

Politics 4206G/9762B: Theories of Global Justice

January-April 2026

Monday 1:30 – 3:20, SSC 7210

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Office Hours: Monday 12:00-1:00 pm, and by appointment

From Plato to John Rawls, *justice* has been a major theme in the history of political theory. But until the 1970s it was thought to be concerned only with the relations of co-citizens within a single state. The modern debates about *global justice* began with the questioning of this assumption: why shouldn't justice focus on the relations of citizens of different states or relations between human beings regardless of citizenship? This political theory course surveys several topics in the modern global justice debates, including global poverty, cosmopolitanism, global inequality, national responsibility, compatriot priority, coercion and cooperation, sovereignty and basic human rights, Rawls's law of peoples, crime against humanity, colonialism, and immigration.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- (1) Describe competing answers to the question, 'What is global justice?', and understand the recent historical development of approaches to this question,
- (2) Identify and assess the arguments for and against specific theoretical perspectives on global justice, including cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and statism,
- (3) Understand the central arguments in debates on key topics in the field, including global poverty and inequality, sovereignty, crime against humanity, colonialism, and immigration.

How Your Final Mark is Determined

30%: *Participation*

35%: *In-Class Essays*, Monday February 9, 2026, 1:30-3:20, SSC 7210.

35%: *Final Examination*, two hours, to be scheduled during the final exam period.

Participation: 30%

To be eligible for this portion of the final grade, students must attend all classes except when there are medical or compassionate reasons for absence. **Students will be provided with a list of questions to discuss and will be expected to attend with pre-written answers, ready to talk about their answers.**

Students will receive a mark that reflects their **contributions to seminar discussion** – average contributions will receive marks that translate into the B range, excellent contributions will receive marks that translate into the A or A+ range. I expect that all students will contribute to every class, or at least will not fail to contribute to two classes in a row.

In-Class Essays: 35%

Answer both questions (approximately 55 minutes per question):

1. With specific reference to Charles Beitz, David Miller, and Chris Armstrong, *outline* and *evaluate* the debate on whether equality is a requirement of global justice.
2. With specific reference to David Miller, Robert Goodin, and Stephen Nathanson, *defend a thesis* in answer to the following question: Should we ethically prioritize our compatriots?

Final Examination (two hours): 35%

This two-hour exam will require you to **choose three topics** (from a longer list of topics we covered in the course) and, for each topic, **do the following**: (1) outline the debate, (2) identify the arguments on different sides, and (3) defend a position on the topic in question.

Potential topics: (1) global justice, cooperation, and coercion, (2) the moral status of sovereignty, (3) John Rawls's law of peoples, (4) colonialism, and (5) immigration.

Schedule of Meetings

January 5, 2026 (first class): Introduction to the course

Hannah Ritchie, *Not the End of the World*, New York: Little, Brown Spark, 2024, Introduction and Chapter 1: Sustainability: A Tale of Two Halves, 1-36.

January 12, 2026: Global Poverty

Peter Singer, *The Life You Can Save: How to Do Your Part to End World Poverty*, New York: Random House, 2009, 3-41.

Brian Barry, 'Humanity and Justice in Global Perspective', in Barry, *Liberty and Justice: Essays in Political Theory 2*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, 182-210.

January 19, 2026: International Distributive Justice and Cosmopolitanism

Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, 1979, Part Three: International Distributive Justice, 125-176.

David Miller, 'Cosmopolitanism: A Critique', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 5 (3), 2002, 80-85.

January 26, 2026: Global Inequality

Charles Beitz, 'Does Global Inequality Matter?', *Metaphilosophy* 32 (1), 2001, 95-112.

David Miller, 'Against Global Egalitarianism', *Journal of Ethics* 9, 2005, 55-79.

Additional reading for in-class essay: Chris Armstrong, 'Global Egalitarianism', *Philosophy Compass* 4 (1), 2009, 155-171.

February 2, 2026: What Do We Owe Our Compatriots?

David Miller, 'The Ethical Significance of Nationality', *Ethics* 98 (4), 1988, 647-662.

Robert E. Goodin, 'What is So Special About Our Fellow Countrymen?', *Ethics* 98 (4), 1988, 663-686.

Additional reading for in-class essay: Stephen Nathanson, 'Moderate Patriotism', in Mitja Sardoc (ed.), *Handbook of Patriotism*, New York: Springer, 2020, 141-161.

February 9, 2026: 35%: In-Class Essays, 1:30-3:20, SSC 7210.

February 16, 2026: Reading Week: No Class Today

February 23, 2026: Distributive Justice, Cooperation, and Coercion

Michael Blake, 'Distributive Justice, State Coercion, and Autonomy', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 30 (3), 2001, 257-296.

Simon Caney, 'Global Distributive Justice and the State', *Political Studies* 56, 2008, 487-518.

March 2, 2026: Sovereignty and Human Rights

Jack Donnelly, 'State Sovereignty and International Human Rights', *Ethics & International Affairs* 28 (2), 2014, 225-238.

Thomas Pogge, 'Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty', *Ethics* 103 (1), 1992, 48-75.

Additional reading: Charles Beitz, 'Sovereignty and Morality in International Affairs', in David Held (ed.), *Political Theory Today*, Cambridge: Polity, 1991, 236-254.

March 9, 2026: Rawls's *Law of Peoples*

Allen Buchanan, 'Rawls's Law of Peoples: Rules for a Vanished Westphalian World', *Ethics* 110, 2000, 697–721.

Joseph Heath, 'Rawls on Global Distributive Justice: A Defence,' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, supp. vol., 35, 2005, 193–226.

Additional reading: John Rawls, 'The Law of Peoples', *Critical Inquiry* 20, 1993, 36-68. [Note: This is an early essay, a forerunner of Rawls's much longer 1999 book, *The Law of Peoples*.]

Additional reading: Gillian Brock, 'The Debate about Rawls's *Law of Peoples*: Critics and Defences', in Brock, *Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Account*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 19-44.

March 16, 2026: Crime against Humanity

Richard Vernon, 'What is Crime against Humanity?', *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10, 2002, 231-249.

Massimo Renzo, 'Crimes against humanity and the limits of international criminal law', *Law and Philosophy* 31, 2012, 443-476.

March 23, 2026: Colonialism

Lea Ypi, 'What's Wrong with Colonialism', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 41 (2), 2013, 158-191.

Margaret Moore, 'Justice and Colonialism', *Philosophy Compass* 11 (8), 2016, 447-461.

March 30, 2026: Immigration

Shelley Wilcox, 'The Open Borders Debate on Immigration', *Philosophy Compass* 4 (5), 2009, 813–21.

Joseph Heath, *Cooperation and Social Justice*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022, Chapter 5: 'A Unified Theory of Border Control and Reasonable Accommodation', 200-251.

April 6, 2026 (last class): Exam Review

35%: *Final Examination*, to be scheduled during the final exam period.