

THE ENDS OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE

HONORS, SPRING 2004

Professor Brat

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TEXTS

Justice and Economic Distribution

Second Edition, John Arthur and William Shaw, Prentice Hall 1991

History of Political Philosophy

Edited by Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, Chicago, 1987

A Short History of Ethics

Alasdair MacIntyre, Notre Dame, 1998

Economics, Logical Positivism and Ethics

David Brat, Craigie Grant Manuscript, 2000

COURSE GOALS

The goal of this course is too big. I want you to understand various philosophical and theological conceptions of economic justice. I also want you to see how these conceptions of justice have changed as society itself has changed over the past two millennium. I want you to gain an understanding of which justice conceptions are compatible with each other and which are not. I want you to understand the assumptions required by various conceptions of justice. I want you to ask and answer to what extent any of these conceptions has changed the world. I want you to read the best material on these subjects and summarize what you have read. I want you to link at least some of this material to a modern issue of economic justice that is important to you. I then want to link these issues of economic justice to the field of economic methodology. We must assess whether these Justice claims are knowledge claims or whether they are “meaningless” claims. It seems that this must matter. I want you to do all of this in one semester.

In order to make this more realistic, I have assigned three secondary texts which will guide us through the main issues in economic justice and social change. The first two texts are Strauss's History of Political Philosophy and MacIntyre's Short Ethics. I have assigned these texts first because I don't think it is possible to start talking about economic justice without first being introduced to the history of these concepts. For example, you might read a current article about virtue theory and think it is one person's latest account of economic justice. Instead it represents a 2400 year old tradition that started with Aristotle and remains quite robust to this day. You have to at least be familiar with the main strands of thought on economic justice. Strauss's text is also excellent at showing the types of communities and economic systems that are compatible with various conceptions of economic justice.

If you read these texts well and work hard, you will be able to move on to an understanding of the third text.

The third text is a reader in Economic Justice proper. The first chapter is the most important summary of the course and we will spend the first day of the course getting this chapter in our minds. After this chapter, we will get into the most celebrated modern discussion of economic justice, that between Rawls and Nozick. The rest of the book is a commentary on this debate and provides additional variations on and around the themes set by these two modern theorists.

The final text is written by your professor. It too is a reader, but this time in the history of economic methodology. The final goal of this course is to get you to link the history of ethics from above with the methodology of modern economics and to begin the critical thinking process. There are endless ways to link these two disciplines and we will examine some of the more celebrated and famous debates which show how logical positivism may have brought about the END of ECONOMIC JUSTICE. That is the course title. If we can get to this stage of analysis, the course will have been a success.

GRADING

The most important part of this course is the reading and understanding of the selected texts. In order to test this most important aspect of the course, I will weight the attendance, reading and participation portion of this course at

60 %. Several research papers will measure your understanding of the material assigned. A ten page final term paper on a topic of your choice, and okayed by me, will count for 20 %. The final exam will count 20 %.

ATTENDANCE, READING AND PARTICIPATION

I will assign a set of readings every day, and a heavier assignment for the weekends. As this is a reading course, I would like you to summarize each paragraph you read, and keep this typed record for the final exam. The final exam will be open notes and this typed record along with your class notes on it will help you on the final exam.

Every day you will receive a grade of either 10, 6, 3 or 0 for the quality of the typed reading notes you hand in at the end of each class and for the class participation you offer while we are together. I will average these scores and they will constitute part of the 60 % noted above. It is obvious that I am giving a huge incentive for timely, complete and quality understanding of the course material. It is also an ideal time to earn an A by getting 10 points instead of a D by earning 6 or lower each day. I will waive this entire part IF as an Honors class, you can pull this off through class discussion on a daily basis. As soon as performance wanes, I will quickly turn back to written requirements. It is up to you as a class. You will all start the day with an F. You must get up to an A for the day by demonstrating excellence in the material assigned.

ATTENDANCE

You are expected to attend all class sessions. That is the whole point of this course. We will be reading and discussing the chapters together. If you miss a class, you will not receive any of the points for the day. If you are sick, you must provide me with a Dr. note and make up any work missed. Missing class for any other reason will have to be discussed

Four misses in this class results in automatic dismissal from the class.

Being late to class will count as one miss.

You must have the typed notes summarizing the day's reading to enter class. No notes, no class. The goal is to share our responses to the reading not to take notes from the Professor or from others. (Waived if content is present).

Keep all of your typed responses in hard form on paper and also backed up on a floppy disk. Each days notes must be stapled and handed in at the end of class. I will return them with a grade by the next class. After using them on the final exam, with the notes you have written in the margins, I will collect them and use them to grade your final exam responses. Hint: leave plenty of space on your typed notes for in-class notes. The final exam should be a cake walk if you do this well.

TYPED RESPONSES

The typed responses to the readings are a summary of what you have read. I want you to pick out the key ideas in each paragraph and link them to the key idea in the previous paragraph. This is difficult material and there is no way to take a short-cut through this type of reading. You may take some of the phrases directly from the reading but you must show me that you understand what it means by summarizing it, not just copying it.

Everyone will have their own style and way of capturing what is on the page. You will see that the grading is much more on the attempt and work effort than on an accurate philosophical summary of the material, although I want you to aim at that target as well.

EACH RESPONSE MUST HAVE YOUR TYPED FULL NAME, THE NAME OF THE TEXT, THE NAME AND NUMBER OF THE CHAPTER AND THE PAGES ASSIGNED ON THE FIRST PAGE EVERY DAY. (STAPLED) DOUBLE SPACE THE TYPING AND SKIP AN EXTRA LINE BETWEEN EACH PARAGRAPH SUMMARY. EVERY TIME YOU HIT A NEW PAGE IN THE TEXT, TYPE A PAGE NUMBER, SKIP A LINE, AND THEN CONTINUE SUMMARIZING THE TEXT.

AT THE END OF EACH CHAPTER, DRAW A TYPED LINE _____, AND THEN TYPE THE NEW CHAPTER NAME AND NUMBER AND PAGE NUMBER AND KEEP MOVING ON.

TRIVIAL STUFF

We can switch rooms if I find a better one.

We can have coffee in class if we choose.

We can alter the course material if you offer good reasons.

I will be in my office every day for help, if you need it.

I do not like voice mail, only email.

You can hand in parts of the term paper for an early grade.

Please act like you are awake in class as a courtesy to all.

Showing up late will earn a zero for the day's class.

If you are over 10 minutes late, please continue to sleep in. One miss.

Please take notes on your typed responses to save you time.

FUTURE READING IN ETHICS AND JUSTICE:

Plato, The Republic.

Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, Books I and II.

God, The Bible, Old and New Testaments.

Calvin, John, Institutes of the Christian Religion, (Book III, Chp. X & Book IV, Chp. 1 Sel.2,3)

Locke, John, Second Essay Concerning Civil Government

Rousseau, Jean Jacques, The Social Contract & Emile

Kant, Immanuel, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals

Mill, John Stuart, Utilitarianism

Marx, Karl & Engles, Frederick in The Marx-Engels Reader

(Communist Manifesto, Gotha Program, Socialism: Utopian & Scientific,
Preface to a Critique of Political Economy)

Niebuhr, Reinhold, Moral Man and Immoral Society, Chp. 3.

Fromm, Eric, Marx=s Concept of Man, (1-83, 140-162)

Harrington, Michael, Socialism.

Von Mises, Ludwig, Socialism.

Hirsh, Social Limits to Growth.

Roemer, John, Free to Lose.

Okun, Arthur, Equality and Efficiency.

Friedman, Milton, Capitalism and Freedom. (Chps. 1,2,10,12)