The Exeter College Summer Programme
at Exeter College in the University of Oxford

Contemporary Political Philosophy

This course is a critical introduction to major debates in contemporary political philosophy and will include treatment of topics such as justice, globalization, citizenship and refugees. An additional theme will be the inclusiveness of liberal political theory. The course will consider objections from thinkers motivated by concern about social and political exclusion, notably based on the categories of gender, race and cultural difference.

Course Objectives
The main aim of this course is to introduce students to important concepts in contemporary political philosophy. More generally, the unit seeks to equip students with general research, work and expression skills that will help them in later employment. Among the generic skills this unit seeks to develop are:

- Comprehension skills: understanding the ideas and arguments presented in texts and in class discussions.
- Critical thinking skills: how to analyse and evaluate arguments.
- Problem-solving skills: how to apply theories and knowledge to the real world.
- Communication skills: how to express and present your ideas clearly and logically.
- Creative-thinking skills: how to develop new ideas and theories and support them with sound argument.

The course is designed to be multidisciplinary and is suitable for students of all disciplines who have a strong interest in philosophy, politics and political theory, and history of the twentieth century. There are no prerequisites and no previous knowledge of either philosophy or politics is required, but would be an advantage.

Teaching Methods and Assessment
- 12 x 1.25hr Lectures (15hrs)
- 6 x 1.25hr Seminars (7.5hrs)
- 4 x 1.25hr Tutorials (5hrs)

This course will be taught by lectures, seminars and tutorials. A short oral presentation on one aspect of one of the lecture topics will be required as part of seminar participation. It is essential that students participate in seminar discussions and thoroughly prepare for each lecture, seminar and tutorial. The emphasis will be on careful reading of philosophical works as well as on open discussion and peer learning. Lectures, seminars and tutorials are required, as is the reading set for each lecture, and the oral presentation. It is vital that you do all the set reading before each lecture in order to be able to follow and participate in discussions.
Final Assessment: An essay of no more than 3,000 words (40%), a final three-hour written examination (40%), oral presentation (10%) and participation in seminar discussion (10%).
Detailed Lecture List

1. Introduction: What is Political Philosophy and what has it to do with contemporary life?

2. Social Justice

3. Political Justice

4. Ideal versus non-Ideal Theory

5. The Libertarian View

6. Feminist Critiques of the Liberal Paradigm

7. Race Matters
Ai-Thu Dang, ‘Eyes wide shut: John Rawls’s silence on racial justice’, Documents de travail du Centre d’Economie de la Sorbonne (2015.30)

8. Embodied and Epistemic Injustice

9. Global Justice


10 Refugees and Citizens

11 Migrants and Citizens

12. Lies, Truth, and Politics

Further Suggested Reading and Reference


