



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 653 – Topics in Social and Political Philosophy
Lec 01, Topic 01 – “Property and Distributive Justice”

Winter Term 2010

Course Outline

Instructor: Allen Habib

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1100-1200

Class Time: Wednesdays, 12:00-3:00

Location: Scurfield Hall, Room 278

Course Description

This is a seminar in the theory of property, in particular private property. We will cover a number of figures in the history of property theory, e.g. Aquinas, Grotius, Pufendorf, Locke and Hume, in addition to contemporary authors like Robert Nozick, G.A. Cohen and Jeremy Waldron. We will survey and assess the answers they give to traditional questions about private property: How is private property ultimately justified? How is the appropriation of un-owned things justified? What are property rights, and what are their limits? What is the nature of the relationship between property rights and justice? Between property rights and the law? Between property rights and the state, or public policy? The class will be taught in a seminar fashion, with an opening lecture on the weekly readings, followed by group discussion. Students will be expected to make assessments and critiques of the weekly readings in discussion.

Texts:

Much of the required reading for this course is available via an electronic database (Past Masters, Jstore, etc.) accessible to students through the library. I will post assigned readings and source information on the course's Blackboard site.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on four assignments:

1. 10 short précis of one of the weekly readings, worth 10% of the final grade
2. A term paper, worth 65% of the final grade
3. A conference presentation, worth 15% of the final grade
4. A conference paper commentary, worth 10% of the final grade

Students are required to complete all assignments to pass the course.

Short Papers: Students must submit a brief précis (no more than 2 pages) of one selection from the weekly reading. The papers should summarize the most salient parts of the text, and offer some quick analysis. Students are responsible for 10 of these throughout the semester.

Term Papers: Term papers must be between 15 and 20 pages (4 000 – 5 000 words), with a bibliography. The final draft is due on the last day of class. **Students must submit a rough draft on Friday March 24th.**

Conference presentation: The conference presentations consist in a 30 minute talk on a topic, followed by a short commentary from a colleague and a question and answer session. The student must submit the text of the presentation (about 4 000 words) as well. I expect that the conference paper will be on the same topic as the student's term paper, but this is not mandatory.

Conference commentaries: The commentary consists in a brief (10 minute) analysis and response to a colleague's conference paper. The commentary is meant to help the audience understand the implications of the paper, as well as offering some critique. The student must submit the text of the commentary (about 1 000 words). **Conference presentations will take place on the final week of class, April 14th. Students are responsible for providing their commenters with the written text of the talk at least one week in advance.**

Grades:

Letter grades will be assigned by the following percentages:

95-100% = A+	90-95% = A	85-90% = A-	80-85% = B+	75-80% = B	70-75% = B-
65 - 70% = C+	60-65% = C	55-60% = C-	50-55% = D	<50% = F	

Late Work: Late work will be accepted on a case-by-case basis, with a penalty of one full letter grade per week.