

PHILOSOPHY 210: Justice and Equality in Plato and Aristotle (Winter 2015)

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Office Hours: Tue. & Th. 4:00-5:00 and by appointment.

The focus of the seminar will be justice and equalities/inequalities in Plato and Aristotle. Both thinkers discuss social/political and individual justice. In the seminar we will be concerned with social/political justice. In thinking about the views of the ancient philosophers on social/political justice and equalities/inequalities it is useful to see them against some contemporary approaches to these same concepts. The following be read for this purpose:

W. Frankena, "Social Justice" (to be emailed).

G. Vlastos, "Justice and Equality" (to be emailed).

J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Ch. II, sections 10-15 (a copy of Rawls' book is in the Philosophy Department Library).

Week 1: We will begin with some excerpts from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* in which he gives a sense of the disputes about the nature of justice and its relation to equality and the nature of the political association, the supposed equality of its members, and the character of political rule.

Read Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V.1-3 (1129a-1131b24)

Aristotle, *Politics* I.1-2

Week 2: Thrasymachus' theory of justice and its treatment of natural, political and economic inequalities in *Republic*, Book I.

Thrasymachus' (T's) Theory of Justice as the Advantage of the Stronger. T's assumption that persons are greatly unequal, first as de facto rulers and ruled, then as rulers with knowledge and ruled with ignorance. How this assumption of inequalities (inborn, social?) and, in addition, legal positivism, lead to his definition of justice. Socrates's criticism of these two premises.

Readings: *Republic* (R), 327-354, *Blackwell Guide to the Republic* (BG), 125-9, R.E. Allen, Introduction to his translation of the *Republic* (to be distributed electronically; see the end of syllabus for readings).

Week 3: The Contractarian theory of justice articulated by Glaucon (G) in *Republic*, Book II and its support of certain political equalities (e.g., equality in limits to freedom and in security). G's theory seems incomplete since he leaves open any other political and economic equalities and inequalities. Given G's contractarian assumptions, how would we complete his theory? Comparisons of T's and G's theories on justice and equality

Read *Republic*, Book II 354a-367e. BG, 129-32.

Week 4: Plato's own theory of social justice (the justice of the ideal city-state) as proportional equality in the distribution of political careers, military careers, and careers in the productive arts. The basis of this theory on his functional account of the good. His different treatments of inequalities of natural talents and of differences in gender, institutionalizing the first and blindfolding the second.

Read Plato's *Republic*, 367-457. BG 132-141. Keyt in Benson.

Week 5: Plato's derivation of just economic inequalities from his principle of social justice and his functional account of the good. Abolition of private property for rulers and the military, economic floors and ceilings for the farmers and craftsmen. His attack on democratic justice as political equality.

Read Plato's *Republic*, 412-427, 457-470, 543-561. Cornford's commentary on these passages is very useful; Cornford, chs. X, XI, XV, XXXI.

Week 6: Aristotle on justice in the elementary associations from which the political association originates and of which it is constituted (master/slave, female/male, household) and its treatment of supposedly inborn inequalities.

Read Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I.

Week 7: Aristotle's criticisms of the ideal constitutions of Plato and Phaleas and the existing constitutions of Sparta and Crete with respect to their treatment of inequalities or support for certain kinds of equality—e.g., Phaleas' defense of economic equality.

Read *Politics*, Book II; R. Stalley, "Aristotle's Criticisms of Plato's *Republic*"; F. D. Miller, "Aristotle on Ideal Constitutions"—the early sections; T. Irwin, "Aristotle on Private Property" (all three papers will be emailed as PDFs).

Week 8: (a)
Correct and Incorrect (deviant) Constitutions and what each type implies about equality and how it responds to inequalities

Read *Politics*. III.1-8; C. Rowe, "Aristotelian Constitutions" (to be emailed as PDF)

(b) Justice, Political Authority, and Democratic Equality—the different conceptions of political justice and Aristotle’s defense of justice as proportional equality and its correct base; the implications of this conception of justice for political and other kinds of equality, including the special case of perfect kingship; Aristotle’s supposed defense of democracy; the different ways of making sense of democratic equality among parts of the political association—equality of individuals vs. equality of the parts of the state.

Read *Politics* III.9-18, VI.2-3; D. Keyt, “Distributive Justice”—you can set aside some the technical parts in Keyt’s paper; J. Waldron, “The Wisdom of the Multitude” (to be emailed as PDFs)

Week 9: Democracy and its parts and why certain inequalities are supposedly necessary in democracy—read *Politics* IV.1-4; inequalities as the causes of factions and instability in democracy and other types of constitution—read *Politics* V. 1-5.

Week 10: Aristotle on the Best Constitution—the conception of justice underlying his best constitution and his views on the equality of citizens with respect to political offices, property, education, etc.; citizenship and inequalities—the treatment of those who are unequal to the citizens and necessary to, but not a part of, the political association.

Read *Politics* VII, VIII; F. D. Miller, “Aristotle on the Ideal Constitution” (to be emailed); R. Kraut, “*Politics* VII and VIII: The Ideal Polis”.

Materials on Plato’s *Republic*

Allen, R.E., *Plato: Republic*, New Haven, 2006. Translation and fine Introduction

Benson, H., *A Companion to Plato*, Blackwell (Articles by Keyt and Meyer)

Bobonich, C., *Plato’s Utopia Recast*, pp. 72-81, 419-449

F.M. Cornford, *The Republic of Plato*, Oxford. Another translation and a very useful analytic table of contents, and useful commentary (In Dept. Library)

T. Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics*. Oxford, 1995. See comments on T. Several chapters on the R.

F. D. Miller, “The Rule of Reason in Plato’s *Statesman* and the American *Federalist*” (to be emailed as PDF)

F.D. Miller, *Nature, Justice, and Rights in Aristotle's Politics*, ch. 6

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 1971.

John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Columbia U. P.

G. Santas, ed., *The Blackwell Guide to the Republic*, 2005. (BG) (In Dept. Library)

G. Santas, *Understanding Plato's Republic*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010 (UR) (In Dept. Library)

P. Shorey, *Plato: The Republic*, 2 vls. Literal translation, Intro, great notes. (In Dept. Library)

Additional materials on Aristotle's *Politics*

Translations: C.D.C Reeve (Hackett); H. Rackham (Loeb, Greek and English); T.A. Sinclair (Penguin); E. Barker (Oxford); W.L. Newman, 4 Volumes (translation and commentary, Oxford U Press); C. Lord (Chicago U Press).

Books on Aristotle's *Politics*

E. Barker, *The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle* (Dover)

R. Mulgan, *Aristotle's Political Theory* (Oxford)

F.D. Miller, Jr., *Nature, Justice and Rights in Aristotle's Politics* (Oxford)

R Kraut, *Aristotle: Political Philosophy* (Oxford)

Collections of Essays

D. Keyt & F.D. Miller (eds.), *A Companion to Aristotle* (Blackwell)

M. Deslauriers and P. Destree, *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Politics* (Cambridge U Press)

Articles

A list of articles related to the topics discussed in Aristotle will be distributed.

N. Smith, "Aristotle's Theory of Natural Slavery," in Keyt & Miller (eds.) *A Companion to Aristotle's Politics*.
