



Power, Oppression, and Justice

Winter 2014/2015 (Semester IIa)

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Faculty of Philosophy

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 10-11 am., Philosophy Building, Room 1.21 (*please e-mail me in advance as I occasionally might be out of office due to other commitments. We can also arrange an appointment for a different time if required*)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

If individual persons or groups of persons are oppressed by others, this is in almost all cases an injustice. But what exactly do we mean when we say something like this? And why exactly is it an injustice? And are there forms of unequal social power which are morally neutral or even good? This course will focus on three questions: First, what social power is, what role power plays in social reality, and how we can distinguish problematic from unproblematic forms. Second, how we should describe empirically existing phenomena of social oppression, such as the oppression of persons in virtue of their economic position, of their gender or of their race, such as to capture what is wrong about such oppression. Third, in what ways contemporary theories of justice help us to understand the wrongness of oppression and to answer the question of who has which obligations to abolish oppressive social relations or to resist oppression

COURSE FORMAT AND GENERAL RULES

This is an intensive course that requires you to read a certain amount of literature, both during the course and while preparing your essay.

I expect to enjoy this seminar very much and I hope that you will as well. To maximize the chances of this happening, there are a few ground rules in terms of obligations that we have towards each other: I accept the obligation to arrive on time and well-prepared to each session. I will do my utmost to design the course material and my contributions in a way which leads your learning as much as possible and to structure the discussion according to your interests. You can approach me about all questions of an academic or administrative nature in person and (to a reasonable extent) via e-mail. I will communicate expectations clearly and will evaluate you fairly. My goal is to prepare you all for finishing the course with an excellent result.

In return, I expect from you to regularly attend all sessions, to excuse yourself in person or via e-mail in case you cannot attend a session, to arrive on time, to read all the required material, to come prepared with relevant questions and objections and to participate in the discussion with your fellow students. I also expect you to refrain from any kind of academic dishonesty and from any behavior which makes it for fellow students more difficult to learn or which makes them feel uncomfortable.

I am aware that students have different needs in order to be able to learn and face different challenges and that the general rules of this course might not be best designed to ensure everyone's success. If you think you may have reason to ask for a modification of the course rules for your specific case, please do not hesitate to talk to me in private.

REQUIREMENTS AND EXAMINATION

The seminar requirements consist of two parts: an *ungraded seminar presentation* and a *graded final essay*.

The seminar presentation should be a short introduction provided by you to the other participants that should take between 5 and 10 minutes (but under no circumstances more than 10 minutes – I will stop you!). It should accomplish two things: First, you should explain the structure of the text (what is its main point? What are the main steps it takes to make this point?): Here, you should not explain the arguments, but rather just mention them. Second, you should point out issues you had with the text, claims you do not think to be justified or what you have not understood, so to give us an opportunity to start the discussion with this text. If there are more people than presentations, and when all presentations are already covered, you can replace the presentation by submitting a short analysis of a text of maximally 750 words. The analysis should aim at reconstructing the logical structure of the text and at a summary of its main arguments in its own words. Please use no quotations.. It should be submitted via email before the beginning of the session in which we discuss the corresponding text.

The final essay should be maximal 5,000 words. It is to discuss, on the basis of our discussion in the seminar, a research question. You are expected to do some literature research on your own, especially if you want to discuss a question which relates to political issues or phenomena.

I suggest the following four questions as topics for essays. If you want to discuss another question, you are free to do so after consulting with me.

1. What is the basic structure and ontology of social power? Or is there no unified concept of social power?
2. How does the liberal tradition in political philosophy think about social power? What are its normative principles in dealing with social power? Are they plausible?
3. Does Foucault provide us with an adequate theory of power to criticize contemporary forms of oppression and resistance?
4. Is the republican ideal of non-domination adequate for criticizing contemporary forms of oppression?

You will have four weeks to write the essay. In the first week, we will have a meeting where we discuss your conception for the essay and your literature research. The exact structure will depend on the number of students choosing to write an essay. In the second and third week, we will have more personalized meetings, discussing your drafts of sections.

The essay is due on **April 7** on **Nestor**.

READINGS

Due to regulations on copyright, I cannot provide a course reader nor put the texts for the course online on Nestor. You will therefore have to acquire all necessary texts yourself. We will discuss in the first session how to best do this so that it is not too much work.

The readings for the first session will be made available on Nestor.

If you think of acquiring some books, the following choices are excellent:

- Mark Haugaard (ed.), *Power. A Reader* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002). This is a collection of 20 or so of the most important authors who wrote on power, with a short introduction and additional references for each of them.
- Thomas E. Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power* (Temple University Press, 1990). Perhaps the most comprehensive text about power theory. A good introduction to the topic.
- Amy Allen, *The Power of Feminist Theory. Domination, Resistance, Solidarity* (Boulder, Westview, 1999)

A very comprehensive collection of articles on power is to be found in:

- John Scott (ed.), *Power. Critical Concepts* (2 volumes) (London, Routledge, 1994).

Very helpful as an introduction is also:

- Amy Allen, “Feminist Perspectives on Power”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-power/>>

SYLLABUS

Session 1: Analyzing Power (February 3)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

1. Max Weber: Excerpts from *Economy and Society* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978), pp. 22, 26-27, 53-54.
2. Robert A. Dahl, “Power”, in Mark Haugaard (ed.), *Power. A Reader* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 8-21
3. Steven Lukes, *Power. A Radical View, 2nd ed.* (Houndmills Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2005), pp. 25-44.

Further readings for essay and own study:

- Peter Morriss, *Power* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 8-35.
- Thomas Hobbes, Richard Tuck (ed.), *Leviathan* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), chap. 10.
- Peter Bachrach, Morton S. Baratz, “The Two Faces of Power”, *The American Political Science Review* 56(4), 1962, 947-952.
- Thomas E. Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power* (Temple University Press, 1990), ch. 1 and 3.
- Ruth Zimmerling, *Influence and Power* (Dordrecht, Springer, 2005), pp. 31-73.
- Martin Saar, “Power and Critique”, in *Journal of Power* 3(1), 2010, 7-20.
- Stewart R. Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, (London, Sage, 1989).

Session 2: Analyzing Power II: Structural Power (February 10)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

1. Jeffrey C. Isaac, *Power and Marxist Theory* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 33-40, 72-101.
2. Frank Lovett, *A General Theory of Power and Domination* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 34-49 and 55-74.

Further readings for essay and own study:

- Thomas E. Wartenberg, *The Forms of Power* (Temple University Press, 1990), ch. 4,6, and 7
- Clarissa Ryle Hayward, *De-Facing Power* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (Verso, London, 1980)
- Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), ch. 1 and 5
- Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981), ch. 2 and 7

Session 3: Analyzing Power III: Disciplinary Power (February 17)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

1. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1 (New York, Pantheon, 1978), pp. 92-102.
2. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Writings 1972-1977* (New York, Pantheon, 1980), pp. 92-108.
3. Michel Foucault, „The Subject and Power“, in: *Power. The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Vol. 3 (New York, The New Press, 2000), pp. 326-348.
4. Amy Allen, *The Power of Feminist Theory. Domination, Resistance, Solidarity* (Boulder, Westview, 1999), pp. 31-58.

Further readings for essay and own study:

- Generally, everything else in Foucault 1980 and 2000., as well as many articles by Allen.
- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York, Vintage, 1977)
- Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power* (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1991), ch. 4-6.
- McNay, Lois, 1992. *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender, and the Self*, Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Butler, Judith, 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge.
- —, 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Fraser, Nancy, 1989. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Oksala, Johanna, 2005. *Foucault on Freedom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Session 4: Defining Oppression (February 24)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

1. Ann E. Cudd, *Analyzing Oppression* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), ch. 1 and 2 (available at Oxford Scholarship Online)
2. Sally Haslanger, "Oppressions: Racial and Other", in *Resisting Reality. Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 311-338

Further readings for essay and own study:

- The remainder of Cudd (2006)
- Amy Allen, "Rationalizing Oppression," in *Journal of Power*, 1 (1), 2008, pp. 51–65.
- Marilyn, Frye "Oppression", in *The Politics of Reality* (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1983)
- Judith Andre, "Power, Oppression and Gender", in *Social Theory and Practice* 11(1), 1985, pp. 107-122
- Miranda Fricker, "Epistemic Oppression and Epistemic Privilege", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 29 (Suppl.), 1999, pp. 191-210
- On gender and oppression, see also Catharine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1989).
- Janet A. Flammang, "Feminist Theory: The Question of Power", in John Scott (ed.), *Power: Critical Concepts* (2 volumes) (London, Routledge, 1994), pp. 178-217.

Session 5: Republican Perspectives on Power and Oppression (March 3)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

1. Philip Pettit, *Republicanism. A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), chs. 3 and 4
2. Lovett, *A General Theory of Power and Domination*, chs. 5 and 6.

Further readings for essay and own study:

- Philip Pettit, *On the People's Terms: A Republican Theory and Model of Democracy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2012).
- Frank Lovett, "Domination and Distributive Justice", in *The Journal of Politics*, 71: 817–830, 2009.
- Cécile Laborde and John Maynor (eds.), *Republicanism and Political Theory* (Malden, Blackwell, 2008).

Session 6: Oppression, Justice and Responsibility (March 10)

Readings for the seminar discussion:

1. Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999), ch. 1 and 2.
2. Carol Hay, "The Responsibility to Resist Oppression", in *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 42(1), 2011, pp. 21-45.

Further readings for essay and own study:

- Bernard R. Boxill, “The Responsibility of the Oppressed to Resist Their Own Oppression”, in *Journal of Social Philosophy* 41(1), 2010, pp. 1-12
- T. L. Zutlevics, “Towards a Theory of Oppression”, *Ratio*, 15(1), 2002, pp. 80-102.
- Mark Navin, “Luck and Oppression”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 14(5), 2011, pp. 533-547.
- Jean Harvey, “Justice Theory and Oppression”, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 29 (Suppl.), 1999, pp. 171-190.

Essay Planning Session (March 17)

Individualized Feedback Sessions (March 24, March 31)