity: Public vs. Voucher Schools" *Social Philosophy and Policy* (1992), pp. 291-309 (recommended)

II. Justice in Healthcare

Week 5: Is Health Morally Special?

- Daniels, "When Are Health Inequalities Unjust? The Social Determinants of Health," in Daniels, *Just Health* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 79-102.
- James Wilson, "Not So Special After All? Daniels and the Social Determinants of Health" *Journal of Medical Ethics* 35:1 (2009), pp. 3-6 (recommended).
- Benjamin Sachs, "Lingering Problems of Currency and Scope in Daniels's Argument for a Societal Obligation to Meet Health Needs," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 35 (2010), pp. 402-414 (recommended).

Week 6: Is Healthcare Special? Cont.

- Dworkin: "Justice in the Distribution of Health Care" in Mathew Clayton and Andrew Williams (eds.) *The Ideal of Equality* (London/New York: Macmillan and St. Martin's Press, 2000)
- M. Powers & Ruth Faden, *Social Justice: the Moral Foundations of Public Health and Health Policy* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), Chapter 2 (recommended).

Week 7: Allocating Healthcare Resources: Can Quality of Life Be Considered?

- Peter Singer et al., "Double Jeopardy and the Use of QALYs in Health Care Allocation," in Helga Kuhse (ed.), *Unsanctifying Human Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 181-194.
- F.M. Kamm: "Aggregation, Allocating Scarce Resources, and the Disabled" *Social Philosophy and Policy* (2009), pp. 148-197
- Dan. W. Brock, "Justice and the ADA: Does Prioritizing and Rationing Health Care Discriminate against the Disabled?" *Social Philosophy and Policy* 12:2 (1995), pp. 159-185 (recommended).

Week 8: Allocating Healthcare Resources: Can Age Be Considered?

- Brock: "Justice, health care, and the elderly" in Brock, *Life and Death: Philosophical Essays in Biomedical Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 388-407.
- S. Brauer: "Age Rationing and Prudential Lifespan Account," *Journal of Medical Ethics* (2009) 35: 27-31 (recommended).
- Dennis McKerlie, "Justice Between the Young and the Old," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 30:2 (2001), pp. 157-172 (recommended).

III. Justice and Genetic Technology

Week 9: Is there a Problem with Genetic Enhancement?

- Michael Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection" *The Atlantic Monthly* 293(3) (2004), pp. 51-62
- F.M. Kamm, "Is There a Problem with Enhancement?" *American Journal of Bioethics* 5:3 (2005), pp. 5-14.

Week 10: Genes and Justice

- Peter Singer: "Shopping at the Genetic Supermarket"

- Colin Farrelly, “The Genetic Difference Principle,” *American Journal of Bioethics* 4:2 (2004), pp. 21-28.
- Allen Buchanan: “Equal Opportunity and Genetic Intervention” *Social Philosophy and Policy* (1995), pp. 105-135 (recommended).

IV. The Ethics of Climate Change

Week 11: Who Should Bear the Burden: Justice Between Generations and the Social Discount Rate

- John Broome, “The Ethics of Climate Change,” *Scientific American* 2008, pp. 97-102.
- Thomas C. Schelling, “Intergenerational Discounting,” *Energy Policy* 23: 4/5 (1995), pp. 395-401.
- Tyler Cowen & Derek Parfit, “Against the Social Discount Rate,” in Peter Laslett and James S. Fishkin (eds.), *Justice Between Age Groups and Generations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 144-161.
- Joseph Mazer, “Liberal Justice, Future People, and Natural Resource Conservation,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 38:4 (2010), pp. 380-408 (recommended).

Week 12: The Ethics of Risk and the Precautionary Principle

- Stephen M. Garniner, “A Core Precautionary Principle,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 14:1 (2006), pp. 33-60.
- Greg Bognar, “Can the Maximin Principle Serve as a Basis for Climate Change Policy?” (2010, unpublished manuscript)
- Simon Caney, “Climate Change and the Future: Discounting for Time, Wealth, and Risk,” *Journal of Social Philosophy* 40:2 (2009), pp. 163-183 (recommended)