

History of Political Philosophy

Semester: 1st

Code: 722031049

Academic unit: FCSH

Department: Philosophy

Unit level: Master

Credits: 10 ECTS

Teacher in charge: *Dr. André Santos Campos*

Weekly hours: 3

Teaching language: English

Subject matter

The History of 'Agreementism'

The idea that a society or a government or moral principles can depend on consent or on a voluntary individual act (or rather on a concatenation of voluntary individual acts) in order to exist and be binding has been a recurrent motif in political and moral thought throughout the History of western philosophy. This conventionalism constitutive of a normative realm emerges in such disparate sources that include the writings of classical Greek Sophists, of certain medieval Christian authors, of the Protestant and Catholic monarchomachi of the sixteenth century, of the most notorious members of the Catholic Counter-Reformation movements, of the most renowned authors of modern political thought, and of those contemporary moral philosophers dealing with the value of agreements for the public domain. They all assume that agreement or consent of the individuals subject to collectively enforced social arrangements is relevant to the fact that those arrangements have some normative property. The literature on such

theoretical justifications usually falls under the general heading of “Social Contract Theories”.

This course provides an overview of this kind of normative justification in politics (‘Agreementism’) and shows that the social contract is only one of the possible forms it assumes throughout the History of Philosophy. It is divided into four parts.

- I. The classical and medieval origins of ‘Agreementism’.
- II. The School of Salamanca.
- III. Modern contractualisms and contractarianisms.
- IV. The Public Reason debates.

Bibliography

Campos, Andre Santos. “The Idea of the Social Contract in the History of ‘Agreementism’: Traditions and Reconstructions”, *The European Legacy* 24(6) (2019).

Darwall, Stephen (ed.). *Contractarianism / Contractualism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003.

Gough, J.W. *The Social Contract. A Critical Study of Its Development*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.

Lessnoff, Michael (ed.). *Social Contract*. London: MacMillan, 1986.

Medina, Vicente. *Social Contract Theories: Political Obligation or Anarchy*. Savage: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990.

Riley, Patrick. “How Coherent is the Social Contract Tradition?” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34 (1973): 543-62.

Teaching method

Each session consists of lectures and discussion of classical texts, based on scheduled readings. This includes analysis and discussion of theories, methods and techniques employed in political theory, as well as the reinforcement of the ability to independently and academically draw up a convincing contextualized research question, select relevant theories and methods, and to gather and critically analyze various possibly complex textual and conceptual materials.

Evaluation method

Active participation in classes. Discussion of texts during session seminars. (20%)
Final written essay. (80%) The concluding essay will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria: - The use of primary and secondary sources; - Scholarly precision; - Correct handling of source material; - Structure and clarity of the argument; - Analysis and synthesis; - Critical disposition; - Originality; - Presentation and handling of references; - Correct language.