

Freedom

Political Theory Project

Course Description:

Freedom has been called the greatest political concept of the modern world. But what is freedom? And if freedom is important, what should we do about it? Does freedom conflict with other important values, such as gender equality or distributive fairness? Can political systems that claim allegiance to freedom also make room for other values? Is the best society the one that cares *only* about freedom?

Format:

This is a demanding, reading intensive freshman seminar. As a seminar, classroom discussion is of the utmost importance. Be sure to complete all the readings before class meets each week, and come to class ready to join in the conversation. In this class, we are a team. So join in.

Presentations:

Each week, seminar will be opened by a brief presentation prepared by a team of two students. When it is your turn to present, your mission is NOT to teach the whole class, or to become world-class experts on the issues at hand. Rather, each presentation team is expected to study the assigned readings carefully, briefly summarize the main points, and to identify a few fundamental questions or challenges posed by the readings that they found most interesting (or confusing!).

Requirements:

1. Students are expected to attend in each seminar, and to participate actively. We will allow one excused absence during the semester. Any additional absence will be penalized by a grade unit deduction from your final grade (so, if you had an A++, your final grade would be reduced to a measly A+, though of course if you had a B-, that would become a C+. You get the idea: come to class!)
2. Each student, typically with a partner, is responsible for making one class presentation.
3. Each student will write three papers over the course of the semester.

Readings:

All articles for the course will be available on Canvas.

The following books are required:

David Schmidtz and Jason Brennan *A Brief History of Liberty* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

J.S Mill *On Liberty* (Dover, 2002 [1859]).

Jason Brennan *Libertarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know*. (Oxford, 2012).

Michael Sandel: *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*. (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2013).

John Tomasi *Free Market Fairness* (Princeton, 2012).

Steven Moore *Who's the Fairest of Them All?: The Truth about Opportunity, Taxes, and Wealth in America* (Encounter Books, 2012).

Part I: Dimensions of Freedom

Week 1:
Intro to the class: Discussion of “Harrison Bergeron”

Week 2:
Benjamin Constant “Liberty of the Ancients Compared to that of the Moderns”
Isaiah Berlin “Two Concepts of Liberty”

Week 3:
David Schmidtz and Jason Brennan *A Brief History of Liberty*.

Part II: Freedom vs. Other Values?

Week 4:
J.S Mill *On Liberty* Chapters 1-3.
Catherine MacKinnon “Pornography as Defamation and Discrimination” *Boston University Law Review* 71 (November 1991).

Week 5:
J.S. Mill *On Liberty* Chapters 4-5.
Robert McGee “If Tossing Dwarfs is Outlawed, Only Outlaws will Toss Dwarves.”

Week 6:
Jason Brennan *Libertarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Chapters 1-8.

Week 7:
Michael Sandel: *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*.

Week 8:
Charles Johnson “Women and the Invisible Fist: How Violence Against Women Enforces the Unwritten Law of Patriarchy.”
Roderick Long and Charles Johnson “Libertarian Feminism: Can this Marriage be Saved?”

III. Freedom and Fairness

Week 9:
John Tomasi *Free Market Fairness*. Introduction, Chapters 1-4.

Week 10:
John Tomasi *Free Market Fairness*. Chapters 5-7, and Conclusion.

Week 11:
Steven Moore *Who's the Fairest of Them All?: The Truth about Opportunity, Taxes, and Wealth in America*

Week 12:
John Tomasi and Matt Zwolinski *A Brief (and Bleeding-Heart) History of Libertarianism* (working draft of book manuscript).