

**University of Guelph
Department of Philosophy**

Winter 2015

PHIL 6600 Social and Political Philosophy: *Global Ethics*

Class meetings: Fridays 10 – 12:50 MACK 346 (Philosophy Seminar Room)

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Office hours: by appointment

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PHIL 6600: Social & Political Philosophy: Global Ethics (REVISED)

Political philosophers and ethicists have in the past few decades grappled with problems of global poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. Many have attempted to develop normative ethical frameworks for addressing these harms, which are global in scope. This course surveys three contemporary ethical approaches to the issue of global poverty.

The first of these focuses on **resources**, framing the issue of chronic unmet needs in terms of a global maldistribution of resources giving rise to acute poverty among people (especially in the Global South). For philosophers who think about poverty through a resourcist frame, more extensive redistribution of global income and wealth — whether through development assistance, philanthropy, market-based solutions, or other means — is what is needed for the global poor to receive the resources they need (water, land, food, consumer goods). Philosophers Peter Singer and Judith Lichtenberg will be our examples of thinkers writing from within this framework, as well as literature from the Effective Altruism movement.

A second approach sees global poverty as fundamentally a problem of **justice**. Some justice-oriented thinkers focus on poverty and inequality in the global South in terms of the violation of (social and economic) human rights. They argue that developing human rights instruments and social-political institutions that secure the social welfare rights of the poor, and their social and economic human rights generally, is the best long-term strategy against poverty. We will not take up this perspective in the course, largely because an extensive background in both political philosophy and development studies (e.g., writings on the “right to development”) are needed to fully grasp this family of arguments. Instead, we will focus on the *capabilities approach* as developed by Martha Nussbaum, as an example of the justice perspective in global ethics. Her approach to global poverty and injustice emphasizes the injustice of uneven development of people’s capabilities globally, and argues that the fostering and support of these capabilities ought to be a priority for domestic and global justice.

A third approach to global poverty foregrounds **power**. Vast global asymmetries in political and economic power (within and between states) make it possible for vast resource inequalities as well as for the capabilities of some to go undeveloped. The antidote here is not just to push for a redistribution of resources to fill unmet needs; rather, a more radical challenge to the way that social, economic and political power regimes are organized is needed. In this part of the course, we will read work by Frantz Fanon, Nancy Fraser, Charles Mills, and some more practical literature on social movement based approaches to poverty reduction.

Class Format

Seminar-style. Come prepared to discuss the readings and your thoughts on them.

Course Requirements

You are required to attend and participate in class meetings, lead seminar one class (circulating discussion questions in advance), and to write one final paper of 15-20 pages.

If you do need to miss a class, you are responsible for catching up in the reading. A 3-page reflection piece on the readings missed is required within one week of the missed class.

Course Assessment

Class participation (contributions to discussion): **10%**

10 short (1 page) response/reflection pieces (due *before* class): **15%***

Leading 2 classes/seminars (you choose which ones): **15%****

Final research paper (8000-10,000 words): **60%** (due Friday, April 22 – or sooner if grad grades are due at the Registrar's before then)

**short response pieces will be graded together as a 'dossier' at the end of the course, but I will give you written feedback on the first few ones*

***Involves circulating study/discussion questions electronically the day before class, kicking off and moderating the first part of our class*

Course policies regarding submission of work, academic integrity etc.

For university policies on submission of work, dropping courses, accessibility, academic misconduct and other matters, see:

https://www.uoguelph.ca/philosophy/resources/standard_statements

Readings

There is around 70-100 pages of reading per week (depending upon the difficulty of the reading). Feel free to email me questions if you're having trouble understanding the reading.

There are 2 required books; the remaining readings are available on Ares, the university's electronic course reserve system. Please bring the readings to class in an easily accessible form, either paper copies or electronic, as we will frequently refer back to them during our discussion.

Books to purchase:

Judith Lichtenberg, Distant Strangers: Ethics, Psychology, and Global Poverty. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Martha Nussbaum, Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach (Harvard 2011)

Schedule of Topics and Readings

a. The Resource/Distributive Frame

- Jan. 15 **Introduction: thinking about global poverty from a position of affluence**
Reading:
1. Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (1972)
 2. Scott Wisor, “Against shallow ponds: an argument against Peter Singer’s approach to global poverty” (2011)
- Jan. 22 **Effective Altruism**
Reading:
1. Peter Singer, “The Logic of Effective Altruism” in the Boston Review: <http://bostonreview.net/forum/peter-singer-logic-effective-altruism> and responses by Acemoglu, Deaton, MacFarquar, Saunders-Hastings, and Tumber
 2. Iason Gabriel, “What’s Wrong With Effective Altruism” (2015)
 3. Websites on Effective Altruism: <http://www.effectivealtruism.org/about-ea/> and GiveWell: <http://www.givewell.org/about/givewell-overview> (also see their blog within this site)
- Jan. 29 **The Problem of Moral Distance**
Reading:
1. Judith Lichtenberg, Distant Strangers (2014), chapters 1-4 (pp. 1-92)
- Feb. 5 **Lichtenberg cont’d**
Reading:
1. Judith Lichtenberg, Distant Strangers (2014), chapters 5-7 (pp. 97-176)
- Feb. 12 **Lichtenberg cont’d**
Reading:
1. Judith Lichtenberg, Distant Strangers (2014), chapters 8-10 (177-152)
- Feb. 19 **Reading week** (no class)

b. The Justice Frame

- Feb. 26 **From Redistribution to Justice?**
Reading:
1. Neera Chanchoke, “Realizing Justice” (2013)
 2. Charles Mills, “Race and Global Justice” (2014)
 3. Iris Marion Young, “A Social Connection Model” (2011)

- March 5 **The Capability Approach: Nussbaum**
Reading:
 1. Martha Nussbaum, Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach (Harvard, 2011), pp. ix-100.
- March 11 **The Capability Approach: Nussbaum continued**
Reading:
 1. Martha Nussbaum, Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach (Harvard, 2011), pp. 101-187.
- March 18 **Capability, empowerment, agency**
Reading:
 1. Alison Jaggar, “Transnational Cycles of Gendered Vulnerability: A Prologue to a Theory of Global Gender Injustice” (2009)
 2. Alison Jaggar, “Saving Amina: Global Justice for Women and Intercultural Dialogue” (2005)
 2. Serene Khader, “Empowerment Through Self-Subordination? Microcredit and Women’s Agency” (2014)

c. The Power Frame

March 22 **Exclusion, power, and poverty**

(TUES 5 pm) *Reading:*

1. Nancy Fraser, ch’s 2 and 4 from *Scales of Justice* (2009) (Chapter titles are “Reframing Justice in a Globalized World” and “Abnormal Justice”)
2. Naila Kabeer, “Social Exclusion, Poverty and Discrimination: Towards an Analytical Framework” (2000)

April 1 **Political action and struggle**

Reading:

3. Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth (1968): pp. 52-62 and pp. 235-239 from the 2004 Grove Press edition. **Also** Fanon’s (1952) Black Skin, White Masks: pp. 191-206 of the 2008 Grove Press edition.
4. Arjun Appadurai, “Deep Democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon of Politics” (2002)
5. David Mosse, “A Relational Approach to Durable Poverty, Inequality and Power” (2010)

April 8 **Global justice from below?**

Reading:

1. Monique Deveaux, “Beyond the redistributive paradigm: what philosophers can learn from poor-led politics” (2015)
2. Anthony Bebbington, “Social Movements and the Politicization of Global Poverty” (2007)
3. *(optional)* Diana Mitlin, “Endowments, Entitlements and Capabilities — What Urban Social Movements Offer to Poverty Reduction” (2013)