

*Power & Invisibility**(Ethics & Public Policy)*

POSC 384/484, PHIL 384

Case Western Reserve University

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T 4:30-7PM

(October 20th's class will be rescheduled for Thursday the 22nd at the same time)
 (Class on Tuesday, November 22nd will be rescheduled for Wednesday, December 9th,
 from 5-8PM at my house in Shaker Heights, dinner included)

“Policy” and its cognate words “police,” “polite,” and “politics” have their root in the Greek word *polis*, which meant, quite simply, *city-state*. Policy has historically had a relation to ethics through philosophy via Plato’s *Politeia (Republic)* –an idealized “policy” whose goal was complete virtue in any citizen. This was a totalitarian ideal. But what is policy when it is grounded instead in democracy? We will have to approach policy through the *assumption of autonomy* –the moral core of democracy. Autonomy’s problem is power, and the main obstacle to legitimacy is moral invisibility. In this course, we focus on the dynamics of autonomy, power, and moral invisibility in order to assess existing policy, to explore the conditions under which any policy could be acceptable, and to identify ways in which policies should be changed. There can be no just *policy* without keeping open the possibility of *politics*, understood as a radical challenge to the limits of visibility framed by existing policy. In a democracy, moral invisibility is the basic threat to policy.

Office hours: Wednesdays 1:30-3:30 –but only with a prior appointment (which can even be made by email Wednesday morning, provided I see the email in time and reply)

Lunch: You get to take your professor to lunch for free (it’s a college program). Anytime you want me to join you and friends for lunch, let me know. I’d love to eat & talk with you.

Class formatFirst half: Workshop

Whole group, small group, pair or solo activities focused on:

- (1) Brainstorming
- (2) Writing
- (3) Close reading
- (4) Discussing our research projects

~ break ~

Second half: Lecture & conversation

Lecture for 30 minutes followed by conversation for 45 minutes

The purpose of reading & conversation in our class

Close reading and good –pleasant, open-minded, thoughtful, and authentic-conversation are a hallmark of liberal arts education. They go together. Reading alone –thoughtfully, carefully, and often more than once for the same reading- is a mark of being an intellectual or a scholar. Reading together is just as much, as well. And conversing about what readings mean and the questions that arise from them is probably the purest distillation of the life of the mind.

That being so, the purposes of reading and conversing in our class are at least these:

- (1) To listen really carefully to someone who has thought meditatively and with rigor and craft about some topic of the course
- (2) To listen to *ourselves* in solitude
- (3) To listen to each other since we each have a unique view of life from out of our life experiences
- (4) To have a whole which is bigger than the sum of its parts.

Class ideas for reading

You are encouraged to propose readings, viewings or listening for class that can interrupt the flow of the others or be read at the end of the course. I will regularly ask for ideas. When you propose a reading, please be prepared to answer three questions (or you might even answer them in an email to me that I can share with the class):

- (1) How does your proposed reading, viewing or listening *respond* to questions we have been asking in class?
- (2) How does it engage these questions *in depth or in a meaningful way?*
- (3) How much time will we probably need for the reading, viewing, or listening?

Applied research topics for this semester

By **September 8th** at the latest, you should decide which of the following four topics you want to focus on for applied policy research all semester. Once you pick a topic, you should not switch to another one, because the purpose of the topic is to allow you to go to deeper and deeper philosophical and practical layers of policy complexity as the semester proceeds. I wouldn't overthink your choice –go with what interests you immediately and trust that it will become more interesting with time.

You are more than welcome to pair up with a classmate or to form small groups. I will provide some time the second week of class to discuss these options.

- (1) *Sound of Da Police* (federal & city politics). The Holder Report issued by the U.S. Department of Justice cited the Cleveland Police Department for multiple cases of excessive use of force and demanded a reform of Cleveland policing. In the wake especially of the Tamir Rice shooting, this issue has been on the minds of many Clevelanders and even citizens nationally. What are the core moral issues raised in the contested terrain of police reform in

Cleveland? What moral questions do you find with policing? How might policing be morally reformed according to democratic values, if necessary? Questions like these and others that you find should form the subject of your research all semester.

- (2) *Sustainable Cleveland* (city politics). Mayor Jackson's office has been plugging away at creating a "Green City on a Blue Lake" for 2020, 50 years after the burning of the Cuyahoga River that incited the Clean Water Act. He formed the Office of Sustainability and holds Sustainable Cleveland every year. His approach is largely neo-liberal: using the economy and soft government policy to incite "green" development. In the light of the moral invisibility of future generations and our moral responsibilities to people globally, how well does the Mayor's initiative hold up? What are the moral justifications for a neo-liberal approach? What are the moral issues, and obstacles, at the heart of sustainability policy? Is, for example, "sustainable development" morally coherent? Questions like these and others that you find should form the subject of your research all semester.
- (3) *International Feminism* (international politics). Perhaps the single biggest policy development in humankind apart from the abolition of slavery (with Saudi Arabia being the last country to end "legal" slavery in 1963) is the gradual and still highly incomplete emancipation of women. Solidarity with oppressed women links our products to women around the globe who often make them for a mere pittance. A huge portion of humankind –women globally- still are not fully involved in their governments or economies. Violence against women is a global problem and saturates even so-called "liberal" societies and their media. What are the core moral issues of international feminist policy? What can be done in the absence of global legislation or enforcement mechanisms? If you are an international feminist, what policies should you morally support in line with democratic values? Questions like these and others that you find should form the subject of your research all semester.
- (4) *Animal Husbandry in Ohio* (state and federal politics). Ohio "always" has been and "always" will be a big agricultural state. It is also a state with a major animal husbandry economy and even a number of state universities, foremost Ohio State, to "man" it. Factory –or industrial- farming of animals is notoriously callous and even cruel to animals. Yet other animals are not included in our democracy in any obvious way except as property, unless they are classified as endangered species. Is there any moral issue with this? Groups like Cleveland Vegans or PETA think that there is, and there are even agricultural associations in this state devoted to humane animal husbandry. What if any are the moral questions at the heart of animal husbandry policy in Ohio and how, if at all, are they matters of core democratic value? Questions like these and others that you find should form the subject of your research all semester.

Flexible reading schedule

(When we will read the text is listed after the bibliographical data; not all the text must be read in each case; a lot depends on our interests.)

- (1) Plato (1992). *Republic*. G.M.A. Grube, trans. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. **August-early September**
<http://www.amazon.com/Republic-Hackett-Classics-Plato/dp/0872201368>
- (2) Martha Nussbaum (2000). *Women and Human Development: the Capabilities Approach*. New York: Cambridge University Press. **Middle September**
<http://www.amazon.com/Women-Human-Development-Capabilities-Approach/dp/0521003857>
- (3) Jacques Rancière (2004), *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. J. Rose, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. **Late September**
<http://www.amazon.com/Disagreement-Politics-Philosophy-Jacques-Ranciere/dp/0816628459>
- (4) Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall (2002). *Agents of Repression: the FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*. 2nd edition. Cambridge, MA: South End Press. **Early October**
<http://www.amazon.com/Agents-Represion-American-Movement-Classics/dp/0896086461>
- (5) Axel Honneth (1996), *The Struggle for Recognition: the Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. J. Anderson, trans. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. **Middle October**
<http://www.amazon.com/Struggle-Recognition-Grammar-Conflicts-Contemporary/dp/0262581477>
- (6) Stephen Gardiner (2011). *A Perfect Moral Storm: the Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change*. New York: Oxford University Press. **Late October**
<http://www.amazon.com/Perfect-Moral-Storm-Ethical-Environmental/dp/0199985146>
- (7) Claire Palmer (2010). *Animal Ethics in Context*. New York: Columbia University Press. **Early November**
<http://www.amazon.com/Animal-Ethics-Context-Claire-Palmer/dp/023112905X>
- (8) Nancy Fraser (2009). *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. New York: Columbia University Press. **Middle November**
<http://www.amazon.com/Scales-Justice-Reimagining-Globalizing-Directions/dp/0231146817>

All books should be bought as paper books –not as Kindle or e-books. All books are available in the Bookstore, too.

Research presentation reading

Since everyone in class will be doing applied research on one of four content areas – police reform in Cleveland, sustainability in Cleveland, international feminism, or animal policy in Ohio- the last weeks of the course (approximately 2) will be devoted to sharing our research with each other. This should include short, additional readings to make the topics clear enough to each other that we can discuss them even if we haven't been working on them.

Narrowing your focus to specific policies

The four course research topics are broad and only initially specified by policy scales and a rough set of issues in order that you can make your way into research that interest you. One of your goals this semester will be to focus in on two things: (1) the core moral issues in your topic and (2) the core –and highly specific- policy debates that surround those issues. This may take a fair amount of work. For instance, international feminism is so broad that you will almost certainly have to pick specific issues and specific institutions to get a grip on it. And it may also take work to familiarize yourself with the policies under question once you hone in on some questions and issues. But you can do it –you are taking a policy seminar. You also have each other to draw on (political scientists drawing on philosophers for moral analysis, philosophers drawing on political scientists for policy analysis?).

By **October 22nd**, you must have answers to the following two questions:

- (1) What is the core moral issue in your topic, where morality is understood democratically?
- (2) What are the few specific policy debates that most concern the core moral issue in your topic?

The purpose of writing in our class

Writing is a craft emphasized strongly by CWRU. It is also historically one of the primary exercises of philosophy. This makes the goals plain.

The main point of CWRU's writing agenda is *good, scholarly communication*. This gives us some plain goals:

- (1) To study something –as carefully and thoroughly as can be given our space and time limitations
- (2) To convey what we understand, first by articulating it clearly to ourselves and then by ensuring it is fairly straightforward and plainly intelligible to others
- (3) To contribute to common knowledge
- (4) Sometimes, also, to try to change the world.

The main point of philosophy writing is *changing your own mind (and sometimes heart or behavior; i.e., changing yourself)*. This also gives us some plain (if not easy!) goals:

- (1) To pursue questions that matter to our own personal growth by being important for human life in some way
- (2) To question authentically –not to fake asking a question that we can already answer, but to ask out of being genuinely unclear or even somewhat lost around some topic

- (3) To be thorough not only in our scholarship but also in its relationship to living, that is, to place what we study within the context of our lives and to search for consistency between the two
- (4) To try to become better people through our writing.

The basic form of a paper

Papers vary according to the form of the assignment and the forms you prefer as you craft your response to an assignment. However, I want your papers to at least include the following parts *no matter the form of the assignment*:

- (1) Close reading of class texts
- (2) Consideration in footnotes of texts, media, or empirical data outside of class that are relevant to the conversation you are having in your paper
- (3) A thesis that is a *response to a main question or problem* (e.g., In your last assignment of the semester, the thesis will be the proposal and the problem will be the intersection of a moral issue with a policy debate.)
- (4) Thoughtful objections to your argument for your thesis and charitable replies –either in the main text of your paper or in long footnotes.

Mid-term paper: Autonomy & Policy

Capability, assertion, and recognition are required for moral visibility. How do all three set limits on policy? In turn, how can policy be used to frame all three? Answering these questions amounts to the basic contours of an *autonomy-based policy*. Refer to the Nussbaum, Rancière, and Honneth texts and be sure to conceptualize for yourself the terms mentioned here.

10< pages (grad students: 15< pages), double spaced, 1" margins, numbered with no title page and CMS footnote citation with no bibliography. **Due Thursday, October 22nd by noon in my mailbox at Clark Hall 211 or under my door at Clark Hall 310.**

Required rewrite of mid-term paper: **Due Tuesday, November 17th at the beginning of class.**

Research paper: A Democratic Proposal

Explain (1) your topic, suitably narrowed down to (2) its core moral question and (3) focused policy debate around that question. Analyze (2) in terms of the core of autonomy we have explored –capability, assertion, recognition. Then provide a proposal for policy that is acceptable in terms of autonomy. Overall, be sure to justify your proposal in such a way that it protects the possibility of politics understood as a radical challenge to the division of the sensible.

15< pages (grad students 25< pages), double spaced, 1" margins, numbered with a title page and CMS footnote citation and a bibliography (note that this final paper

does have a title page and a bibliography, including in the page minimum and maximum). **Due Tuesday, December 1st at the beginning of class.**

First draft handed back **Tuesday, December 8th, by noon in my mailbox at Clark Hall 211.**

Required rewrite of research paper: **Due Tuesday, December 15th by 4:30 PM in my mailbox at Clark Hall 211 or under my door at Clark Hall 310.**

Grading

Class participation –20%

Midterm paper –30%

Final paper –50%

Rewritten papers are worth 2/3rds and the first draft 1/3rd in the calculation of the paper grade.

A -> Excellent!

B -> Solid

C -> *wobbly*

D -> Please come see me soon.

F -> Foul ball.

Lateness policy

One third of a letter grade demarking for anything up to one day late. A full letter grade for anything up to a week late. Two letter grades for anything more than a week late.

Draft policy

I am happy to look at anything from a *sentence* to a *section* of a paper, but not an entire paper before they are handed in.

When you are preparing for the final triptych, I am happy to look at an entire version of papers 1-3, but not the entire revised triptych.

Page length, formatting, etc.

The page minimum is a hard limit. But I will never see a problem with a thoughtful paper that goes over the limit if the quality is constant. Still, overly wordy papers can drag their quality down –so just be thoughtful.

Other formatting is hard-ish. Blatant disregard for standard paper formatting will show up as sloppy work. But having some typos or forgetting a small detail or two is no big deal.

Grammar & spelling

They matter, and if they are wobbly, the paper is as well.

Academic integrity

People who plagiarize will fail the course.

Attendance and tardiness

Missing more than one class will affect your participation grade, and missing four or more classes is grounds for failing the course.

Frequent tardiness will affect your participation grade, too. Regular tardiness is grounds for an overall final grade reduction.