

Philosophy 764: Selected Topics in Social and Political Philosophy
Rights and Duties: Foundational Questions and Political Applications
Fall 2018

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I. Course Description:

In an effort to theorize and address pressing global justice concerns such as poverty, war, persecution, environmental degradation, to only name a few, philosophers commonly turn to frameworks of rights or obligations.

In this course, we will carefully examine the frameworks of both rights and obligations. First, we will engage with Margaret Gilbert's new book *Rights and Demands: A Foundational Inquiry* (2018). We will consider her argument about the nature and structure of demand-rights. Why is it that we can make demands on others? Gilbert argues that it is joint commitment that grounds demand-rights. We will evaluate her proposal from a theoretical perspective and also whether it helps us make sense of human rights. Second, we will engage with Onora O'Neill's recent book, *Justice Across Boundaries: Whose Obligations?* (2016). O'Neill challenges rights-based accounts. For O'Neill, we ought to begin the analysis from obligations rather than rights. We will consider a collection of her papers that engages with questions about who has obligations to do what if we are to make progress on the global justice front.

II. Readings:

1. Margaret Gilbert, *Rights and Demands: A Foundational Inquiry* (Oxford University Press, 2018).
2. Onora O'Neill, *Justice Across Boundaries: Whose Obligations?* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

III. Course Requirements

1. Weekly readings and participation in class discussion.
2. 7 reflective commentaries on weekly readings (1-2 pages): 25%.
 - To be uploaded to Avenue before the start of class.
3. Seminar Presentation: 25%
 - 30 minute oral presentation with the aim of facilitating class discussion.
 - Include either a handout for class or a PowerPoint presentation (or both).
4. Major Paper 50% (12-15 pages)
 - Proposal (thesis statement and brief outline) and preliminary bibliography.
 - Paper to be handed in electronically on Avenue. Late papers penalized 5% per day.