

Philosophy 290–1: Recent Work on Political Coercion

Tuesdays 2–4
234 Moses Hall

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Description

It is generally thought to be wrong to use force against a person without their consent. I may not constrain, invade, or damage your body, for example, not even with the aim of providing you or others with what would otherwise be significant benefits. Nor may I coerce you, by threatening to use force. But states do this as a matter of routine. And they are often thought to be permitted to do so.

Why is this? What is force? What makes its use wrong, when it is wrong? It is just that force often has bad effects (e.g., it hurts)? What is wrong about threatening to use force, even when the force never eventuates? Why does consent affect whether force is permissible? May force ever be used without consent? May force ever be used for ends other than to respond to (e.g., defend against or punish) uses of force? Is there some difference between states and individuals that licenses states to use force where individuals would be forbidden from using force? Do democracies, or states enjoying “the rule of law,” have better title to use force?

We will touch on a number of bordering topics in moral and political philosophy: the nature and value of freedom, property and contracts, liberalism and libertarianism, democratic theory, the justification of self-defense and punishment, and the limits of the criminal law.

We will begin with A. J. Simmons, John Rawls, and Joshua Cohen, and then turn to more recent work by Philip Pettit, Arthur Ripstein, Japa Pallikkathayil, and A.J. Julius.

Readings

Please buy Arthur Ripstein’s book, *Force and Freedom*, since we’ll be reading almost the whole thing.

Everything else may be downloaded from the “Resources” section of the course’s bspace page: <http://bspace.berkeley.edu/>. Enrolled students should already have access. Other students should send either their ID number or their official Berkeley email address to Niko.

Prerequisites

This is a graduate seminar. Enrollment is open only to (i) graduate students in Philosophy, and Logic and Methodology of Science, and (ii) advanced philosophy majors or graduate students in Jurisprudence and Social Policy *with the consent of the instructor*.

Requirements

All enrolled students are required to write a term paper of 15–20 pages, due December 4.

Readings:

0. August 28: Introductory meeting
1. September 4: Simmons, “Justification and Legitimacy”
2. September 11: Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, IV: 1, VI: 4.4; Cohen, “Democracy and Liberty”
3. September 18: Pettit, *On the People’s Terms*, Ch. 1
4. September 25: Pettit, Ch. 3
5. October 2: Pettit, Ch. 4–5
6. October 9: Ripstein, *Force and Freedom*, Ch. 1–2
7. October 23: Ripstein, Ch. 3–4
- No meeting October 16
8. October 30: Ripstein, Ch. 5–6; Pallikkathayil, “Persons and Bodies”
9. November 6: Ripstein, Ch. 7
10. November 13: Ripstein, Ch. 10–11
11. November 20: Pallikkathayil, “The Possibility of Choice”; Julius, “The Possibility of Exchange”
12. November 27: Kolodny
- December 4: Term papers due