

## *Liberalism and Its Critics*

Government 60.04  
Dartmouth College Fall, 2009

Monday / Wednesday / Friday  
1:45-2:50 P.M.  
X-hour: Thursday, 1:00-1:50 P.M.

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### Course Description

Liberal political theory is renowned for its emphasis on rights, freedoms, and limited government; but critics of liberalism hold that the liberal legacy in free societies is one of misguided energies and broken promises. Students in this course chart the development of liberal thought from the Seventeenth Century to the present, with a view to considering the central values and commitments liberals may share, and examining important contemporary work in liberal theory. The course integrates weighty challenges to the moral and political viability of liberalism from communitarian, conservative, libertarian, postmodern, and value-pluralist critics.

We will reckon with a panoply of questions, including the following: Does liberalism overemphasize the importance of the individual at the expense of community? Are liberal societies bound to be licentious, selfish, and atomized? Do liberal theories rest upon a mistaken view of the self and its construction? Are liberal theories committed to the excessive promotion of autonomy for persons, or are they unfair to religion? Should we understand liberalism to be based merely in the pursuit of *modus vivendi*, or might there be some shared vision of a moral life on which liberals can base their theories?

### Required Readings

There will be both books as well as course reserve materials for Govt. 60.04. The required six books for the course are as follows:

- (1) John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James Tully (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishers, 1983). [ISBN: 0-915145-60-X]
- (2) Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishers, 1983). [ISBN: 0-915145-47-2]
- (3) John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Elizabeth Rapaport (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishers, 1978). [ISBN: 915144-43-3]
- (4) Michael J. Sandel (ed.), *Liberalism and Its Critics* (New York: New York University Press, 1984). [ISBN: 0-8147-7841-0]
- (5) John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (expanded edition) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). [ISBN: 0-231-13089-9]
- (6) Stuart Hampshire, *Justice Is Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[ISBN: 0-691-08974-4]

Each of these texts has been ordered and should be available for purchase at Wheelock Books. Required and recommended readings for the course are either contained within the books listed above, or they have been placed on reserve at the Baker/Berry Library. A complete listing of the items placed on reserve for Govt. 60.04 is given at the end of the syllabus.

### Format

Govt. 60.04 is not simply a lecture course, since lectures will be joined by in-class discussion in which you are invited to participate. Normally, there will be a period of lecturing at the outset of each class, following which the floor will be opened to discussion. Classes will focus on specific readings (described below in the course schedule), with different works examined in each successive week. There is a good deal of involved reading in Govt. 60.04, but it is crucial that you come prepared so that you can make use of the lectures and the discussions with your cohort. Please also bring the books and your other readings with you, when we discuss them, since we will frequently refer to passages in the texts. If there are changes to be made to the syllabus, or adjustments of other kinds, they will be announced in class.

### Grading

Students' grades will be comprised of the following four components:

- |                        |            |                |                       |
|------------------------|------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Sixty-minute exam   | 25%        | of total grade | (covers weeks 1 to 4) |
| 2. Seven-page paper    | 30%        |                | (covers weeks 5 to 8) |
| 3. Final exam          | 35%        |                | (cumulative)          |
| 4. Class participation | <u>10%</u> |                |                       |
|                        | 100%       |                |                       |

Late papers will not be accepted, and make-up exams will not be granted, without sufficient reason and advance notice. Students are expected to understand and follow the Academic Honor Principle of Dartmouth College in pursuing studies for this course. Students with any disabilities requiring special arrangements are encouraged to see the instructor by October 2, in order to arrange appropriate accommodation.

### Course Schedule

Week 1:      Early Liberal Ideals      (Total Reading: 58 pp.)

Sept. 23:      Introduction

Sept. 25:      • John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* [58 pp.]

Week 2:      Negative Liberty and the Proper Role of Government      (Total Reading: 89 pp.)

- Sept. 28:      • Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent," [12 pp.] and "What is Enlightenment?" [6 pp.] in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*  
 • John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chapters 1, 4 [31 pp.]  
                   Recommended: all of *On Liberty*
- Sept. 30:      • Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," [22 pp.] in Michael J. Sandel (ed.), *Liberalism and Its Critics*
- October 2:     • Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong With Negative Liberty," [18 pp.] in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, pp. 211-29 (on reserve)

Week 3:      Justice and Equality: Liberals vs. Libertarians      (Total Reading: 89 pp.)

- October 5:     • John Rawls, "Distributive Justice," [24 pp.] and "Distributive Justice: Some Addenda," [22 pp.] in *Collected Papers* (on reserve)  
                   Recommended: Rawls, "Justice as Fairness," in *Collected Papers*
- October 7:     • Ronald Dworkin, "Liberalism," [20 pp.] in *Liberalism and Its Critics*  
                   Recommended: Rawls, "A Kantian Conception of Equality," in *Collected Papers*
- October 9:     • Robert Nozick, "Moral Constraints and Distributive Justice," [23 pp.] in *Liberalism and Its Critics*  
                   Recommended: F.A. Hayek, "Equality, Value, and Merit," in *Liberalism and Its Critics*

Week 4:      The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism      (Total Reading: 84 pp.)

- October 12:    • Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life, and the Concept of a Tradition," [21 pp.] in *Liberalism and Its Critics*  
 • Michael Sandel, "Justice and the Good," [24 pp.] in *Liberalism and Its Critics*  
                   Recommended: Charles Taylor, "Atomism," in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, pp. 187-210 (on reserve)  
                   Recommended: Michael Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," *Political Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1984), pp. 81-96 (on reserve)
- October 14:    • Amy Gutmann, "Communitarian Critics of Liberalism," [15 pp.] *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 14 (1985), pp. 308-22 (on reserve)  
                   Recommended: Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism," *Political Theory*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1990), pp. 6-23 (on reserve)
- October 16:    • Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate," [24 pp.] in Nancy L. Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (on reserve)

Week 5:      Persons, Pluralism, and Liberal Values      (Total Reading: 70 pp.)

- October 19: **In-class examination on topics in weeks 1 to 4**
- October 21: • Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Introduction," [17 pp.] and "Pluralism and Self-Defense" [20 pp.], in *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (on reserve)  
• Judith N. Shklar, "The Liberalism of Fear," [18 pp.] in *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (on reserve)
- October 23: • Susan Moller Okin, "Humanist Liberalism," [15 pp.] in *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (on reserve)  
Recommended: George Kateb, "Democratic Individuality and the Meaning of Rights," in *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (on reserve)

Week 6:      Political Liberalism      (Total Reading: 149 pp.)

- October 26: • John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, introduction to paperback edition, Lecture I [68 pp.]  
Recommended: Charles Larmore, "Political Liberalism," *Political Theory*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1990), pp. 339-60 (on reserve)
- October 28: • John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, lecture II [42 pp.]  
Recommended: Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, lecture IV
- Paper topic announced; due Wednesday, November 11**
- October 30: • John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, lecture V [39 pp.]  
Recommended: Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, lecture VII

Week 7:      Postmodern Rejoinders to Liberalism      (Total Reading: 82 pp.)

- November 2: • William Connolly, "Secularism, Politics, and the Ambiguities of Justice," [22 pp.] in E. Portis, A. Gundersen, and R. Shively (eds.), *Political Theory and Partisan Politics*, pp. 149-72 (on reserve)
- November 4: • Stanley Fish, "Mission Impossible," [27 pp.] in *The Trouble With Principle*, pp. 162-86, 320-21 (on reserve)  
Recommended: Richard Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," in M. Peterson and R. Vaughan (eds.) *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom*, pp. 257-82 (on reserve)
- November 6: • Stephen Macedo, "Transformative Constitutionalism and the Case of Religion: Defending the Moderate Hegemony of Liberalism," [24 pp.] *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1998), pp. 56-80 (on reserve)  
• Richard Flathman, "It All Depends ... On How One Understands Liberalism," [4 pp.] *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1998), pp. 81-84 (on reserve)  
• Stephen Macedo, "Reply to Flathman," [5 pp.] *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1998), pp. 85-89 (on reserve)

Week 8:      Conservative and Value-Pluralist Attacks Against Liberalism      (Total Reading: 108 pp.)

- November 9: • John Kekes, *Against Liberalism*, preface, chapter 1 [25 pp.] (on reserve)  
Recommended: Kekes, *Against Liberalism*, chapter 2
- November 11: • John Kekes, *Against Liberalism*, chapters 8, 10, afterword [35 pp.] (on reserve)

Recommended, Kekes, *Against Liberalism*, chapter 5

**Seven-page paper due**

November 13: • John Gray, "What Is Dead and What Is Living in Liberalism?" [48 pp.] in *Post-Liberalism: Studies in Political Thought*, pp. 283-328, 347-48

Weeks 9 & 10:        Justice and the Future of Liberalism        (Total Reading: 170 pp.)

November 16: • Stuart Hampshire, *Justice Is Conflict*, preface, Chapter 1 [35 pp.]

Recommended: all of *Justice Is Conflict*

November 18: • John Rawls, "The Law of Peoples," [36 pp.] in *Collected Papers* (on reserve)

November 20: • John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," [51 pp.] in *Political Liberalism*

Recommended: Kant, "Perpetual Peace," in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*

November 23: • John Tomasi, *Liberalism Beyond Justice*, pp. xiii-xviii, 3-16, 108-28, 129-31, 146-49 [48 pp.] (on reserve)

Week 11:        Course Completion

November 30: Course synthesis

December 2: Final class

December 5-9: Final exam period; final exam date TBA.

Materials on Course Reserve (in order used)

Charles Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

John Rawls, *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

Michael Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," *Political Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1984), pp. 81-96.

Amy Gutmann, "Communitarian Critics of Liberalism," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 14 (1985), pp. 308-22.

Nancy L. Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). (various selections)

Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism," *Political Theory*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1990), pp. 6-23.

Charles Larmore, "Political Liberalism," *Political Theory*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1990), pp. 339-60.

William Connolly, "Secularism, Politics, and the Ambiguities of Justice," in Ed Portis, Adolph Gundersen, and Ruth Shively (eds.), *Political Theory and Partisan Politics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), pp. 149-72.

Richard Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," in Merrill Peterson and Robert Vaughan (eds.) *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 257-82.

Stanley Fish, "Mission Impossible," in *The Trouble With Principle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 162-86, 320-21.

Stephen Macedo, "Transformative Constitutionalism and the Case of Religion: Defending the Moderate Hegemony of Liberalism," *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1998), pp. 56-80.

Richard Flathman, "It All Depends...On How One Understands Liberalism," *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1998), pp. 81-84.

Stephen Macedo, "Reply to Flathman," *Political Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1998), pp. 85-89.

John Kekes, *Against Liberalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

John Gray, "What Is Dead and What Is Living in Liberalism?," in *Post-Liberalism: Studies in Political Thought* (New York: Routledge Press, 1993), pp. 283-328, 347-48.

John Tomasi, *Liberalism Beyond Justice: Citizens, Society, and the Boundaries of Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. xiii-xviii, 3-16, 108-28, 129-31, 146-49.