

PHILOSOPHY 210: Justice and Equality in Plato and Aristotle (Winter 2017)

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Office Hours: Friday 2:00-4:00, 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 primarily 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. For this purpose, it might be useful to read from 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 prerequisites for being a participating member of the political association/community.

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 these assumptions of inequalities (inborn, social?) and, in addition, legal positivism, lead to his definition of justice. Socrates's criticisms of these two assumptions.

Read: *Republic* (R), 327-354; G. Santas, "Methods of Reasoning about Justice in the *Republic*", from *Blackwell Guide to the Republic* (BGR), pp. 125-9, posted on TritonED; R.E. Allen, Introduction to his translation of the *Republic*, posted on TritonED.

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; Santas, “Methods of Reasoning about Justice in the Republic, in BGR, pp. 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: *Republic*, 367-457; Santas, “Methods of Reasoning about Justice in Republic”, in BGR, pp. 132-141(posted on TritonED); D. Keyt, “Plato on Justice” (posted on TritonED).

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 family and property for rulers and the military, economic floors and ceilings for the farmers and craftsmen. His attack on democratic justice as political equality.

Read: *Republic*, 412-427, 457-470, 543-561. F. M. Cornford's commentary on these passages is very useful; Cornford introductory remarks to his chs. X, XI, XV, XXXI (a copy of Cornford's book will be available in the Department Library).

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. Although Aristotle initially discusses these associations in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, his main discussion of them occurs in Book I of his *Politics*, a Book in which he lays out his basic ideas about the nature of the polis; these basic ideas are critically examined in a seminal paper by David Keyt, which we will read and discuss.

Read: Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I; D. Keyt, “Three Basic Theorems in Aristotle's *Politics*”, posted on TritonED.

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 posted on TritonED).

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”, posted on TritonED.

(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” (all articles to be posted on TritonED).

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”; R. Kraut, “*Politics* VII and VIII: The Ideal Polis” (papers to be posted on TritonED)..

Additional Materials on Plato’s *Republic*

Translations and Books on the *Republic*

Allen, R.E., *Plato: Republic* (New Haven: Yale U Press, 2006). Translation and fine Introduction

Benson, H., *A Companion to Plato* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Bobonich, C., *Plato’s Utopia Recast* (Oxford: OU Press), especially, pp. 72-81, 419-449

F. M. Cornford, *The Republic of Plato*, (Oxford: O U Press). Another translation and a very useful analytic table of contents, as well as good commentary on different sections of the *Republic* (a copy will be available in the Dept. Library).

T. Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics* (Oxford: OU Press, 1995). See comments on Thrasymachus and other topics in the *Republic* throughout the various chapters on that work.

F. D. Miller, "The Rule of Reason in Plato's *Statesman* and the American *Federalist*" (to be posted on TritonED)

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

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

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

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

P. Shorey, *Plato: The Republic*, 2 volumes, bilingual edition. Literal translation, with an informative Introduction and great notes (in Dept. Library)

Additional bibliographical information on the *Republic* will be posted on TritonED.

Additional materials on Aristotle's *Politics*

Translations:

C.D.C Reeve (Hackett); H. Rackham (Loeb, Greek text and English translation); 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 U Press)

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 comprehensive Bibliography on the various Books of the *Politics* will be posted on TritonED.