

Political Ethics

5th semester (3rd year, 1st semester)

Wednesday, 10-14, IV/5

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Goal and description of the course

The aims of the course:

- the discussion of some of the important topics of contemporary political ethics
- not a systematic discussion of the major ethical doctrines and their connection to political theory
 - but the discussion of certain problems from the point of view of applied ethics

The approach is not normative → the standpoint will not be only ethical,

- but will include other elements of political decision making as well:
 - political context,
 - administrative capacity,
 - technical abilities,
 - "rationality", "scientific truth", the opinion of the „experts”, etc.

The topics will all be controversial, showing that the values standing behind a political decision are more often than not incompatible in certain cases, even if in themselves they may all be noble, elevate, etc.

- In itself, an ethical solution to a problem
 - ↳ is not enough in giving the "proper" direction to a political decision.
- Furthermore,
 - "reason" may collide with moral considerations,
 - and both of them may collide
 - with the goals and abilities of decision-makers in a certain situation.
- Questions like the "common good", "relativism", etc. can be discussed only after seeing how others faced difficult decisions.

Consequently, the work is not organised according to "lectures" and "seminars",

- but will take the form of a workshop.
- The core of each meeting will be a topic, exemplified by several texts that will be read and discussed in class. The textbook used will be Amy Gutmann – Dennis Thompson (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, 4th edition, Wadsworth.
- By definition, reading a text means also taking notes of it. (The requirements will be given during the first class.)

- This is supplemented by looking for information connected to the topics discussed.
- There is a list of topics, and the students will prioritise them according to their interest – deadline: November the 7th

By the end of the meeting, the students should prepare the plan of the paper they will write as a home work.

- The paper will be approximately 1.5-3 pages long (Times New Roman 12, line spacing 1.5), with references, bibliography, etc.
- The full list of requirements (structure, paragraph, etc.) will be given during the first class.
- All seminars will start with a discussion of the papers.

By the end of the semester (for the final examination) each student will have to write a longer paper (8-10 pages) on a topic of his/her choice.

- the topic will be chosen by the 7th of November
- The papers will be presented at the last meeting, in a sort of a "conference".
- However, the papers will be constantly discussed during the semester in each stage of their development: from the choice of the topic, to the bibliography, from the thesis sentence to the structure, etc.

Consequently, the structure of the meetings will be as follows:

- discussion of the papers from the previous meeting (the home works)
- discussion of the term papers
- short presentation of the topic and the texts of the week
- reading interrupted by discussing (rather frequently), taking notes
- preparing the plan of the homework

Bibliography

- Calore, G. (1996). Natural rights. In Clarke, Paul Berry - Linzey, Andrew, Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society. London - New York: Routledge.
- Candelaria, M. (1995). Power. In Roth, John K., International Encyclopedia of Ethics. London - Chicago.
- Clarke, P. B. (1996). Politics. In Clarke, Paul Berry - Linzey, Andrew, Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society. London - New York: Routledge.
- Coady, C. A. (1991). Politics and the problem of dirty hands. In Singer, Peter (ed.), A Companion to Ethics. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 373-383.
- Curran, C. E. (1996). Natural law. In Clarke, Paul Berry - Linzey, Andrew, Dictionary of Ethics, Theology and Society. London - New York: Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel (2000). Essential Works of Foucault, Volume III: Power. ed. James D. Faubion . New York: The New Press.
- Gaus, G. F. (2000). Political Concepts and Political Theories. Westview Press.
- Geertz, Clifford (1986): The Uses of Diversity, lecture delivered and the University of

Michigan Nov. 8 1985 in The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Vol. VII ed. by McMurrin Sterling M., Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press and Cambridge – London – Melbourne – Sydney: Cambridge University Press .

Paul, G. E. (1995). Communitarianism. In Roth, John K., International Encyclopedia of Ethics. London - Chicago.

Weber, Max (1998): A politika mint hivatás, in Tanulmányok. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó.

Grading

According to:

- activity in class
- the papers
- the term paper

Downgrading:

- papers handed in with delay
- regular and serious problems of argumentation, structure, etc.

Attendance

Compulsory at min. 70% of the meetings.

Plan of the meetings

1.

Introduction. Presentation of the meetings

- presentation of the work plan for the semester
- what it means taking notes
- most important aspects to be taken into consideration when writing a paper
 - introduction, body of the text, conclusion
 - the paragraph
 - statements should be accompanied by arguments
 - references

2.

Max Weber: Politics as a Vocation (I)

A.

- short presentation of Weber's Politics as a Vocation
 - the qualities of the politician
 - passion
 - sense of responsibility
 - sense of proportion – look reality in the face
- the relationship between ethics and politics
 - some: no relationship
 - others: the same ethical norms should be followed
 - in the family,
 - in business,
 - and in politics

BUT

- what is typical of politics? → its typical tool, violence
- the relationship between goals and means
 - goals do not ennoble the means
 - Bolsheviks
 - but their opponents say the same
- the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount in politics → responsibility
- the two types of ethics:
 - the ethics of conviction
 - the ethics of responsibility
- the problem of parrhesia: truth-telling

- another absolute ethics that should be seen with responsibility

B.

- film: Adam Curtis: The Trap, 1st part

3.

Max Weber: Politics as a Vocation (II)

A.

- part II

B.

- film: Adam Curtis: The Trap, 2nd part

4.

Max Weber: Politics as a Vocation (III)

A.

- part III

B.

- film: Adam Curtis: The Trap, 3rd part

5.

Politics and Violence

- the morality of war
- distinction between the justice of war and the justice of the means used to fight

Gutmann, Amy – Thompson, Dennis (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 3-70.

6.

Deception and Secrecy

- what is deception?
- can deception be right?
- how can one justify deception in politics?
- the difference between deception and secrecy

Gutmann, Amy – Thompson, Dennis (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 74-112.

7.

Privacy of Officials

- the difference between the ethical rules of public and private life
- the interpenetration of the two spheres in public discourse
- how can private life be relevant in the public sphere?

Gutmann, Amy – Thompson, Dennis (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 115-157.

8. Manipulation

- emotion and argument in appealing to people
- when is manipulation justified in politics
- the relationship between manipulation and deception

Gutmann, Amy – Thompson, Dennis (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 162-189.

9. Official Disobedience

- accountability: in a democratic process, vs. the bureaucracy (i. e. non-elected officials)
- the obligations of officials:
 - to the laws and the rules of the institution
 - to their superiors
 - to their conscience
 - to the public
- official disobedience and civil disobedience

Gutmann, Amy – Thompson, Dennis (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 193-257.

10. Policy Analysis

- the problem of conflicting goals
- policy analysis
 - cost-benefit
 - cost-effective
 - risk-benefit
- the assumptions of utilitarianism
 - there is a neutral common measure of welfare (or satisfaction)
 - this common measure helps us compare policies
- criticisms of this type of policy analysis
- the problems of quantification
- is the value of human lives comparable
- taking decisions as a political process instead of a bureaucratic one
 - educating the public in making decisions
 - democratic deliberation

Gutmann, Amy – Thompson, Dennis (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 264-311.

11. Distributive Justice

- what should be the principles governing the distribution of goods?
- utilitarians: maximise the welfare of most citizens
- libertarians: governments should not distribute goods
- egalitarians: in a society there are duties of aid and responsibility toward others
- criticisms of egalitarians
- problems of democratic distributive justice

Gutmann, Amy – Thompson, Dennis (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 315-383.

12. Equal Opportunity

- how should one fight chronic, historic inequality?
- first of all in educational and employment policies
- the non-discrimination principle
- non-discrimination and affirmative action
- preferential treatment and historical injustice

Gutmann, Amy – Thompson, Dennis (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 388-427.

13. Liberty and Morality

- liberty as autonomy: sovereignty over oneself
- attacks on this principle: paternalism and moralism
- restrictions of the freedom of choice
 - other, equally important values (happiness, health, stability, welfare, etc.) may collide with liberty
 - people are not always able to exercise freedom in a responsible way
- justifications and criticisms of paternalistic intervention
- liberal and conservative moralism
- the criteria of justified moralism
- authority and procedure in making paternalistic or moralistic decisions

Gutmann, Amy – Thompson, Dennis (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 432-464.

14. Liberty and Life

- who has the right to life?
- the right to life and the right to choice

- personal morality vs. political morality
- there is hardly a rational solution to the argument
- no policy is morally neutral – this is visible especially in cases of unsolvable conflicts
 - what are the possible solutions?
 - fair compromise
 - procedurally fair decision

Gutmann, Amy – Thompson, Dennis (2006): Ethics and Politics: Cases and Comments, Thomson Wadsworth, pp. 468-557.

15.

Presentation of the Term Papers

- students may propose other topics as well, but the texts to be worked upon should be proposed by them