Political Theory

Petra Kosonen, Worcester College
petra.kosonen@worc.ox.ac.uk

Tutorials are on Teams – I will send you invitations.

You should write 6 essays in total. Please email me your essays by 2pm on the day before our meeting. Your essay should be about 1,000 to 1,500 words in length. Don’t tackle everything in a single essay and be selective about your readings. The reading lists below are quite extensive, so that you can follow up on the issues you find interesting. Pick one interesting aspect of the topic, pick an argument/view that you like or dislike, and try to come up with interesting arguments. Try to have a clear structure and write in a simple and concise manner.

Useful resources:
https://philpapers.org
https://plato.stanford.edu

Podcasts:
http://www.philosophybites.com

Advice on writing philosophy essays:
http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html
http://oyc.yale.edu/sites/default/files/philosophy-paper.pdf

Week 1

Ideal Theory and Realism

Essay topic:

1. Must the recommendations of political theories be feasible?
Key reading

Further reading

Week 2
Liberty

Essay topic:
1. Is freedom best understood as the absence of constraints?

Key reading

Further reading

Week 3
Equality

Essay topic:
1. Does the Levelling Down Objection give us reason to reject equality?
Key reading

Further reading
- Larry Temkin, Inequality, (1993), Chapter 9 - 9.5.

Week 4
Feminism
Essay topic:
1. What weight should feminists give to the value of individual liberty?

Key reading
-Nussbaum, Martha C., Sex and Social Justice (1999), chs. 2 'The Feminist Critique of Liberalism'

Further reading

Week 5
Rights
Essay topic:
1. Are there any natural rights and, if so, are there any which are absolute?

Key reading
Further reading

**Week 6**

**Justice and Injustice**

Essay topic:

1. ‘Theories of justice concern the public rules of political institutions rather than personal choices of individuals.’ Discuss.

*Key reading*

*Further reading*

**Week 7**

**Democracy**

Essay topic:

1. Is democracy intrinsically just?

*Key reading*

*Further reading*

**Week 8**

**Libertarianism**

Essay topic: What is left-libertarianism and how plausible is it?

**Key reading**

**Further reading**