

PPG2022S Moral Foundations of Public Policy

R 9-12, UC 152

Professor Joseph Heath

Ethics and public policy: Although we often hear talk about “shared values” among Canadians, in reality there are none. On the contrary, one of the most fundamental features of Canadian society is the extent to which it is marked by pluralism with respect to culture, religion, *and values*. It is precisely this sort of pluralism that has led to the privileging, in liberal societies, of principles of justice (such as efficiency, equality, or liberty), that strive for *neutrality* with respect to competing values. This is why the liberal state is regarded as properly responsive only to a subset of the moral arguments that circulate in the broader society. Understanding the role that neutrality plays in restricting the scope of state action is the most important element in understanding the way that normative considerations can be brought to bear on public policy questions. In this course, we will examine three rather distinct ways that this neutrality constraint structures deliberation about state action: first, we will examine cost-benefit analysis, the use of which has become increasingly prevalent in the public sector, and which constitutes in many ways the highest expression of the commitment to state neutrality; second, we will examine the classical liberal prohibition on paternalistic uses of state power, which is to say, the unwillingness to coerce individuals “for their own good”; and finally, we will examine the role that democracy might play as a procedure for making decisions under conditions of value pluralism. In all three cases, we will examine issues and developments that have put pressure on the traditional commitment to liberal neutrality.

Evaluation:

Mid-term paper (40%), 2500 words, due Feb. 27.

Final paper (50%), 3000 words, due April 3.

Class participation (10%).

Contact Info

Office hours: R12-2 @ UC 149, or by appointment.

Course website on Blackboard: <http://portal.utoronto.ca>.

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Required reading

Jonathan Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy* (Routledge)

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Hackett)

Weekly course readings available through Blackboard

Lateness policy and plagiarism

Any assignment handed in late without medical excuse will be penalized by one grade fragment (about 3%) per day late. Late assignments can be submitted to me in person, or at the front desk at SPPG. I do not accept submissions by email. Plagiarism (“to represent as one’s own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another”) will not be tolerated, and any suspected cases will be submitted to the office of student conduct for investigation without exception.

Syllabus

1. (Jan. 9) Introduction and primer on moral philosophy

2. (Jan. 16) Primer on political philosophy

John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 14 (1985).

3. (Jan. 23) Primer on the welfare state

Joseph Heath, "Three Normative Models of the Welfare State" *Public Reason*, 3 (2011).

Joseph Stiglitz, *The Economic Role of the State* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

4. (Jan. 30) Introduction to cost-benefit analysis

Jonathan Wolff, "Safety," *Ethics and Public Policy*, ch. 4.

Harvey S. Rosen, Bev Dahlby, Roger S. Smith and Paul Boothe, "Cost-Benefit Analysis," ch. 7 of *Public Finance in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson, 2003).

5. (Feb. 6) Debates over cost-benefit analysis

Amartya Sen, "The Discipline of Cost-Benefit Analysis," *Journal of Legal Studies*, 29 (2000).

Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), ch. 8.

Cass Sunstein, "Cognition and Cost-Benefit Analysis," *Journal of Legal Studies*, 29 (2000).

6. (Feb. 13) Health care

Jonathan Wolff, "Health," *Ethics and Public Policy*, ch. 6.

Michael Drummond, "Allocating Resources," *International Journal of Technology Assessment in Health Care*, 6 (1990).

Dan Brock, "Ethical Issues in the Use of Cost Effectiveness Analysis for the Prioritization of Health Resources," in G. Khushf, *Handbook of Bioethics* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2004).

Michael D Rawlins, Anthony J Culyer, "National Institute for Clinical Excellence and its Value Judgments," *British Medical Journal*, 329 (2004).

7. (Feb. 27) Environment

Giles Atkinson and Susana Mourato, "Environmental Cost-Benefit Analysis," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 33 (2008).

Peter A. Diamond; Jerry A. Hausman, "Contingent Valuation: Is Some Number better than No Number?," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 8 (1994).

David Pearce, Ben Groom, Cameron Hepburn and Phoebe Koundouri, “Valuing the Future,” *World Economics*, 4 (2003).

8. (March 6) Paternalism

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978).

9. (March 13) Addiction

Jonathan Wolff, “Gambling” and “Drugs,” in *Ethics and Public Policy*, ch. 2-3.

Joseph Heath, *Filthy Lucre* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2008), ch. 11.

10. (March 20) Cognitive bias

Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler, “Libertarian Paternalism is not an Oxymoron,” *University of Chicago Law Review*, 70 (2003).

Bruno Frey and Alois Stutzer, “Mispredicting Utility and the Political Process,” in Edward J. McCafferey and Joel Slemrod, *Behavioral Public Finance* (New York: Russell Sage, 2006).

11. (March 27) Aggregative Democracy

Gerald Strom, *The Logic of Lawmaking*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1990), chap. 1-3.

12. (April 3) Deliberative Democracy

Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), chap. 1.