

Institutions and Practical Reason

Winter Quarter
Stanford University
Professors Barry Maguire and Michael Bratman

Contact:

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Class Details: Wednesdays from 3pm until 5.20pm (without a break)

Class Location: 110 – 114

Brief Class Description: We live in a thicket of institutions: small-scale, such as friendships and marriages, large-scale, such as massive economic and political systems, and everything in between. These institutions yield standards by which individual conduct in pertinent contexts can be assessed; these standards can themselves be ethically evaluated. We must organize these institutions and our commitments to them in some kind of ethically responsible way. This raises all sorts of questions, that have been addressed on rather different terms in normative ethics, political theory, normative theory, action theory, and social metaphysics. Our goal will be to bring these different literatures to bear on a general inquiry into the ethics of institutional participation.

Open to graduate students in Philosophy and to others by permission.

Assignments:

Students who take this seminar for the full 4 units are expected to participate in all seminar discussions and to satisfy a three-part writing requirement: (a) 5 brief weekly comments (approximately 400-600 words), due in class (this will be explained further at the first meeting), (b) a 1000 word abstract for their final paper, due at midnight on the Monday of week 9, and (c) a modestly sized (about 5,000 word) research paper, due at midnight on the Friday of week 11. LATE PAPERS WILL RECEIVE GRADE PENALTIES AND VERY LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED EXCEPT UNDER SPECIAL CONDITIONS. Students who take the seminar for only 2 units should take it Credit/No credit. They are expected to participate in all seminar discussions and to write 4 brief weekly comments (approximately 400-600 words).

Submission Instructions: TBD

Students with Disabilities:

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability should initiate the request with the Student Disability Resources Center

(SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. There is more info here: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea>. Please also feel free to contact us at any time if there is anything we can do to make the course more accessible for you.

Preliminary List of Readings:

8 January: On the Normativity of Rules

- Laura Valentini, 'Respect for Persons and the Moral Force of Socially Constructed Norms'

15 January: How to Worship a Rule, with Special Guest Jorah Dannenberg

- Jorah Dannenberg, 'Everywhere Chimerical' (on Canvas)

Background:

- Kieran Setiya, 'Intention, Plans, and Ethical Rationalism'
- John Rawls, 'Two Concepts of Rules'

22 January: The Ethics of Roles and Identities

- Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Social Structures and their Threats to Moral Agency'
- Robin Zheng, 'What is my Role in changing the system?'

29 January: Values in Joint Action (especially exchange)

- Robert Sugden and Luigino Bruni, 'Fraternity: Why the Market Need not be a Morally-Free zone'
- Sangiovanni, 'Joint Action and Solidarity'

5 February: Conservative Value

- Cohen, 'Rescuing Conservatism'

Possible background:

- Scheffler, 'Why Worry about Future Generations?'

12 February: On Vocations and Caring Institutions

- Lawrence A. Blum, 'Vocation, Friendship, and Community'
- Scheffler, 'The Practice of Equality'

Background:

- Diemut Bubeck, *Care, Gender, and Justice*, selections

19 February: 'From Each...to Each'

- Carens, 'Rights and Duties'
- Carens, 'An Interpretation and Defence of the Socialist Principle of Distribution'

Background:

- Carens, *Equality, Moral Incentives, and the Market*

26 February: Justice and Incentives, The Objection

- o Cohen, Rescuing Justice, Rescuing Equality, selections from the first half

Background:

- o Rawls, especially sections on the restriction to the basic structure in TJ and PL (I'll provide page references)

4 March: Justice and Incentives, Some Responses

- o Mike Titelbaum, 'What would a Rawlsian Ethos look like?'
- o David Estlund, 'Liberalism, Equality and Fraternity'
- o Seanna Shiffrin, 'Incentives, Motives, and Talents'

Possible Background to Estlund:

- Scheffler, *The Rejection of Consequentialism*

11 March: Divisions of Moral Labour

- o Scheffler, 'The Division of Moral Labour' and 'The Conflict between Justice and Responsibility'
- o Swift and Brighouse, Legitimate Parental Partiality
- o Goodin, What is so Special about our Fellow Countrymen?

18 March: Bonus Session (since Barry absent on Jan 15)