Instructor: Melissa S. Williams
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Class meetings: Larkin 214, Thursdays, 10-12 (Note that the room is booked until 1:00 PM in case we need additional time for class discussion. Please do not book other commitments into this time slot.)

Course description:

Over the last several decades, the Western academy’s theoretical understandings of justice and democracy have been profoundly reshaped by the wave of critical engagement by feminists, critical race theorists, queer theorists, and postcolonial theorists who drew attention to the ways in which both actually existing political and social institutions and theoretical models of justice and democracy have reinforced patterns of deep structural inequality along the lines of race, class, gender, culture and sexuality. Taken together, this wave of criticism drew attention to the dangers of false claims to universality for normative theorizing, and to the social situatedness of the theoretical enterprise as something to which theorists must attend if they are to maintain a healthy critical perspective on their own activity.

Although the theoretical debates unleashed by critical theorists of difference are still playing out, most of those debates have remained within the larger background framework of the territorially bounded constitutional state as the principal site of the most important theoretical questions concerning both justice and democracy. Meanwhile, the dynamics of globalization have rendered irresistible the judgment that the possibilities of democracy and justice within territorially bounded constitutional states are deeply conditioned by institutions, organizations and social and economic processes that exceed the political agency of those states. Accordingly, a growing number of political theorists have, in recent years, shifted their attention from justice and democracy within states to the criteria for assessing duties of justice across borders and the possibility of supranational, transnational or global democracy.

This course is governed by two broad purposes. First, we will simply canvass some of the most influential writings on global justice and global democracy and some of the leading critical responses to these. In doing so, we will explore the fundamental questions in normative theory that these works raise and address: What generates duties of justice, as contrasted with duties of humanitarian concern? Is it possible to owe duties of justice to people with whom we do not share dense social, political and economic relationships? Does the link between democracy and political legitimacy obtain only within the boundaries of sovereign territorial states? Or is it possible to disentangle the constructs of sovereignty from those of democratic agency, authorization, and accountability?
Because of time constraints, we will not be able to survey all the relevant scholarly debates in great depth. Instead, our purpose will be to develop an understanding of some of the most central debates in the literature, which you can explore in greater depth in your written work in the course.

The second major goal of the course is to explore the social (or political) imaginaries that are operating in the theoretical accounts of global justice and global democracy that we are studying. The idea of a social imaginary is drawn from Charles Taylor, who uses the term to denote “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underline these expectations.”

The purpose in drawing our attention to the social or political imaginaries that are operative in these influential theories of global justice and global democracy is to try to gain critical purchase on the fact that these theories – like the theories of justice and democracy that were criticized by the difference theorists – have been developed on the basis of Western intellectual traditions by scholars working within the Western academy. The intuition underlying this attention to political imaginaries is that as globalization proceeds, our theories of politics – and in particular our normative theories of global politics – ought to avoid the dangers of false universalism and false neutrality to which the critique from difference so powerfully drew our attention. Where should we look for intellectual resources through which to globalize our normative understandings of global politics and institutions? What would a globalized critical theory of difference look like, as applied to theories of global justice and global democracy?

Course readings:

A. Course Texts (marked [CT] in syllabus below)

The following texts are required reading for the course. They are available at the University of Toronto Bookstore.


B. Online sources (marked [OL] in syllabus)

Where possible, I have assigned readings that are available through the UofT Libraries website (or through Google Scholar, accessed from a UofT account).

Course requirements:

• Participation. Each member of the seminar is expected to attend every class having carefully studied the readings and having read response essays on the Blackboard site. Participation in class discussion, presentation, and preparedness will count for 20 percent of your mark in the course.

• Response essays. Four times during the semester, each student will prepare a 2-page (500 word) critical response to the week’s readings. These essays must be posted on the course Blackboard site no later than 6:00 PM the evening before class. Each essay will be worth 5 percent of your final mark, for a total of 20 percent.

• Term paper proposal. Due in class, Feb. 28. Write a two-page proposal for your term paper, stating your thesis question and including a bibliography of the main sources you will be relying upon. Your bibliography should be comprised of at least two or three major works from the syllabus, but should also include sources from the wider literature to which you have been guided through your research. This proposal is worth 10 percent of your final mark.

• Term papers. Students are required to complete one term paper on a topic of their choice which is based closely on the assigned readings. Term papers are due no later than noon on the last day of class (April 5), and should be handed in at the beginning of class that day. Undergraduate term papers should be 15-20 pages in length; graduate papers should be 25-30 pages. Late penalties will accrue at the rate of 2 percent per day, including weekends. All papers should be submitted in hard copy, but please be prepared to submit a version electronically if requested. The term paper is worth 50 percent of your final mark in the course.

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I. Introduction: What is a Political Imaginary?

Week 1 (Jan. 10): Introduction

A. The concept of social and political imaginaries


Note: If you prefer, read the book-length version of this argument in Modern Social Imaginaries (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

Suggested:


Week 2 (Jan. 17): Imagining the Global, Imagining Territory

A. Global political imaginaries

### B. Territoriality and political imaginaries

Read at least two of the following:


Recommended:


### II. Imagining Global Justice

**Week 3 (Jan. 24): “Peoples” and Global Justice**


Suggested:


**Week 4 (Jan. 31): Cosmopolitan Justice & Its Critics**

Thomas Pogge, World Poverty and Human Rights (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), chapters 1, 4 and 5. [CT]


**Week 5 (Feb. 7): Cosmopolitan Justice & Its Critics (cont’d)**


**Week 6 (Feb. 14): Cosmopolitan Justice and Its Critics (cont’d)**

Allen Buchanan, Justice, Legitimacy and Self-Determination in International Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Synopsis and Chapter 4, pp. 1-13, 191-230. [BB]


*** READING WEEK ***

**Week 7 (Feb. 28): Provincializing Global Justice**
Neera Chandoke, “How Much is Enough, Mr Thomas?” in Allison Jaggar (ed.), *Thomas Pogge and His Critics* (Polity, 2010), pp. 66-83


Suggested:


III. Imagining Global Democracy

**Week 8 (Mar. 4): Cosmopolitan Democracy**


**Week 9 (Mar. 11): Cosmopolitan Democracy (cont’d)**


**Week 10 (Mar. 18): Trans-Demotic Democracy**


**Week 11 (Mar. 25): Global Discursive Democracy**

**Week 12 (Apr. 2): Global Democracy and Difference**


**Further suggested readings:**

