PO3B1-15 Discrimination and Appearance

22/23

Department
    Politics & International Studies
Level
    Undergraduate Level 3
Module leader
    Andrew Mason
Credit value
    15
Module duration
    10 weeks
Assessment
    Multiple
Study location
    University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

There has been a considerable amount written over the past decade on the political morality of discrimination. This module aims to provide students with an advanced introduction to the different theories that have been developed concerning what makes discrimination wrong when it is wrong, using racial discrimination as a test case. It will then consider how these theories should be applied to a relatively neglected form of discrimination, viz., appearance discrimination.

Module aims

The module provides an advanced introduction to the concepts and debates surrounding the morality of discrimination, particularly the morality of appearance discrimination.

More specifically, the principal module aims are:

- To introduce students to different notions of discrimination – such as, the notions of direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, and statistical discrimination – and the difficulties involved in conceptualising them.
- To consider a range of different theories of what makes discrimination wrong when it is

wrong, including those developed by, inter alia, Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, Deborah Hellman, Benjamin Eidelson, and Sophia Moreau, using racial discrimination as a test case for them.

- To apply these theories to appearance discrimination, both in the context of appointments to jobs and the choices that people make in their personal lives.

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.

1: Introduction and overview

2: The nature of discrimination: conceptual and empirical issues. (This session will provide an introduction to the different forms that discrimination may take, such as direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, and statistical discrimination, debates surrounding how they should be conceptualised, and the different mechanisms that may be involved in direct discrimination, including stereotyping and implicit bias.)

3: Why is discrimination wrong? I: Harm and deliberative freedom. (This session will examine two theories of what makes discrimination wrong that regard it as contingently wrong in terms of its consequences, namely, Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen's harm-based theory and Sophia Moreau's theory concerning how discrimination may impair deliberative freedom.)

4. Why is discrimination wrong? II: Disrespect and the denial of moral equality. (This session will examine two theories of what makes discrimination wrong that regard it as potentially non-contingently wrong, namely, Deborah Hellman's account concerning how discrimination may be demeaning, and Benjamin Eidelson's account of how it may be disrespectful.)

5. Why is discrimination wrong? III: The meritocratic principle. (This session will examine whether the meritocratic principle, viz., that the best-qualified candidates should be selected for positions, can help to explain why discrimination is wrong in the context of job appointments.)

6. Statistical discrimination and racial profiling (This session will consider the issue of when it is permissible for statistical generalisations to play a role in decision making, with special reference to racial profiling.)

7. Appearance discrimination and reaction qualifications (This session will apply different theories of discrimination to the case of appearance discrimination, focusing in particular on the role of reaction qualifications, that is, qualifications that count as such in virtue of the responses of those with whom the successful candidate will interact in the course of performing the duties associated with a role.)

8: Discrimination and the personal sphere. (This session will apply different theories of what makes discrimination wrongful to the discrimination that occurs when people choose friends, lovers and companions. It will focus especially on racial discrimination and appearance discrimination in this context, and on the role played by appearance norms, that is, norms concerning how one should look.)

9: Legal regulation of appearance discrimination. (This session will assess the arguments for and against regulating appearance discrimination by means of the law, in particular whether appearance should be made a protected characteristic within the UK Equality Act.)

Learning outcomes

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

- Demonstrate knowledge of different forms of discrimination, the various ways in which they can be conceptualised, and the advantages and disadvantages of different definitions.
- Demonstrate knowledge of a range of theories of what makes discrimination wrong when it is wrong.
- Apply different theories of what is wrong with discrimination to specific kinds of discrimination, including racial discrimination and appearance discrimination.
- Demonstrate enhanced key skills such as written and oral communication skills, problem solving, working with others, and information technology skills.
- Construct and substantiate a comprehensive and sophisticated argument in response to a pre-approved essay question, or a question of the student's choice in consultation with their seminar tutor.

Indicative reading list

Darwall, S., 'Two Kinds of Respect', Ethics, Vol. 88, 1977, 36-49

Dobos, N., 'The Duty to Hire on Merit: Mapping the Terrain', Journal of Value Enquiry, Vol. 50, 2016, 353-368;

Eidelson, B., Discrimination and Disrespect (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Etcoff, N., Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty (New York: Doubleday, 1999)

Hamermesh, D., Beauty Pays: Why Attractive People Are More Successful (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011)

Hellman, D., When Is Discrimination Wrong? (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008)

Holroyd, J., 'The Social Psychology of Discrimination' in K. Lippert-Rusmussen (ed.), The Routledge Handbook of the Ethics of Discrimination (London: Routledge, 2017)

Kershnar, S., 'The Duty to Hire the Most Qualified Applicant', Journal of Social Philosophy, Vol. 43, 2003, 267-284;

Lazenby, H. and P. Butterfield, 'Discrimination and the Personal Sphere', in K. Lippert-Rusmussen (ed.), The Routledge Handbook of the Ethics of Discrimination (London: Routledge, 2017

Lippert-Rasmussen, K., Born Free and Equal? A Philosophical Inquiry into the Nature of Discrimination (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Mason, A., 'Appearance, Discrimination, and Reaction Qualifications', Journal of Political Philosophy, Vol. 25, 2016, 48-71;

Mason, A., Levelling the Playing Field (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

Miller, D., Principles of Social Justice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999),

Moreau, S., 'What is Discrimination?', Philosophy and Public Affairs, Vol. 38, 2010, 143-179,

Parr, T., and A. Slavny, 'Harmless Discrimination', Legal Theory, Vol. 21, 2015, 100-114.

Rhode, D., The Beauty Bias. The Injustice of Appearance in Life and Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Saunders, H., 'The Invisible Law of Visible Difference: Disfigurement in the Workplace', Industrial Law Journal, Vol. 48, 2019, 487-514

Sher, G., 'Qualifications, Fairness, and Desert', in N. Bowie (ed.), Equal Opportunity (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988);

Tietje, L., and S. Cresap, 'Is Lookism Unjust?: The Ethics of Aesthetics and Public Policy Implications', Journal of Libertarian Studies, Vol. 19, 2005, 31-50

Wertheimer, A., 'Jobs, Qualifications, and Preference', Ethics, Vol. 94, 1983, 99-112

Widdows, H., Perfect Me. Beauty as an Ethical Ideal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018)

Subject specific skills

1. Ability to apply key normative theories and concepts relating to discrimination and appearance.
2. Ability to analyse, develop, and critically assess normative arguments using theories and concepts introduced and discussed in the module.

Transferable skills

1. Critical thinking
2. Communication of complex ideas - written and verbal
3. Working effectively with others
4. Information literacy/research skills
5. Time management and organisation

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	57 hours (38%)
Assessment	75 hours (50%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Reading for seminars
Preparation for seminars - answering set questions
Further reading for summative work
Preparation and writing of summative work

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Students will be required to select an essay title from a pre-approved list.	80%	60 hours	Yes (extension)
Students will be required to write a summative essay related to the module content.			
Book review	20%	15 hours	Yes (extension)
Students will be required to write a 750 word book review, selected from pre-approved list of possible books.			

Assessment group R

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Students will be required to select an essay title from a pre-approved list.	100%		Yes (extension)
Students will be required to write a summative essay related to the module content.			

Feedback on assessment

Essay feedback and feedback on the book review will be returned within 20 working days of essay submission

Essay grading and grading of the book review will conform to marking criteria established by the Department (PAIS)

It will give extensive comments on comprehension, analysis, critique and presentation as well as overall comments and suggestions for improvement.

A standardised sheet on which the mark and constructive comments are entered will be provided as feedback to students.

Students are entitled to request further feedback/clarification from the marker if they have questions about the written feedback they receive regarding coursework.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 4 of UHIA-VM14 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)

- Year 3 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)

This module is Optional for:

- Year 3 of UPOA-M100 Undergraduate Politics
- Year 4 of UPOA-M101 Undergraduate Politics (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 4 of UPOA-M168 Undergraduate Politics and International Studies with Chinese
- Year 3 of UPOA-M169 Undergraduate Politics and International Studies with Chinese (3 year)
- Year 3 of UPOA-M164 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and German
- Year 4 of UPOA-M165 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Italian
- Year 4 of UPOA-M167 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Quantitative Methods (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 3 of UPOA-M16A Undergraduate Politics and International Studies
- Year 4 of UPOA-M16B Undergraduate Politics and International Studies (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 3 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology
- Year 4 of UPOA-ML14 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UPOA-M163 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and French
- Year 4 of UPOA-M164 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and German
- Year 4 of UPOA-M166 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Hispanic Studies

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 3 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 4 of UHIA-VM12 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad)