

# PH9E3-30 Topics in Moral and Political Philosophy

**20/21**

**Department**

Philosophy

**Level**

Taught Postgraduate Level

**Module leader**

Mathew Coakley

**Credit value**

30

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

PH9E3 Topics in Moral and Political Philosophy

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

The module will offer a critical engagement with key debates in moral and political philosophy. It will deal with a range of problems revolving around the tension between moral autonomy and political authority, focusing in particular on the following two questions: on what grounds, if any, can individual moral agents be placed under a moral duty to obey political authority? And is deferring to political authority compatible with acting as autonomous moral agents? In addressing these two questions a number of fundamental issues in moral and political philosophy will be critically examined, such as "why is consent morally important?", "can morality make room for associative responsibilities?", "how important is the difference between our duty to help and our duty not to harm?", "under what conditions do we incur fair-play obligations?", "how should we understand equality?". Particular attention will be paid to the question of how best to characterize practical reasoning in relation to issues of obedience.

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

### Illustrative Syllabus

1. Introduction to the module. Discussion of distributive principles.
2. Equality: distributive or relational?
3. Aggregation
4. Aggregation, uncertainty, and statistical lives
5. Moral uncertainty
6. READING WEEK
7. Racial Profiling
8. Sex, Consent, and Deception
9. Killing the Innocent
10. Nudging

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- By the end of the module the student should have a systematic understanding and knowledge of key contemporary debates in moral and political philosophy, and the major methodological and conceptual issues at stake in them.
- By the end of the module the student should be able to participate in debate on an important set of issues in contemporary moral and political philosophy, and to articulate arguments and criticisms in an insightful, original, and productive way
- By the end of the module the student should be able to analyse and critically evaluate different theories and arguments presented in current research, and come to an independent assessment of their relative merits; to be able to critically evaluate different methodological approaches in these debates.

## Indicative reading list

R. P. Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970; 2d ed. 1998).

A. John Simmons, *Justification and Legitimacy: Essays on Rights and Obligations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

A. John Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

Joseph Raz, *Ethics in the Public Domain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

George Klosko, *The Principle of Fairness and Political Obligation*, (Savage, Md: Rowman and Littlefield, 2d ed. 2004).

F. G. Miller and A. Wertheimer (eds), *The Ethics of Consent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Frances Kamm, *Intricate Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).  
Brian Feltham and John Cottingham (eds.), *Partiality and Impartiality: Morality, Special Relationships and the Wider World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).  
G. Dworkin, *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1988).  
John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. Revised Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).  
John Rawls *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, 2d ed. 2005).  
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).  
Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Equality* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).  
Gerald Gaus 2011, *The Order of Public Reason*, New York: Cambridge University Press.  
Jonathan Quong, *Liberalism without Perfection*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).  
David Estlund, *Democratic Authority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).  
Thomas Christiano, *The Constitution of Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).  
Fabienne Peter, *Democratic Legitimacy* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

### **Subject specific skills**

TBC

### **Transferable skills**

TBC

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## **Study**

### **Study time**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Required</b>
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (3%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (3%)
Private study	282 hours (94%)
Total	300 hours

### **Private study description**

No private study requirements defined for this module.

### **Costs**

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

### Assessment group A1

	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Study time</b>
7500 word essay	100%	

### Feedback on assessment

Feedback on essays will be provided on the coversheet for the essay, addressing standard areas of evaluation and individual content.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Option list A for:

- TPHA-V7PN Postgraduate Taught Philosophy and the Arts
  - Year 1 of V7PN Philosophy and the Arts
  - Year 2 of V7PN Philosophy and the Arts