

Political and Social Philosophy

Phil 108-80

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Online (asynchronous)

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We all want to live in a just society. But what does a just society actually look like? In this course we will examine a number of theories of what makes a society just. We will dive deeply into John Stuart Mill's utilitarian theory of justice, Robert Nozick's libertarian theory, John Rawls's liberal egalitarian theory, and Karl Marx's socialist theory. Along the way we will talk about a number of contemporary political issues: Is valuing free speech compatible with de-platforming speakers with offensive views? Is drug use something the state should try to limit? Should people be able to donate however much they want to political campaigns? Does capitalism necessarily exploit workers? All of these debates have roots in rival conceptions of a just society.

Our goal in this class is not just to discover how philosophers have answered these questions, but to think about how we should answer these questions for ourselves and for our society today.