Philosophy 202  Core Course in Ethics  
Richard Arneson  Fall, 2015 
Topic: Global Justice. 
Course meets on Tuesdays 4-7 in HSS 7077 (Philosophy Department seminar room)  

Course requirements:  Attendance and participation at all seminar meetings, some seminar presentations (analyzing a key argument or claim in a reading and leading its discussion), and a term paper (about 15-20 pages in length) on some topic central to course themes. Regular auditors of the class are welcome, and will be asked to contribute seminar presentations.  

Readings: Most readings will be made electronically available at a course website. (As a backup, I can send interested persons copies of weekly course readings by email attachment.) One book has been ordered and is available at the Bookstore: Mathias Risse, On Global Justice (2012).  

This course surveys some basic issues of global justice. Most of the writing surveyed has been written in the past 15 years. During this time, many philosophical works on global justice have appeared, and the field is in an interestingly unsettled, perhaps chaotic state. Our aim will be to examine some current controversies and assess the current state of debate.  

The course does not presuppose any prior background knowledge of moral or political philosophy. Course authors for the most part seek to address an audience of general readers not specialists. If you do the reading for each week, you will be prepared to participate in seminar discussion.  

The actions of individual persons can be assessed as just or unjust. So can institutions. We can regard “justice” as picking out moral obligations that are especially stringent and that take priority over other obligations and moral aspirations with which they might compete. Principles of justice identify overriding obligations. This usage leaves it entirely open what the content of such principles might be.  

So global justice principles will be fundamental moral principles that tell us what are our moral obligations to people all over the Earth and that assess the moral acceptability of institutions and practices that affect people all over the Earth. (This formulation might sound parochial. What about beings from other planets? What about nonhuman animals? Answer: The topic is parochial. We can’t talk about everything at once.) Global justice norms are norms of justice with wide spatial scope and also wide temporal scope (what we owe to future persons, and our duties to create future persons).  

Interest by philosophers in global justice issues in recent years has been heightened by the disparate phenomena of “globalization.” Also, since World War II, international relations have featured and fostered a new discourse of “human rights,” which invites scrutiny and analysis.  

The current world order consists of sovereign nation states, some small and weak, some big powers. There are a few stateless regions. One central issue for global justice is whether each of us has duties to the state in which we live or to the national community in which we are born that take priority over any duties we might have to people everywhere. On this issue, statists emphasize our duties to our own state and our own compatriots. Extreme cosmopolitans hold that at the level of fundamental principle, states, nations, and other social groups lack normative significance; we owe the same consideration, concern, and respect to insiders and outsiders. Both views come in left-wing and right-wing forms, and in a wide variety of versions. A truism about our word today is that some nations are very prosperous, some very poor, and the economic prospects of individuals around the world vary enormously. What does global justice
theory have to say about global poverty and global economic inequality? In Matthias Risse’s terminology, current responders to this question are divided into “relationalist” and “nonrelationalist” camps. Risse: “Relationalists think principles of justice hold only among persons who stand in some essentially practice-mediated relation to each other. Nonrelationalists think such principles may apply among those who stand in no such relation.” Obviously, there will be mixed views to consider. Risse further divides relationalists into “globalists,” who think that significant practice-mediated relations triggering principles of justice hold among people all over the globe and “statists” who “think the relevant relation holds only among individuals who share membership in a state.”

These disputes shape responses to issues involving immigration, emigration, duties to refugees, secession, and other issues involving national borders. We look at some of these issues.

Familiar moral philosophy debates resurface, perhaps reconfigured, in global justice discussions. Utilitarians see the fundamental moral duty as being beneficence, bringing about good outcomes, and when discussing global justice tend to focus on the duties of those possessing greater resources to help those in need. Their opponents emphasize moral requirements to avoid wrongfully causing harm to others in ways that violate their rights, and the question becomes what are the implications of such requirements for interaction across the globe. Thomas Pogge answers this question with a particular twist.

Just war theory is a relatively well developed and articulated branch of global justice theory. Just war theory seeks to answer such questions as under what conditions is it morally acceptable for one nation, or group of people, to make war on another, and what ways of waging war are morally acceptable. In recent years just war theory has been a thriving enterprise. This course touches only on a small piece of this intellectual terrain—the issue of humanitarian intervention. We ask, under what conditions, if any, is it morally permissible, or morally required, for one state to intervene militarily in the internal affairs of another, in order to benefit its members.

Even if we could agree about global justice moral principles, their implications for choice of action and policy depend on the empirical facts, especially facts about what causes what. The social science literature relevant to global justice issues is huge, burgeoning, and contentious. We will try to clarify the interaction of moral and empirical disagreement in global justice controversies.

We may take a quick look at the complex issues of climate change justice. Who should do what, to inhibit global warming and to mitigate its harmful effects? Climate change raises questions about what we owe to future generations, and also issues of population ethics—how do we determine what is morally required and morally permissible when our actions will affect the number and identity of future persons.

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The list of topics below is provisional. I am open to suggestions from you. Notice also that there is a substantial reading for the first week’s seminar meeting.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS
(The “further readings” in small print are recommended not required—recommended especially for anyone who might be thinking of exploring the topic as a possible essay topic.)

Week 1. Tuesday, September 29.
Introduction: skepticism about global justice and about cosmopolitanism.

Week 1 Continued.
Week 2. Tuesday, October 6.
Cosmopolitanism and national partiality.
Further reading: Richard Arneson, “Extreme Cosmopolitanisms Defended” and “Is Patriotism Immoral?”.

Week 3. Tuesday, October 13.
John Rawls on global justice and global tolerance.
Reading: John Rawls, The Law of Peoples.
Reading: Martha Nussbaum, Frontiers of Justice (2006), chapters 4 and 5.

Week 4. Tuesday, October 20.
The significance of coercion.

Week 5. Tuesday, October 27.
Cooperation and obligations of reciprocity as grounds of national partiality.

Week 6. Tuesday, November 3.
Robust global egalitarianism.

Week 6 continued.
Further reading: Richard W. Miller, Globalizing Justice: The Ethics of Poverty and Power (Oxford University Press, 2010), chapters 1 & 2.
Further reading: Andrew Altman and Christopher Wellman, chapter 6 in their A Liberal Theory of International Justice (Oxford University Press, 2009).
Week 7. Tuesday, November 10.
Further reading: Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, chapter on "Membership."

Week 8. Tuesday, November 17.

Week 9. Tuesday, November 24.
Beneficence versus not violating human rights as the ground of global justice.

Week 10. Tuesday, December 1
Climate Change.
Reading: John Broome: Climate Matters: Ethics in a Warming World.
Reading: Mathias Risse, chapter 10 of his *On Global Justice*.

Week 10 continued.
Further possible topics (which might be substituted for some of the topics above):

Fairness in global trade.
Reading: Aaron James, *Fairness in Practice: A Social Contract for a Global Economy*; also Mathias Risse and Gabriel Wollner, *Critical Notice of James*; also Mathias Risse, chapter 14 of his *On Global Justice*.

Humanitarian intervention.

Exploitation.