



## Political Philosophy

---

University College Maastricht

### Political Philosophy

---

#### Full course description

Politics is a complex and puzzling subject. If only taken at their word, it is difficult to understand why people act the way they do and believe the things they purport to believe in. As political philosophers we try to understand underlying conceptions and values that shape politics and which are used to justify concrete policies. We are not concerned with what people claim to believe, but rather with the underpinning structures, values and ideas that shape how it is that we live together. We are concerned with how the language and concepts that people use comes to define who they are. In other words, we don't have ideas, ideas have us. Our task in this course is to understand those ideas.

This course will provide an introduction to contemporary philosophical debates about core political concepts such as *justice*, *liberty*, *equality*, *community*, and *democracy* in modern liberal-democratic societies. Students will become familiar with the thought of some of the leading modern political philosophers, like Thomas Hobbes, Mary Wollstonecraft, John Rawls, Hannah Arendt, Isaiah Berlin, and Martha Nussbaum. Since conceptual analysis is the core business of philosophy, students will learn to analyse concepts, to clarify fuzzy moral ideas, and to make explicit the tensions and contradictions inherent to our political lives. Students will learn how to apply these concepts to current political debate and practice.

---

#### Course objectives

The course will provide an introduction to western political philosophy. Students will learn to analyse, discuss, and apply basic concepts in contemporary political philosophy such as justice, equality, liberty and community. Students will apply these core concepts to various local, national, and global political issues such as migration and global justice. Students will be trained in normative political argumentation. They will exercise their ability to debate contentious ethical issues of public life.

---

#### Prerequisites

None

---

## Recommended reading

Various primary texts in political philosophy (these vary somewhat from period to period and year to year)

Adam Swift (2014, third edition), *Political Philosophy; A Beginners' Guide for Students and Politicians*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

# COR1004

Period 2

**25 Oct 2021 - 17 Dec 2021**

Period 5

**4 Apr 2022 - 3 Jun 2022**

ECTS credits:

**5.0**

Instruction language:

**English**

Coordinators:

[D.E. Meacham](#)

[J.M. Hoye](#)

Teaching methods:

**Assignment(s), Lecture(s), Paper(s), PBL, Presentation(s)**

Assessment methods:

**Attendance, Final paper, Oral exam, Participation, Take home exam, Written exam**