

Modules: PW-MA-2a,3a,4a;
PT-MA-2,5a,5c; PW-BA-SP

Goethe-Universität Frankfurt
Wintersemester 2019/20
(Updated 20 January 2020)

Frontiers of Socioeconomic Justice

Thursdays 14:00–16:00, Seminarhaus 4.107

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••• NOT THE FINAL VERSION: CHECK OLAT FOR UPDATES •••

The Main Idea

This seminar will survey contemporary normative theories of justice in economic relationships and organization. The years since the 2008 crisis have brought a flurry of creative thinking about socioeconomic justice, opening up a variety of new and exciting domains in normative theorizing. After reviewing core statements by John Rawls, Robert Nozick, GA Cohen, Iris Young, Thomas Piketty, and others we will look at innovations that push beyond conventional paradigms of distributive justice, such as the idea of a universal basic income, central banking and financial markets as topics of justice, the firm as a “political” entity, workplace democracy, and the idea of socialism.

Progress and Assessment

Attendance: Everyone is responsible for attending all classes, keeping up with the weekly readings, and participating actively in our discussions. It is expected that you will not miss more than 2 sessions during the semester.

Class participation: In addition to written assignments, additional credit may be awarded based on active and thoughtful class participation.

“Solos”: Students seeking a *Leistungsschein* or a *Teilnahmeschein* are required to write at least four short (300–500 words) papers or “solos” over the course of the term.

- If you choose to write a solo for a given week’s reading, it should be submitted via email (brian.m.milstein@gmail.com) no later than 23:59 on the Tuesday *after* the class for which that reading is assigned. Late solos will be accepted, but you waive your right to receive comments.

- The solos will not be graded, but will receive a mark of “✓+,” “✓,” “✓-,” or “✗.”
- In each solo, you must identify and analyze a *key point* in one (and only one) of the primary readings we will be discussing at the next class meeting. A “key point” may be a specific claim, concept, premise, or implied presupposition by the author that is significant to the author’s broader argument. Your task is to show the relation of the point you’re raising to the author’s argument and make a critical point of your own—i.e., raise a question, identify a problem, anticipate an objection, or expound upon the significance of an idea. Because each solo is only 300–500 words (about 1–2 pages), your analysis should aim to be as focused and concise as possible.
 - State your argument clearly.
 - Back up your claims with reasons and evidence.
 - Be sure to cite page numbers from the text.
 - Avoid long quotations.
 - Do not merely summarize the reading.
- You are free to choose which weeks on which to write; however, you are required to complete *four*, and it will be your responsibility to manage your time accordingly. Only one solo may be submitted per week; however, you are free to submit more than four if you believe it to be beneficial.

Final research paper: At the conclusion of the semester, students pursuing a *Leistungsschein* will write a research paper of 5000-7500 words (about 15–20 pages), which will be due **no later than Friday, 27 March, 2020**. Those pursuing a *Teilnahmeschein* are not required to submit a final paper.

- You are free to write the paper on any topic you wish, so long as your topic is based on the central themes of the course. *You are strongly encouraged to meet with me at least once to discuss your paper.* When writing, you should approach your final paper as a serious piece of scholarly research, complete with citations and bibliography: you should develop a clear central thesis; you should demonstrate knowledge of your topic; you should engage the material in a critical and thoughtful manner; you should be able to back up your arguments with reasons, evidence, and examples; and you should strive to show readers what conclusions they can draw from your efforts.

••• IMPORTANT •••

All papers must be double-spaced, in 12-point type, with one-inch margins, using a normal-sized font, and must be submitted to me via email as either a Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or Adobe PDF (.pdf) file at brian.m.milstein@gmail.com.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to accept papers not written in English.

For all papers, you will be expected to adhere to proper conventions of scholarly attribution. Any work quoted or otherwise referenced must be appropriately and fully cited. Any idea, argument, information, or quotation that you might employ from an external source must likewise be accompanied by full citation. You are free to use any standard bibliographic citation style you wish, but you should apply it consistently.

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in automatic failure of the course.

Weekly Readings

All required readings for the course will be made available on OLAT, as well as at least some of the suggested supplementary readings (which will be indicated with an OLAT icon).

Week 1 (17 October) / Introduction

There is no required reading for this session, though we will be talking a bit about the 2008 Financial Crisis. It was, after all, this event and its aftermath that has inspired much of recent efforts to expand the “frontiers” of thinking about socioeconomic justice. Most of you know something about the root causes and consequences of the crisis, but for those of you who would like a primer, here are two movies (☺) I would recommend. Viewing one of them is sufficient to get an idea, but both are excellent:

- *Inside Job* (2010) dir. Charles Ferguson. Sony Pictures Classics, New York.
 - This highly praised documentary explores various aspects of the US financial industry and the forms of (mostly legal) corruption that led to the crisis.
- *The Big Short* (2015) dir. Adam McKay. Paramount Pictures, Hollywood.
 - This film dramatizes the stories of several real people who foresaw the collapse of the US housing market—and sought to profit off it—which also offers explanations of the systemic causes of the crisis. It is based on the (also *highly* recommended) book by Michael Lewis, *The Big Short: Inside the Doomsday Machine*. (Film contains profanity and some nudity)

Week 2 (24 October) / Distributive Justice I

Primary reading:

- John Rawls (2001) *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). Pp135–79 [“Part IV: Institutions of a Just Basic Structure”]. OLAT

Supplementary reading:

- If you have no familiarity with Rawls’s theory:
 - John Rawls (2015 [1971, 1999]) *A Theory of Justice* (excerpts), in *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*, ed. Steven M. Cahn (New York: Oxford University Press). Pp917–32. OLAT
- Martin O’Neill and Thad Williamson, eds. (2012) *Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond* (Chichester: Blackwell).
- Critique of Rawlsian “ideal theory”:
 - Amartya Sen (2006) “What Do We Want from a Theory of Justice,” *Journal of Philosophy* 103(5): 215–38. OLAT

Week 3 (31 October) / Distributive Justice II

Primary reading:

- Robert Nozick (1974) *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford: Blackwell). Pp149–231 ["Distributive Justice"]. [OLAT](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Rawls's response:
 - John Rawls (2005 [1997]) *Political Liberalism*, expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press). Pp257–88 [Lecture VII]. [OLAT](#)

Week 4 (7 November) / Distributive Justice III

Primary reading:

- G.A. Cohen (2008) *Rescuing Justice and Equality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). Pp181–225 ["The Freedom Objection"]. [OLAT](#)
- G.A. Cohen (2009) *Why Not Socialism?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press). [OLAT](#)

Week 5 (14 November) / Distributive Justice IV

Primary reading:

- Philip Pettit (2006) "Freedom in the Market," *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics* 5(2): 131–49. [OLAT](#)
- Frank Lovett (2009) "Domination and Distributive Justice," *Journal of Politics* 71(3): 817–30. [OLAT](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Richard Dagger (2006) "Neo-Republicanism and the Civic Economy," *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics* 5(2): 151–73. [OLAT](#)
- For a "pro-market" reading of republican freedom:
 - Robert S. Taylor (2013) "Market Freedom as Antipower," *American Political Science Review* 107(3): 593–602. [OLAT](#)
- For a "market-skeptical" reading of republican freedom:
 - Steven Klein (2017) "Fictitious Freedom: A Polanyian Critique of the Republican Revival," *American Journal of Political Science* 61(4): 852–63. [OLAT](#)
- "Left" readings of the (neo)republican tradition:
 - Alex Gourevitch (2015) *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
 - William Clare Roberts (2017) *Marx's Inferno: The Political Theory of Capital* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Critique of neo-republicanism:

- Thomas W. Simpson (2017) "The Impossibility of Republican Freedom," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 45(1): 27–53. [OLAT](#)
- Frank Lovett and Philip Pettit (2019) "Preserving Republican Freedom: A Reply to Simpson," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 46(4): 363–83. [OLAT](#)

Week 6 (21 November) / Distributive Justice V

Primary reading:

- Iris Marion Young (2011) *Responsibility for Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Pp43–74 ["Structure as the Subject of Justice"]. [OLAT](#)
- Rutger Claasen and Lisa Herzog (2019) "Why Economic Agency Matters: An Account of Structural Domination in the Economic Realm," *European Journal of Political Theory* <doi:10.1177/147488511932181>. [OLAT](#)

28 November / CLASS TO BE RESCHEDULED

Week 7 (5 December) / Inequality I: The Structure of Inequality

Primary reading:

- Thomas Piketty (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). Pp1–35, 237–70.

Week 8 (12 December) / Inequality II: Regulating Capital

Primary reading:

- Thomas Piketty (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). Pp471–92, 515–39.

Week 9 (19 December) / Inequality III: Basic Income

Primary reading:

- Martin O'Neill (2017) "Philosophy and Public Policy after Piketty," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 25(3) 343–75. [OLAT](#)
- Karl Widerquist (2015) "The Piketty Observation Against the Institutional Background: How Natural Is this Natural Tendency and What Can We Do about It?" *Basic Income Studies* 10(1): 83–90. [OLAT](#)
- Philippe van Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght (2017) *Basic Income: A Radical Proposal for a Free Society and a Sane Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). Selections.

HOLIDAY BREAK

Week 10 (16 January) / Finance I: Debt

Primary reading:

- Lisa Herzog (2017) "What Could Be Wrong with a Mortgage? Private Debt Markets from a Perspective of Structural Injustice," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 25(4): 411–34. [OLAT](#)
- Marco Meyer (2018) "The Right to Credit," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26(3): 304–26. [OLAT](#)
- Anahí Wiedenbrüg (2018) "What Citizens Owe: Two Grounds for Challenging Debt Repayment," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26(3): 368–87. [OLAT](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Govind Persad (2018) "Distributive Justice and the Relief of Household Debt," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26(3): 327–43. [OLAT](#)
- Gabriel Wollner (2018) "Morally Bankrupt: International Financial Governance and the Ethics of Sovereign Debt," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26(3): 344–67. [OLAT](#)
- Juri Viehoff (2018) "Eurozone Justice," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26(3): 388–414. [OLAT](#)

Week 11 (23 January) / Finance II: Markets

Primary reading:

- Gabriel Wollner (2014) "Justice in Finance: The Normative Case for an International Financial Transaction Tax," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 22(4): 458–85. [OLAT](#)
- Ivan Ascher (2016) "'Moneybags Must Be So Lucky': Inside the Hidden Abode of Prediction," *Political Theory* 44(1): 4–25. [OLAT](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Lisa Herzog (2017) "Can Incomes in Financial Markets Be Deserved? A Justice-Based Critique," in *Just Financial Markets? Finance in a Just Society*, ed. Lisa Herzog (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Pp103–21. [OLAT](#)
- Lisa Herzog, ed. (2017) *Just Financial Markets? Finance in a Just Society*, ed. Lisa Herzog (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Ivan Ascher (2016) *Portfolio Society: On the Capitalist Mode of Prediction* (New York: Zone Books).

Week 12 (30 January) / Finance III: Central Banking

Primary reading:

- Clément Fontan, François Claveau, and Peter Dietsch (2016) "Central Banking and Inequalities: Taking Off the Blinders," *Politics, Philosophy, and Economics* 15(4): 319–57. [OLAT](#)
- Jens van 't Klooster (2019) "Central Banking in Rawls's Property-Ownning Democracy," *Political Theory* <doi: 10.1177/0090591718810377>. [OLAT](#)

Week 13 (6 February) / Employment I: Labor

Primary reading:

- Alex Gourevitch (2013) "Labor Republicanism and the Transformation of Work," *Political Theory* 41(4): 591–617. [OLAT](#)
- Alex Gourevitch (2016) "Quitting Work but Not the Job: Liberty and the Right to Strike," *Perspectives on Politics* 14(2): 307–23. [OLAT](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Alex Gourevitch (2018) "The Right to Strike: A Radical View," *American Political Science Review* 112(4): 905–17. [OLAT](#)

Week 14 (13 February) / Employment II: The Firm

Primary reading:

- David Ciepley (2013) "Beyond Public and Private: Toward a Political Theory of the Corporation," *American Political Science Review* 107(1): 139–58. [OLAT](#)
- Hélène Landemore and Isabelle Ferreras (2016) "In Defense of Workplace Democracy: Towards a Justification of the Firm–State Analogy," *Political Theory* 44(1): 53–81. [OLAT](#)

Supplementary reading:

- Elizabeth Anderson et al (2017) *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don't Talk About It)*, ed. Stephen Macedo (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Isabelle Ferreras (2018) *Firms as Political Entities: Saving Democracy through Economic Bicameralism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press).
- Abraham Singer (2018) *The Form of the Firm: A Normative Political Theory of the Corporation* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Lisa Herzog (2018) *Reclaiming the System: Moral Responsibility, Divided Labor, and the Role of Organizations in Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Week 15 (Date TBD) / Socialism

Primary reading:

- Axel Honneth (2017) *The Idea of Socialism: Towards a Renewal*, trans. Joseph Ganahl (Cambridge, UK: Polity). Pp51–108. [OLAT](#)

••• Final paper due Friday, 27 March, at 12 noon •••