

Global Justice

Suggested Syllabus

Ole Koksvik

Description

A core concept in political philosophy is *justice*. Discussions of justice have traditionally focused on just distribution of resources and power *within* states, but more recently discussion has turned to what constitutes justice in the global sphere.

In the first part of the course (weeks 1 – 5) we discuss some potential sources of obligations for agents in the global domain: that the agent stands in a particular relationship with an agent in need or with the agent who brought about that need, for example. In each case we first consider simple instances of the obligations arising, before considering their potential application globally.

Even with the new focus on global justice, the majority view is still that obligations to compatriots are very different from, and generally much more extensive than, obligations to people elsewhere: people and governments are right to strongly *prioritise* the wellbeing of compatriots over the wellbeing of others. With the sources of obligations in hand we can now ask, in week 6, whether affording such priority is justified, given the way the world now actually is, and if so, to what extent.

A striking point about justice in the global sphere is that many of the problems are so vast that individual agents' efforts seem completely unsuited to fixing them: consider poverty and climate change, for example. This prompts us to ask which obligations various *collective* agents may have. We discuss, in week 7, the obligations of actual collective agents, centrally *states*, but also the idea that individuals may be obliged to form new collective agents.

In week 8 we turn to justice in international trade. States are central actors here because they lay the ground rules for how trade takes place, through international treaties and trade practices. We discuss the idea that the system of international trade is unjust: not just at the fringes, in minor ways, or accidentally, but at its core, in major ways, and fundamentally. In week 9 we ask what individuals' and companies' current moral obligations are, focusing in particular on outsourcing, the practice of moving some operations to a different country in order to increase profits.

In week 10 we turn to climate change, and, in particular, its interaction with poverty. While the two often recommend the same actions, sometimes they do not. How should they be balanced? How do we balance future generations' wellbeing against the current suffering of the world's poor?

The last two weeks of the course are devoted to the notion of Effective Altruism (EA). This movement holds that moral agents—both individuals and collectives—are obliged to make notable sacrifices to assist the poor (or to do good, more broadly), but also that we must do *as much good* as we possibly can. If that's true, then we need a way to measure how much good we do: the focus on *measurable* outcomes is central to EA. In week 11, accordingly, we turn to the difficult question of what poverty is, and of how we can measure it. We consider relative and absolute notions of poverty, different measures proposed by the world bank, and bring out some of the glaring difficulties they face.

We end the course by considering the goal of efficiency itself. While the case for doing as much good as possible is compelling, it also faces strong objections; for certain groups will systematically be left behind, and EA thinking may force us to ignore famine and other acute catastrophes.

Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings
1	Sources of moral obligations 1: association with those in need	<u>Required:</u> Scheffler, Samuel. 1997. 'Relationships and Responsibilities'. <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i> 26: 189-209.
2	Sources of moral obligations 2: association with perpetrators of harm	<u>Required:</u> Ypi, Lea, Goodin, Robert and Barry, Christian. 2009. 'Associative Duties, Global Justice, and The Colonies'. <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i> 37: 103-135. <u>Further:</u> Tan, Kok-Chor. 2008. 'National responsibility, reparations and distributive justice'. <i>Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy</i> 11: 449 – 464.
3	Sources of moral obligations 3: contribution to harm	<u>Required:</u> Pogge, Thomas. 2004. "'Assisting" the Global Poor', Chatterjee (Ed.) <i>The Ethics of Assistance</i> . <u>Further:</u> Øverland, Gerhard. 2005. "Poverty and the Moral Significance of Contribution", <i>Journal of Moral Philosophy</i> 2, 299-315. Patten, Alan. 2005. "Should we stop thinking about poverty in terms of helping the poor?", <i>Ethics and International Affairs</i> 19 (2005), 19-27.
4	Sources of moral obligations 4: ability to help	<u>Required:</u> Singer, Peter. 1972. 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality'. <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i> 1, 229-243. <u>Further:</u> Narveson, Jan. 2003. 'We Don't Owe Them a Thing! A Tough-minded but Soft-hearted View of Aid to the Faraway Needy.' <i>The Monist</i> 86: 419-33.
5	Sources of moral obligations 6: (innocently) benefiting from injustice	<u>Required:</u> Butt, Daniel. 2007. 'On Benefiting from Injustice'. <i>Canadian Journal of Philosophy</i> 37: 129-152.

Week	Topic	Readings
		<p><u>Further:</u> Anwander, Norbert. 2005. 'Contributing and Benefiting: Two Grounds for Duties to the Victims of Injustice'. <i>Ethics and International Affairs</i> 19: 39-45.</p> <p>Huseby, R., 2013. 'Should the beneficiaries pay?' <i>Politics, Philosophy & Economics</i>, pp.1–17.</p> <p>Butt, Daniel. 2012. 'Repairing Historical Wrongs and the End of Empire'. <i>Social and Legal Studies</i> 21: 227-242.</p>
6	Balancing obligations: compatriots and all the others	<p><u>Required:</u> Brock, Gillian. 2008. 'What do we owe others as a matter of global justice and does national membership matter?'. <i>Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy</i> 11: 433-448.</p> <p><u>Further:</u> Barry, Christian, and Valentini, Laura. 2009. 'Egalitarian challenges to global egalitarianism: a critique'. <i>Review of International Studies</i> 35: 485 – 512.</p>
7	Collective agents, states	<p><u>Required:</u> Collins, Stephanie and Lawford-Smith, Holly. 2013. 'Collectives' and Individuals' Obligations: A Parity Argument'. <i>Canadian Journal of Philosophy</i> 46: 38 – 58.</p> <p><u>Further:</u> Collins, Stephanie. 2013. 'Collectives' Duties and Collectivisation Duties'. <i>Australasian Journal of Philosophy</i> 91: 231 – 248.</p>
8	International trade: state actors	<p><u>Required:</u> Pogge, Thomas. 2001. 'Achieving Democracy', <i>Ethics and International Affairs</i> 15: 3–23.</p> <p><u>Further:</u> Leif Wenar, 'Property Rights and the Resource Curse', <i>Philosophy & Public Affairs</i> 36 (2008): 2–32.</p>
9	International trade: individuals and companies	<p><u>Required:</u> Koksvik, Ole and Øverland, Gerhard. 'Profiting from Poverty'.</p> <p><u>Further:</u> Meyers, C. 2004. 'Wrongful beneficence: Exploitation and Third World Sweatshops'. <i>Journal of Social Philosophy</i> 35: 319–333.</p>

Week	Topic	Readings
10	Climate change	<p><u>Required:</u> Lomborg, Bjorn. 2015. 'Trade-Offs for Global Do-Gooders'. <i>The Wall Street Journal</i>, September 18th.</p> <p>Ord, Toby and Wiblin, Robert. Ms. 'Should we discount future health benefits when considering cost-effectiveness?'</p> <p><u>Further:</u> Galiana, Isabel. 2014. 'Benefits and Costs of the Climate Change Targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda'. <i>Copenhagen Consensus Center</i>.</p>
11	Effective Altruism: measuring poverty	<p><u>Required:</u> Wisor, Scott. 2012. 'Introducing Poverty Measurement'. In <i>Measuring Global Poverty: Toward a Pro-Poor Approach</i>: 3 – 22.</p> <p><u>Further:</u> Reddy, Sanjay. 2006. 'Counting the Poor: The Truth about World Poverty Statistics'. <i>Socialist Register</i> 42: 169 – 178.</p> <p>Pogge, Thomas and Reddy, Sanjay. 2010. 'How Not to Count the Poor'. In <i>Debates on the Measurement of Global Poverty</i>, Sudhir Anand, Paul Segal, and Joseph E. Stiglitz (Eds): 42 – 85.</p> <p>Ravallion, Martin. 2010. 'A Reply to Reddy and Pogge'. In <i>Debates on the Measurement of Global Poverty</i>: 86 – 101.</p> <p>Pogge, Thomas. 2010. 'How Many Poor People Should There Be? A Rejoinder to Ravallion'. In <i>Debates on the Measurement of Global Poverty</i>: 102 - 114.</p>
12	Effective Altruism: Efficiency	<p><u>Required:</u> Taurek, John. 1977. 'Should the Numbers Count?'. <i>Philosophy & Public Affairs</i> 6: 293-316.</p> <p><u>Further:</u> Otsuka, Michael. 2004. 'Skepticism about Saving the Greater Number'. <i>Philosophy & Public Affairs</i> 32: 413 – 426.</p>

Assessment and Participation

You will be assessed on two short essays, each about 2000 words long. (+/- 10% is ok, I stop reading at 2200 words.) You are required to formulate your own essay question or topic. You can do this as early as you'd like, but the topic must be finally approved by me in writing at least two weeks before the due date, and it's *up to you* to ensure that this happens. Simply write me with your suggestion; I'll approve or suggest amendments. The first essay must draw its topic from the first half of the course (weeks 1 – 6); the second must draw it from the second half of the course (weeks 7 – 12).

In addition, over the course of the semester you are required to write 10 memos, and 20 comments. (You're by no means required to stop at this number: more is better.) This is a course requirement, meaning that you'll fail the course if you don't do this. On the other hand, meeting the requirement guarantees you 15% of the total mark, so long as your memos and comments, judged overall, show appropriate engagement with the texts and with other students' comments. What I want to see is that you've read and tried properly to understand and engage with the texts; that's all.

Writing memos and comment will help ensure that you stay up to date with the readings, and really absorb the content of the whole semester, rather than just what's relevant to your chosen essay topic. Just as importantly, writing these will help you to develop as thinkers and writers.

A memo is a text of about 300 words that you write in response to an assigned reading. Memos can do various things, including: outline an argument from the text, argue or show that there is a hidden presupposition in the text, clarify or disagree with a thesis, or with a premise to an argument, give a counterexample to a claim made in the text, question the meaning of a section of the text, offer an interpretation of a section of the text, etc. I will initially provide prompts for the memos; if things go well, this might change later on.

Memos are always due by 8pm, three days before class.

A comment is a short response to another student's memo. It may be one or more sentences (it doesn't have to be long).

When you write a comment, be constructive and respectful. You are allowed to disagree with what the student has written, just take care to must express yourself properly. (There's no value in saying just that you disagree, however, please say something about why.) You can also provide additional argument in support of the student's conclusion, give examples that support the student's conclusion, or are challenging to it, challenge a hidden presupposition of the student, etc.

Comments are always due by 8pm two days before class.

To count against the course requirement, comments and memos must be submitted on time, and be original to you and relevant to the text or memo in question. It's a good idea to plan to have all your memos and comments finished a few weeks before the end of the semester, to allow unforeseen circumstances.

Memos and comments are to be submitted to the course's online discussion board, always using full names.