Overview

Worldwide attention on income and wealth inequality has sparked renewed interest in asking what justice demands of our economic institutions and policies. This course provides students with an opportunity to tackle this issue head-on and to explore it with rigor and sophistication. Our discussions will wed empirical findings with theory, always keeping an eye toward policy implications.

Course Requirements

1. Response Papers

Much of the heavy-lifting for this course will require you to engage the assigned readings. And a significant portion of those readings are in political philosophy, an area that may be unfamiliar to
some of you. As the instructor, I will work very hard to make sure that this challenging material is useful to you. But I can only accomplish that if you expend some serious effort as well in wrestling with it prior to lecture.

As such, you are required to write a one-to-two page (double-spaced) response paper for the reading assigned for each class. If multiple readings have been assigned, you may focus on one reading for your response. These response papers are not intended to take you more than twenty minutes to half an hour to write—after you’ve read and thought about the relevant article or chapter, of course.

Response papers should not be summaries. Think about them like this. If you were called upon at the start of class to read your response, write about what you would want to say to start the conversation and begin to move it forward.

You are required to write a response paper for each class; however, your grade will be based on a random selection of them. Your grade will be determined by how insightful, clear, engaging and thought-provoking your responses are—the same general standards used in evaluating participation.

Response papers constitute 40% of your final grade.

2. Participation

Students are expected to attend all lectures and to contribute to class discussions, expand upon ideas presented, challenge classmates, introduce new arguments, etc.

Absences will be excused only for medical or family emergencies and for religious holidays. Students are expected to schedule interviews, ordinary medical appointments, and all other business around the lectures. Students are also expected to attend the entirety of each lecture, and so are advised to schedule other courses in a way that allows them to be at each lecture for its duration. Late arrivals and early exits will count as absences.

Phones and other devices should be silenced. Designated e-readers are allowed so long as they are used exclusively to refer to the course material for the day. Notes should be taken by hand. There’s a general prohibition on using phones, laptops, netbooks, iPads, etc. during lecture. Please do not bring food to class. Beverages are fine.

Participation constitutes 10% of your final grade.

3. Term Paper

Each of you will be responsible for writing a 12-page term paper. It is to be a philosophically-informed policy proposal. That may sound more terrifying than it ought to. By the time you start working on this, you will have read and talked at length about numerous examples of just this sort of thing, and in class I will also provide explicit guidelines for what I’m looking for. The important thing to know up front is that you are not expected to write a philosophy paper; rather, you will be expected to advance a policy proposal that incorporates philosophical insight based on the topics explored in this course.
Your term paper will constitute 50% of your final grade.

**ADDENDUM I: ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students are encouraged to re-familiarize themselves with all material relating to academic integrity found here:

http://www.hks.harvard.edu/degrees/registrar/procedures/integrity

This course operates under the expectation that all students understand and will comply with the code of behavior discussed at length under the topics found at the page linked to above.

**ADDENDUM II: SOCIAL NETWORK POLICY**

I have an online presence through various social networks and am delighted if you’re interested in connecting with me via these sites. I’m also perfectly content if you are not. The views I express on these sites are entirely my own and are not to be confused in any way with me speaking in the capacity of my role at HKS. In light of that, while I’ll happily accept FB friend requests, Twitter followers, etc., I will not initiate such contact. The idea is to do whatever you’re comfortable with.

**Texts**

Some of the readings for this course will be available on the course page. Please secure copies of the following books as well. (Don’t panic: many of these books are quite short—long essays, really—and some we will only be reading selections from, but enough to require us to assign the text rather than upload a chunk of the book on Canvas.)

In order of appearance:

- Jason Brennan, *Why Not Capitalism?*
- Murray Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*
- F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*
- Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*
- Harry Frankfurt, *On Inequality*
- Jason Brennan and Peter Jaworksi, *Markets Without Limits*
Schedule of Topics and Readings

1. Introduction
Monday, January 25


Dan Ariely, “Wealth Inequality in Motion” Video http://danariely.com/2013/03/09/wealth-inequality-in-motion/

I. Socialism vs. Capitalism: Opening Moves

2. A Moral Defense of Socialism
Wednesday, January 27


3. A Moral Defense of Capitalism
Monday, February 1


4. Is the Concentration of Wealth Among the Few Inevitable?
Wednesday February 3


II. Market Anarchy

5. Against the State
Monday, February 8


III. Libertarianism and Classical Liberalism

6. Hard Libertarianism
Wednesday, February 10

Robert Nozick. Chapters 1-3, 7 (Section One) and 8 of *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1975).

7. Classical Liberalism
Wednesday, February 17

F. A. Hayek. Chapters 1-7, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944.)


8. Policy and Classical Liberalism
Monday, February 22

IV: Classical Marxism

9. The Communist Manifesto
Wednesday, February 24


V. Rawls: Liberal Egalitarianism

10. Two Principles of Justice
Monday, February 29


11. The Original Position
Wednesday, March 2


12. Rawls: Criticisms and Complications
Monday, March 7


13. Policy and Liberal Egalitarianism: Property-Owning Democracy
Wednesday, March 9


Kevin Vallier, “Property Owning Democracy” Bleeding Heart Libertarianism  
http://bleedingheartlibertarians.com/2012/11/property-owning-democracy/ (Read all five parts)

Interlude: Public Opinion

14. Americans’ Views on Welfare and Inequality  
Monday, March 21


http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/desert/

VI. More Accounts of Economic Justice

15. Luck Egalitarianism vs. Democratic Equality  
Wednesday March 23


16. Capabilities Approach  
Monday March 28


17. Neo-Classical Liberalism  
Monday, April 4

Bleeding Heart Libertarians Symposium on Free Market Fairness
http://bleedingheartlibertarians.com/2012/06/introduction-to-the-symposium-on-john-tomasis-free-market-fairness/

Replies: http://bleedingheartlibertarians.com/category/symposium-on-free-market-fairness/


18. Prioritarianism and Sufficientarianism
Wednesday, April 6


VII. More Policy Proposals

19. Basic Income and Stakeholder Grants
Monday, April 11


20. Tax Policies
Wednesday, April 13


**VIII. Economic Justice: Further Topics**

**21. Money in Politics**  
**Monday, April 18**


**22. Economic Reparations**  
**Wednesday, April 20**


**23. Commodification and Exploitation I**  
**Monday, April 25**


[http://bostonreview.net/forum-sandel-markets-morals](http://bostonreview.net/forum-sandel-markets-morals)  
(Read responses as well)
24. Commodification and Exploitation II
Wednesday, April 27

Jason Brennan and Peter Jaworski, *Markets Without Limits*, selections