

**Phil 535 Topics in Social and Political
Philosophy: The Equity-Efficiency Trade-Off**

**NOTE: this is a provisional
draft of the course syllabus.**

Spring 2022

Instructor: Peter Dietsch, PhD

Lectures: TWF 10:30-11:20

Office hours: Wednesday 2:30-3:30

Email: pdietsch@uvic.ca

Seminar description

There is a widespread belief that there is a tension between promoting distributive justice by reducing income inequality on the one hand, and economic efficiency on the other hand. The goal of this seminar is to analyze the terms in which this trade-off is presented, and to critically probe its various interpretations in the literature. No prerequisites in economics are required. Students from all faculties are welcome.

Course Website

Online materials will be made available via Uvic Brightspace. Access your customized Brightspace page by signing in to Uvic and clicking on Online Tools. You should see Brightspace as an option.

Texts

All readings available online via Uvic Brightspace.

Grading System

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definition
90 – 100	A+	9	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior , shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
85 – 89	A	8	
80 – 84	A-	7	
77 – 79	B+	6	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
73 – 76	B	5	
70 – 72	B-	4	
65 – 69	C+	3	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
60 – 64	C	2	
50 – 59	D	1	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
0 – 49	F	0	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

Interpretation of these grade definitions is up to the discretion of the instructor. If you receive a grade during the course that you believe is unfair, please begin by discussing

the matter with the instructor (or TA) in a respectful, open-minded manner. Rest assured that if you still believe the grade you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the chair of the department.

For additional information regarding undergraduate grades, please consult the [Grading](#) section of the Uvic Undergraduate Calendar.

All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to percentage scores. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference.

Final examinations are the property of Uvic and are not returned. They are available for viewing at the Records Office according to Uvic Examinations procedures and regulations.

Uvic is committed to providing a safe, supportive learning environment for all members. Further information regarding Uvic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are located in the Uvic calendar [General University Policies](#), but if you have any particular concerns related to our course please do not hesitate to contact me.

Graded student activities

- One 4000-word essay to be handed in on April 7th 2022 (50%)
- One presentation (20%) and one commentary (10%)
- Participation in seminar discussion (20%)

Policy on Late Assignments

5% per working day will be subtracted from grade unless students are delayed by illness or family emergency.

Plagiarism

Review the [University Policy on Academic Integrity](#) very carefully, and be aware that anti-plagiarism software may be used in this course. Resources will be provided via Brightspace for students seeking guidance about what constitutes plagiarism and how they can avoid it, but it is the responsibility of each student to be informed about these details.

Counseling Services

Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health during their years as undergraduate students. Make sure you are familiar with [Uvic Counseling Services](#), which is an excellent resource you have at your disposal on campus. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, but if at any point you can benefit from help with mental health issues, please contact Counseling Services. They genuinely want to help, and why not take advantage of this free resource?

Important Dates

Please consult the Uvic calendar's [Academic Year Important Dates](#) for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examinations period start/end dates, etc.

Technology in Classroom

Some students require laptops or voice recognition apps for their learning strategies, so I do not prohibit their use in the classroom. However, studies demonstrate that multi-tasking reduces the performance of other nearby students. Therefore, I strongly

discourage the use of computers in the classroom. Anyone caught on social media, internet surfing, etc. will be asked to leave and potentially subject to disciplinary action.

Uvic Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response

Learn more about preventing sexualized violence by visiting www.uvic.ca/svp. If you or someone you know has been impacted by sexualized violence and needs advice, and/or support, please contact the Sexualized Violence Resource Office in EQHR, Sedgewick C119; email: svpcoordinator@uvic.ca.

Territory Acknowledgment

The University of Victoria is committed to acknowledging and respecting the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the Uvic [Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement](#).

Detailed seminar plan

Part I: Conceptual foundations

Week 1 (Jan 11-14): Introduction and the concept of efficiency

Tuesday, January 11

- Introduction

Wednesday, January 12 & Friday January 14

- Daniel M. Hausman & Michael S. McPherson, *Economic analysis and moral philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, chapter 7.
- Allen Buchanan, *Ethics, Efficiency, and the Market*, Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allenheld, 1985, chapters 1 & 2.

Week 2 (Jan 18-21): Different concepts of efficiency

- Julian Le Grand, 'Equity versus Efficiency: The Elusive Trade-off', *Ethics* 100/3 (1990): 554-68.
- F.A. Hayek, 'Economics and Knowledge', *Economica*, New Series, Vol. 4, No. 13 (1937): 33-54.
- Mark Blaug, 'Is Competition Such a Good Thing? Static Efficiency versus Dynamic Efficiency', *Review of Industrial Organization* 19 (2001): 37-48.

Week 3 (Jan 25-28): The normative standing of the market

- Amartya Sen, 'The Moral Standing of the Market', *Social Philosophy and Policy* 2/2 (1985): 1-19.
- Joseph Heath, *Morality, Competition, and the Firm*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, chapter 8.
- Daniel M. Hausman, 'Are markets morally free zones?' *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1989): pp. 317-333.

Week 4 (Feb 1-4): The limits of the market

- Debra Satz, *Why Some Things Should not be for Sale*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, chapter 4.

- Michael J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, Allen Lane, 2012, introduction and chapter 2.

Part II: Incentives

Week 5 (Feb 8-11): Incentives in Rawls and beyond

- Joseph Carens, *Equality, Moral Incentives and the Market: An Essay in Utopian Politico-Economic Theory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, chapter 1.
- John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971, chapter II, sections 11-13.
- Colin Macleod, 'Economic incentives and liberal equality', *Éthique économique / Ethics and Economics* 3/1 (2005).

Week 6 (Feb 15-18): Cohen's critique

- GA Cohen, *Rescuing Justice & Equality*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008, chapter 1.

READING WEEK

Week 7 (Mar 1-4): Putting Rawls vs Cohen in perspective

- Joshua Cohen, 'Taking People as They Are', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 30/4 (2001): 363-86.
- Peter Dietsch, 'If it's not your talent, how come we should be paying you an incentive?', *paper under review*.

Week 8 (Mar 8-11): More on incentives

- Ruth Grant, 'Ethics and Incentives: A Political Approach', *American Political Science Review* 100/1 (2006): 29-39.
- Seana Valentine Shffrin, 'Incentives, Motives, and Talents', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 38/2 (2010): 111-42.
- Thomas Christiano, 'Cohen on Incentives, Inequality, and Egalitarianism', in: Christi Favor, Gerald Gaus, and Julian Lamont, *Essays on Philosophy, Politics & Economics*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

Part III: Equity vs efficiency in economic policy

Week 9 (Mar 15-18): taxation

- Liam Murphy & Thomas Nagel, *The Myth of Ownership. Taxes and Justice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, chs. 2 & 6.
- Peter Dietsch, *Catching Capital. The Ethics of Tax Competition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, ch.3.

Week 10 (Mar 22-25): wage determination

- Joseph Heath, 'On the very idea of a just wage', *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics* 11/2 (2018): 1-33.

- Lisa Herzog, 'Just wages in which markets? The embeddedness of markets and the very idea of an *unjust* wage', *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics* 11/2 (2018): 105-23.
- Peter Dietsch, 'On the very idea of an efficient wage', *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics* 11/2 (2018): 85-104.

Week 11 (Mar 29-April 1): basic income

- Philippe Van Parijs, 'Why Surfers Should be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 2. (1991): 101-131.
- Juliana Uhuru Bidadanure, 'The Political Theory of Universal Basic Income', *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (2019): 481-501.

Week 12 (April 5-6): ownership of the firm

- Henry Hansmann, *The Ownership of Enterprise*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996, Part 1.