

New Perspectives on Political Problems

Session I: Approaches

Reader Abstract: This reader presents three different ethical philosophies – utilitarianism, fairness, and non-aggression – and then presents different political problems that can be examined in light of these philosophies. The political issues analyzed in the reader are foreign aid, military torture, and gun ownership, though any set of political issues could be substituted with applicable alternative readings.

Mill, John Stuart. "On the Connexion Between Justice and Utility." In *Utilitarianism*. Part of *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill Volume X: Essays on Ethics, Religion, and Society*, edited by John M. Robson, 240-260. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.

Rawls, John. "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical." *The Philosophical Review* 67, no. 2 (1985): 164-174, 187-190.

Nozick, Robert. Excerpts from, "Moral Constraints and the State," and, "The State." In *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 26-35, 90-95. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974.

Session Abstract: The Mill piece presents the traditional argument in favor of utilitarian ethics that was common to the classical economists. The Rawls piece presents his own theory of justice, which revolves around the notion of "fairness," which directly responds to the utilitarian approach. The final piece, by Nozick, addresses both utilitarianism and fairness in light of another ethical principle, being non-aggression. The first selection (26-35) presents the concept of a principle of non-aggression or non-coercion as an alternative to utilitarianism. The second selection (90-95) critiques Rawls' principle of fairness.

Session II: Global Justice

Singer, Peter. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1978): 229-243.

Wenar, Leif. Excerpts from, "Poverty Is No Pond: Challenges for the Affluent." In *Giving Well: The Ethics of Philanthropy*, edited by Patricia Illingworth, Thomas Pogge, and Leif Wenar, 104-105, 107-118. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Session Abstract: The piece by Peter Singer is an argument in favor of foreign aid – claiming it is a matter of moral obligation – and it can be viewed as an application of Rawls' principle of fairness. The second piece, by Leif Wenar, presents a utilitarian argument against foreign aid, focusing on the *consequences* of foreign aid programs, rather than their *intent*.

Session III: Torture

Shue, Henry. "Torture." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1978): 124-43. From *Political Problems*, edited by Steven M. Cahn, 180-192. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Hill, Daniel J. "Ticking Bombs, Torture, and the Analogy with Self-Defense." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2007): 395-404. From *Political Problems*, edited by Steven M. Cahn, 193-202. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Session Abstract: The Shue piece places torture within Rawls' framework of fairness. He analyzes two different types of torture – terroristic and interrogational – and analyzes them according to various criteria of fairness. The second piece argues that terror is a form of unjustifiable coercion, which relates to the Nozick readings, but unlike Nozick, it does not reject coercion as *per se* unjust.

Session IV: Gun Control

Hughes, Todd C., and Lester H. Hunt. "The Liberal Basis of the Right to Bear Arms." *Public Affairs Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (2000): 1–25. From *Political Problems*, edited by Steven M. Cahn, 120–138. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Lafollette, Hugh. "Gun Control." *Ethics* 110, no. 2 (2000): 263–81. From *Political Problems*, edited by Steven M. Cahn, 139–152. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Session Abstract: The Hughes-Hunt article takes a different approach than most of the other pieces by placing gun control within the ideological framework of "liberalism," which the authors elaborate as two ideologies: wide and narrow liberalism (respectively referring to classical and modern liberalism). They conclude that most restrictions on gun ownership violate the ethical principles of both forms of liberalism. The second article argues in favor of gun control on utilitarian grounds. The piece presents a philosophical framework for analysis, but the argument ultimately rests on empirical-utilitarian grounds.