

A Social Philosophy Course
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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Social philosophy or, broader, social thought studies relations within and between social groups, institutions, and organizations from the point of view of values, justice, identity, development, and the good life of the members of these and other groups.

Course content

1. What is Society (communal and individualist approaches)?

Social philosophy focuses on social groups rather than individuals; it frequently assumes that individuals are shaped by social relations in such contexts as freedom, values, religion, politics, language, and others.

2. Society as a whole vs. society as a set of social groups

Is society something like an organism whose parts (e.g. ethnic groups and minorities) are its specific and necessary parts, or rather society is a set or a collection of ethnic groups, religious denominations, subcultures and minorities, each having its specific interests?

3. Identity

What is identity and what is the relation between the social identity and the individual identity? Is 'identity' something given or rather it is a task to perform for each of us, for example, by means of 'self-identity' process (cultural auto-creation)?

4. Social Justice

If we want to know what is just and fair, first we have to know the laws (human, moral, legal, religious) according to which we measure social justice. An important part of the story is to know WHO is responsible for shaping the laws: people? God? Nature? If People, who are these people? International community? National parliaments? Presidents? The Police? Representatives of small communities? The upper classes?

5. Universality of Human Rights

The United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)
The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990)

6. Moral Rights, Legal Rights

Examples of legal system that regulates immoral "moral laws": a) India's abolishing the caste system in 1949; b) USA's abolishing racial segregation in public schools in 1954; c) Mauretania abolishing slavery in 1981.

7. Duties and Responsibilities (individual or institutional?)

In the UN Human Rights' Declaration we read that "Everyone has duties to the community (Chapter 29)"; however, The duty for securing human rights typically falls upon national governments and international, inter-governmental bodies because they are best placed and most able to effectively perform the task. So, what's the role of the individuals? of each of us?

8. *Social Conflicts Theories*

Most frequent areas of social conflicts: religious, political (dominating group vs. dominated), economic (rich vs. poor), cultural (e.g. Western-Muslim), sexual/gender (e.g. males vs. females), generational (older vs. younger), class, ethnic, identity, many others.

9. *Power Structure*

Any society (e.g. democratic, totalitarian, religious, non-religious, etc) and any collection of social groups (e.g. state, international organization) is organized according to some power structure, with some specific group of people at the top of this communal hierarchy. Social philosophy studies the anatomy (often hidden and unclear) of the relations of power within these groups.

10. *Positive Freedom and Negative Freedom*

Positive Freedom or *Positive Liberty* is the possibility of acting in such a way as to take control of one's life and realize one's fundamental purposes within a given society. For example, freedom to learn, to travel, to realize happiness in different ways. *Negative Freedom* or *Negative Liberty* is the possibility of refusing doing something that is done or suggested by others.

11. *Recognition, Misrecognition, Non-recognition*

Charles Taylor's "The Politics of Recognition" is the basic material here: the text of this Canadian philosopher is available on the Internet.

12. *Various Theories of Justice*

John Rawls' theory of justice (*A Theory of Justice*, 1971) is one of the most discussed nowadays.

Obligatory Literature

Charles Taylor, "*The Politics of Recognition*"

UN Human Rights Declaration

Cairo Human Rights Declaration

Additional Literature

John Rawls, *Theory of Justice* (fragments)

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (selected entries)

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (selected entries)