Rawls’ *Theory of Justice* has become an ubiquitous point of either reference or criticism for political theorists of all *couleurs* and philosophical temperaments. In order to provide a path through the still growing jungle of interpretations and variations of “Rawlsianisms,” the seminar offers a critical discussion of three main ideas behind Rawls’ *Theory of Justice*: Liberal egalitarianism, the problem of justification in ethics, and the Kantian ideal of the person.

All interested students are welcome. Credits will be given for regular (intellectual) participation (which includes the preparation of the readings). Term papers will be accepted.


**I. The basic ethical claims:**

**Oct. 8th:** Rights-consequentialism: “Justice as Fairness” and the claim of the priority of the Right over the Good

*Readings:*
*TJ*, sect. 1-3, 9, 30.


**Oct. 15th:** The liberal limits of (in)equality: “Distributive Justice”

**TJ, sect. 11-15.**


**II. The status of the contractarian argument in reflective equilibrium**

**Oct. 22nd:** Conflicting interests and the problem of justification in ethical theory

Readings:

**TJ, sect. 4, chap. III (sect. 20-23), sect. 87.**


**Oct: 29th:** The basic structure

What does it mean to assert that the basic structure is the primary subject of justice? Should it be its *exclusive* subject? (Christian Schemmel)

Readings:

TJ, sect. 1-2, 10.


*Suggested further readings:*

**III. Ethical theory and the concept of a person**

**Nov. 5th:** What is a Kantian theory of the person about?

*Readings:*
**TJ**, sect. 40.

**Nov. 12th:** Persons as citizens in liberal democracy

*Readings:*
**TJ**, chap. VIII (sect. 69-77) and chap. IX (sect. 78, 79).
Nov. 19th: Self-respect
What kind of good is self-respect, or its ‘social bases’, and what is its relationship to the other ‘primary goods’? In particular, what is its relationship to equal basic liberties on the one hand, and to distributive (in)equality, on the other? (Christian Schemmel)

Readings:
TJ, sect. 67, 80-82.

Suggested further readings:

Nov. 26th: How egalitarian is Rawls’ egalitarianism? Some Criticisms from the Right and from the Left

Readings:

Suggested further readings:
Dec. 3rd: Extensions and criticisms of Rawls’ idea of persons and reasonableness

Readings:

Dec. 10th: Synopsis and further discussion