

PHIL 195: Seminar in Philosophy of Law

Political Freedom: A Philosophical Introduction

Tuesdays from 6 pm to 8:45 pm, Spring 2024, SH 241 (in-person)

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That all people have a right to enjoy fundamental freedoms is a foundational principle of democracy, but what does it mean, precisely, to be free? Are you free whenever other people allow you to do what you want? When the government coerces you to obey laws with which you disagree, does this mean you are not free? And if no one prevents you from doing what you like, but you have no resources to achieve your goals, are you truly free?

This seminar is a philosophical introduction to political freedom. Weekly topics will include the following:

- Freedom as the Absence of Restraint (Hobbes)
- Freedom as Collective Self-Government (Rousseau)
- The Distinction between Positive and Negative Freedom (I. Berlin; C. Taylor)
- Freedom as Non-Domination (P. Pettit)
- The Marxist Critique of Liberal Freedom
- The Feminist Critique of Liberal Freedom (C. Pateman)
- The Relationship between Liberal Freedom and Racism (C. Mills)
- Religious Freedom and the Rights of Minorities (C. Laborde)
- Freedom of Movement and the Right to Migrate (A. Abizadeh)

Weekly meetings will include student presentations, short lectures, and small and large group discussions. I commit to making all reading materials freely available on Canvas.