

Political Theory Hauptseminar:

Justice and the Welfare State

Summer Semester 2011, Tuesdays 4-6 pm, NM 126

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April 12, 2011

University of Frankfurt

Introduction

Contemporary theorists of social justice, such as John Rawls, are often accused of operating only on the abstract level of principles of justice, and of being relatively silent on the concrete institutional and policy implications of their theories. And social science of the welfare state often faces the complementary objection of retreating into the "merely empirical", staying silent on its normative dimension.

This seminar seeks to bridge the gap between normative theories of social justice and empirical social science of the welfare state, asking questions such as: Which kind of welfare state arrangements, if any, does social justice require? Does it require more than a welfare state, such as an unconditional basic income, or even a different socioeconomic order, such as a "liberal socialism"? Finally, methodologically speaking, can the social science of the welfare state, with its focus on the history and stability of welfare states, teach us something on how we ought to go about doing normative political theory?

This is an advanced seminar – its aim is to present students with an understanding of how contemporary normative political theory and empirical social science of the welfare state can be brought to bear on each other, and to teach them the argumentative skills necessary to make good normative arguments connecting issues of normative principle with knowledge of welfare state arrangements.

It is divided into three parts: In Part I, we discuss the theory of social justice of John Rawls, and its proposed implications for the basic socio-economic set-up of advanced liberal societies. Part II introduces some classics of recent welfare state research, exploring their possible connections to normative political theory and their implications for the questions raised in Part I. Part III discusses a variety of alternatives or supplements to the welfare state, such as an unconditional basic income, a "stakeholder grant", and versions of liberal (or: market) socialism.

Course requirements

One oral presentation (handout or visual aids required) – weekly topics may be divided up; two essays of about 4000 words length. The first one is due on the 21st of June, the second at the end of the semester break at the latest. Late submission will lead to a grade reduction.

Good active and passive command of English, willingness to actively contribute to seminar discussions, and basic knowledge of contemporary political theory are presupposed.

Assessment

Presentation 10 %, each essay 40 %, participation 10%

For “Teilnahmeschein”: one oral presentation.

The first essay is to be handed in at the seminar session on June 21, or, failing that, to Ms Bignon (bignon@em.uni-frankfurt.de, 798 25355), Varrentrappstr. 40-42, Ground Floor, Office 016, and will be returned in one of the following sessions. The second essay is to be handed in to Ms Bignon, and to be collected there after correction; together with the “Schein”.

Attendance Requirements

Not more than two absences – notify me in advance of the session.

A Note on Essay Writing:

The reading list below will provide some reading, essay, and presentation questions. You are free to come up with your own essay questions; please consult me by e-mail beforehand if you are planning to write an essay on a question of your own choice.

All essays – and the presentation as well, if possible – should not only provide an account of the relevant literature, but aim at making an argument of their own: they should critically evaluate the arguments that are put forward in the readings, and may develop own proposals.

Seminar plan and reading list

We will read between two and three book chapters/articles per week (more only if readings are short). These readings are absolutely essential for seminar discussions. The reader is available at “Copies etc.”, Gräfstr. 43 (cost: 17,60€), and will be on OLAT soon. In the course of the semester, I will put additional books/chapters on reserve at the library, and upload them on OLAT. Independent further literature research for essay writing is expected.

April 12: Introductory Session

Part I: Liberal Egalitarian Principles – and Policies?

April 19: The Set-up and principles of Rawls’s theory of justice

Readings:

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness – A Restatement*, Cambridge (MA): The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2001, Part I;

Thomas Nagel, “Rawls and Liberalism”, in: Samuel Freeman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Rawls*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002, pp. 62-85.

Questions: What is liberal egalitarianism, and how does it differ from liberalism as such? Why, and in which sense, is Rawls’s liberalism “political”?

April 26: Rawls’s Principles and the Arguments for them

Readings: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness – A Restatement*, Parts II and III (less important: §31)

Questions:

What are Rawls’s arguments for egalitarianism? Are they convincing?

May 3: The Case for “Property-Owning Democracy”

Readings: Rawls, *Justice as Fairness – a Restatement*, Part IV (less important: §50);

Richard Krouse and Michael McPherson, A ‘Mixed’ Property-Regime: Equality and Liberty in a Market Economy”, *Ethics* 97 (1986), 119-138, with a comment by Jon Elster, *ibid.*, 146-153;

Martin O’Neill, “Liberty, Equality, and Property-Owning Democracy”, *Journal of Social Philosophy* 40 (2009), 379-396

Questions:

On which principles of justice does the case for “property-owning democracy” rest? And what are the arguments against “welfare-state capitalism”? Are they plausible?

Part II: A Closer Look at Welfare States

May 10: Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism

Readings:

Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990, chapters 1-3.

Questions: Are welfare states redistributive devices, or something else? How, if at all, does it matter how much they spend?

May 17: How many worlds? And why *worlds* at all?

Readings:

Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, chapter 5;

Wilhelmus Antonius Arts and John Gelissen, “Three worlds of welfare capitalism or more? A state-of-the-art report”, *Journal of European Social Policy* 12 (2002), 137-158;

Kees van Kersbergen and Philip Manow, “The welfare state”, in: Daniele Caramani (ed.), *Comparative Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008, pp. 520-545.

Questions:

What, if anything, is the advantage of dividing welfare policies into “worlds”, or *regimes*? Which lessons for political theory, if any, does such a division yield?

May 24: no session

May 31: The universal welfare state and liberal egalitarianism

Readings: Bo Rothstein, *Just Institutions Matter*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, chapters 1,2 and 7.

Questions:

Is Rothstein's Rawlsian case for the universal welfare state plausible? How does it compare to Rawls's arguments against the welfare state?

June 7: The question of stability

Readings:

Rawls, *Justice as Fairness – A Restatement*, Part V;

Rothstein, *Just Institutions Matter*, chapters 5-6.

Questions:

What is the relationship between justice, reciprocity, and stability? In which sense, if any, do the morality and politics of social justice go together?

June 14: no session – reading week

Part III: Alternative proposals

June 21: First essay due

June 21: Liberal/Market Socialism

Readings:

Joshua Cohen, "The Economic Basis of Deliberative Democracy", *Social Philosophy and Policy* 6 (1989), 25-50;

John E. Roemer, "A Future for Socialism", *Politics and Society* 22 (1994), 451-478.

What considerations of justice, if any, speak for liberal forms of socialism? How do they compare to “property-owning democracy”? What, if anything, can be said about their stability?

June 28: Universal Basic Income

Readings:

Philippe van Parijs, *Real Freedom for All – What (if anything) can justify capitalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1995, chapters 1 and 2, and “Why Surfers Should Be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 20 (1991), 101-131.

Questions:

Does a UBI make people more free than liberal socialism would? Do Rawls and van Parijs disagree on matters of principle, or policy, or both? Who is right, if anybody is?

July 5: Stakeholder Grant

Readings: Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott, *The Stakeholder Society*, New Haven: Yale University Press 1999, chapters 1-3, 5, and chapter 11, pp. 210-216 (section on “Basic Income”).

Question: What are the reasons, if any, to prefer a stakeholder grant over a basic income? What are the reasons, if any, to prefer it to a universal welfare state, or to a form of liberal socialism?

July 12: Concluding discussion

October 14: Second essay due