



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Introduction to Ethics & Political Philosophy - Part B - 15200

Last update 25-10-2025

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Philosophy

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Oded Na'aman

Coordinator Email: oded.naaman@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Monday 15:00-16:00

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Oded Naaman

Course/Module description:

Part B of 'Introduction to Ethics and Political Philosophy' will discuss questions in political philosophy and meta-ethics.

Course/Module aims:

Our aim is to discover questions, ideas, and thoughts that can help us understand the political and moral reality of our lives. Some of the ideas we'll discuss shaped our political and cultural world; by drawing on them we might be able to change this world for the better. The course takes a broad-range approach, meaning, we'll glimpse into great strands of thought and won't have time to explore each thoroughly. One of the course's aims is to expose students to these strands of thoughts and encourage them to continue the investigation on their own. After all, even when we learn philosophy from others, we learn by ourselves.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

To define the central questions in contemporary ethics and political philosophy. to understand their theoretical and practical implications, and to critically evaluate the arguments for each position.

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: lecture

Course/Module Content:

We'll begin with political philosophy. We'll discuss the following topics: the relation between the power of the ruler and his authority; religious and liberal justifications for political authority; central ideas in liberal political philosophy in the 20th Century; the relation between liberalism and racial discrimination; feminist critiques of liberalism; anarchism; and Israeli liberal political philosophy. In the second part of the semester we'll discuss questions in meta-ethics, such as: the relation between God's authority and moral authority, the relation between evolution and morality, the question of whether morality is objective or subjective, what is the a-moral person like, and what is moral motivation.

Required Reading:

(it is mandatory to read one text from each section)

1.
 - Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, book 6.
 - Vincent Azoulay, *The Tyrant-Slayers of Ancient Athens*, chapter 1
 - Etienne de La Boetie, *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*
2.
 - Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (chapters 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21)
 - Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha*, (chapters 1 and 2)
 - John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, pages 1-25.

And *Two Treatise on Government*, chapter 7, sec. 88 to the end, chapter 9, to 11.
3.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, books 1 and 2.

 - Michael Rosen, *The Problem of Ideology*
4.

Jeremy Waldron, 'The Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism'

 - John Rawls, excerpts from *A Theory of Justice*
 - Robert Nozick, excerpts from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*
 - Raymond Geuss, excerpts from *Political Realism*
5.
 - Jane Mansbridge and Susan Moller Okin, 'Feminism'
 - Annette Baier, 'The Need for More Than Justice'
 - Charles Mills, 'Racial Liberalism'
 - W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, essays 1 and 2.
6.
 - Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread. Segments.*
 - James Scott, excerpts from *The Art of Not Being Governed*
 - Emma Goldman, *Anarchism What It Really Stands For*
7.
 - Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society*, chapters 1 and 6.
 - Anat Matar, *The Poverty of Ethics. Chapter 1*
8.
 - Plato, *Euthyphro*.
 - Norman Kretzmann, 'Abraham, Isaac, and Euthyphro: God and the Basis of Morality'
 - Robert Merrihew Adams, 'Divine Commands'
9.
 - Franz de Waal, 'Morally Evolved'
 - Christine Korsgaard, 'Morality and the Distinctiveness of Human Action'
 - Sharon Street, 'Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?'

10.

- J. L. Mackie, 'The Subjectivity of Values'
- R. Jay Wallace, 'Moral Subjectivism'
- David Enoch, *Why I am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)*

11.

- Bernard William, 'The Amoralist'
- Philippa Foot, 'Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives'
- H. A. Prichard, 'Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?'
- T. M. Scanlon, excerpts from *What We Owe to Each Other*

Additional Reading Material:

none

Grading Scheme:

Computerized Exam - At the cluster % 100

Additional information:

none