Methods in analytical political theory

Wednesdays, 5-7:50 pm
Ripton Room, Scott Hall 201
Prof. Shmuel Nili

Office hours: Wednesday, 3-5 pm, Scott Hall 020 (Lower level)
Shmuel.nili@northwestern.edu

Course description
This graduate course has two aims. The first is to introduce students to debates on method in contemporary analytical political philosophy. We examine disputes on the degree of idealization and abstraction that is appropriate in political theory, and reflect on how these disputes relate to different conceptions of political philosophy's practical task. Second, in the process of investigating these meta-theoretical issues, the course also introduces students to substantive theories that have been dominant in contemporary moral and political philosophy.

Requirements
One short paper (1000 to 1500 words), that will allow you to lead discussion, due 24 hours before the relevant session. Ideally your short paper will help you lay foundations for your final paper (you should upload the paper to Canvas to give others a chance to read it and offer you comments during the session). This paper must critically engage with specific arguments out of the relevant week’s readings, rather than offer only a review of the readings

One final term paper (5500 to 7500 words), due by email Dec. 12, 5 PM.

Readings:

Sep. 25: Rawls’ theory of justice
- Rawls, A Theory of Justice, selections
- Recommended:
  - Leif Wenar, “Rawls,” in Stanford encyclopaedia of Philosophy

Oct. 2: “Ideal” versus “non-ideal” theory
- Jacob Levy, “There is no such thing as ideal theory,” Social Philosophy & Policy 33 (2016): 312-333
Oct. 9: Public reason


Oct. 16: Political realism v. liberalism


Oct. 23: Handling political disagreement (1)

- Jeremy Waldron, *Law and disagreement* (selections)

Oct. 30: Handling political disagreement (2)

- Shmuel Nili, “strategic political theorizing” (draft)

Nov. 6: Historical injustice (1):


Nov. 13: Historical injustice (2):


Nov. 20: No class - thanksgiving

Nov. 27: TBD