

Contemporary Political Theory: Challenges and Opportunities

Course content

Politics, both domestically and internationally, raises a host of vital normative questions. How should resources, rights, political power, and burdens be distributed? How should we ideally respond to injustices committed by state and non-state actors? And which real-world constraints (should) shape our normative evaluations and prescriptions? This course focuses on recent developments within core issues of normative political theory. In particular, the course focuses on wealth distribution and taxation, access to natural resources, the politics of climate change, shifts in immigration patterns, the rights of minorities, the politics of warfare, the rise of non-majoritarian institutions, and the importance of globalization. In each case, the course employs normative political theory to examine these topics, assess their importance, and help prescribe potential remedies.

- 1 Distributive justice (RH)
- 2 International distributive justice (JK)
- 3 Territory and rights (RH)
- 4 International climate change (RH)
- 5 Minority rights (JK)
- 6 International immigration (RH)
- 7 Just war (FH)
- 8 Humanitarian intervention (JK)
- 9 Non-majoritarianism and the politics of expertise (JK)
- 10 Globalization and democratic deficits (JK)

Learning outcomes

Knowledge:

You will gain knowledge about recent developments in the following areas:

- Domestic and international distributive justice
- Theories of territorial rights
- Theories of climate justice
- Theories of immigration ethics and minority rights
- Theories of just war and the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention
- Theories of domestic and global democracy

Skills:

You will learn

- How to distinguish between empirical and normative analysis
- How to assess and evaluate normative theories and arguments
- How to develop and structure normative arguments
- How to employ normative methods in argumentation
- How to apply normative theories to specific cases to evaluate the relative rights and obligations of individuals and collectives
- How to use normative theory prescriptively suggest remedies to problems
- How to think about the relationship between normative (ideal) theories and the non-ideal world in which they are employed

General Competence:

You will

- Develop your analytical skills
- Develop your skills in assessing normative arguments and theories
- Develop the ability to use normative methods and theories
- gain experience in writing academic texts

Exam:

You will

- An exam (50%)
- A final term paper of 3500 words (50%)

Teaching

Lectures (10 – as above) and Seminars (5)

Seminar 1 – Distributive justice: Domestic and International (RH)

Seminar 2 – Territory, natural resources, and climate change (RH)

Seminar 3 – Minority rights and immigration (JK)

Seminar 4 – Just war (FH or JK)

Seminar 5 – Democratic deficits: Domestic and international (JK)

Compulsory activities

- Participate in 4/5 seminars
- Exam and term paper

Language of examination

The examination text is given in English, and you submit your response in English.

Grading scale

Grades are awarded on a scale from A to F, where A is the best grade and F is a fail. Read more about the grading system.

Examination

- 3-hour written exam
- Term paper
- You must pass the compulsory activities in order to sit the exam

The term paper must:

- Have a limit of 3500 words
- Be on a topic related to the curriculum but selected by the student
- Meet the formal requirements for submission of written assignments

Grading

- You must pass the written exam and the term paper in the same semester
- The two parts are evaluated together and given one, overall grade
- The written exam counts more than the term paper
- If you appeal against the grade, the appeal is of both the written exam and the term paper

Written examination

The written examination is conducted in the digital examination system Inspera. You will need to familiarize yourself with the digital examination arrangements in Inspera.

[Read more about written examinations using Inspera.](#)

Submit assignments in Inspera

You submit your assignment in the digital examination system Inspera. [Read more about how to submit assignments in Inspera.](#)

Use of sources and citation

You should familiarize yourself with the rules that apply to [the use of sources and citations](#). If you violate the rules, you may be suspected of [cheating/attempted cheating](#).

Language of examination

The examination text is given in English, and you submit your response in English.

Grading scale

Grades are awarded on a scale from A to F, where A is the best grade and F is a fail. Read more about [the grading system](#).

Explanations and appeals

- [Explanation of grades and appeals](#)
[Ask for an explanation](#)

Resit an examination

If you are sick or have another valid reason for not attending the regular exam, we offer a [postponed exam](#) later in the same semester.

See also our information about [resitting an exam](#).

If you have previously passed the mandatory activities, you do not have to repeat the activities in order to sit for the exam.

Withdrawal from an examination

It is possible to take the exam up to 3 times. If you [withdraw from the exam](#) after the deadline or during the exam, this will be counted as an examination attempt.

Special examination arrangements

Application form, deadline and requirements for [special examination arrangements](#).

Evaluation

The course is subject to continuous evaluation. At regular intervals we also ask students to participate in a more comprehensive evaluation.