

HI180 Theories of Tolerance

Module: History of Political Thought
Seminar Leader: Andreas Blank
Course Times: Tue, 17:00-18:30; Thu, 17:00-18:30
Email: andreasblank@hotmail.com
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

Throughout the history of political thought, theories of tolerance have had to find responses to experiences of extreme religious and ideological oppression. The core question of theories of tolerance is the question of how the stabilizing function of a plurality of religious, political and theoretical points of view for the life of societies can be demonstrated. In the early modern period, religious and political oppression derived from the Reformation and the subsequent confessionalization of the political life of European states. The earliest defenses of tolerance in the sixteenth century tried to formulate answers to these experiences by reflecting on the cognitive fallibility of human beings and on the experience of religiously motivated violence. In the seventeenth century, issues concerning toleration were discussed from the perspective of strategies of conflict resolution, which tried to provide a minimal consensus that could function as the basis for the peaceful co-existence of diverse groups. As an alternative to such conflict-resolution oriented approaches, the idea of freedom of thought began to develop in the late seventeenth century. This novel approach was more fully developed into a theory of freedom of expression in the eighteenth century, when question of the limits of toleration also became part of the agenda of political thought. Contemporary debates about toleration reflect all of these developments in the early modern period. The seminar will trace the connections between some of the central historical positions (Baruch de Spinoza, John Locke, and Voltaire) and some influential contemporary positions in political philosophy—both analytic and continental—and thereby illustrate the persisting relevance of these issues.

Requirements

Attendance

More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course.

Students should consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assessment

Learning diary (2500-3000 words), Final essay (2500-3000 words)

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C.

Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Classroom participation (30%), learning diary (30%), final essay (40%)

Schedule

Part One: Tolerance in the History of Political Thought

Week 1: Tolerance and Freedom of Thought

Tuesday (31.1.): Introduction

Thursday (2.2.): Baruch de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter 4

Week 2: Tolerance and Freedom of Thought

Tuesday (7.2.): Baruch de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter 14

Thursday (9.2.): Baruch de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter 15

Week 3: Tolerance and Freedom of Thought

Tuesday (14.2.): Baruch de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter 16

Thursday (16.2.): Baruch de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter 19

Week 4: Tolerance and Freedom of Thought/ Tolerance in Classical Liberalism

Tuesday (21.2.): Baruch de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter 20

Thursday (23.2.): John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (first half)

Week 5: Tolerance in Classical Liberalism

Tuesday (28.2.): John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (second half)

Thursday (2.3.): John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (second half continued and postscript)

Week 6: Tolerance in classical liberalism

Tuesday (7.3.): John Locke, *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration* (first half)

Thursday (9.3.): John Locke, *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration* (second half)

Week 7: Tolerance in the French Enlightenment

Tuesday (14.3.): Voltaire, *On Toleration*, chapters 4–5

Thursday (16.3.): Voltaire, *On Toleration*, chapters 6–7

Week 8: Tolerance in the French Enlightenment

Tuesday (21.3.): Voltaire, *On Toleration*, chapters 8–9

Thursday (23.3.): Voltaire, *On Toleration*, chapters 12–14

Week 9: Tolerance in the French Enlightenment

Tuesday (28.3.): Voltaire, *On Toleration*, chapter 18

Thursday (30.3.) Voltaire, *On Toleration*, chapter 22

Part II: Tolerance in Contemporary Political Thought

Week 10: Cognitive humility and religious tolerance

Tuesday (4.4.): Philip L. Quinn, “On Religious Diversity and Tolerance”

Thursday (6.4.): Quinn continued

Week 11: Spring break

Week 12: Tolerance, respect and dialogue

Tuesday (18.4.): Wendy Brown & Rainer Forst, *The Power of Tolerance*

Thursday (20.4.): Brown & Forst continued

Week 13: Tolerance in contemporary liberalism

Tuesday (25.4.): Colin Macleod, “Liberal Neutrality or Liberal Tolerance?”

Thursday (27.4.): Macleod continued

Week 14: Tolerance in contemporary liberalism

Tuesday (2.5.): Michael Sandel, “Judgmental Toleration”

Thursday (4.5.): Sandel continued

Week 15: Contemporary liberalism and the limits of tolerance

Tuesday (9.5.): Allison Harell, “The Limits of Tolerance in Diverse Societies: Hate Speech and Tolerance Norms among Youth”

Thursday (11.5.) Harell continued

Scheduled class times are available online under the relevant course heading:

<http://www.berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses/spring-2017/>

Essay Deadlines

Learning diary: May 12

Final essay: May 19