

Dear Prospective MA Students,

When it comes to my research and teaching at the graduate level, I usually teach Rawls' theory of justice in light of his critics from various fronts, including Hegelian, feminist, critical race theory, critical Indigeneity, the politics of recognition, as well as other forms of liberalism. Rawls works Kant's idea that the right is prior to the good into a basis for a political morality suitable for citizens of a modern constitutional democracy. These regimes are marked by deep differences of opinion when it comes to the good life, ultimate ends, the sacred, and so on, making for what Rawls calls the fact of reasonable pluralism and deep disagreement. The response to the facts of disagreement and conflict on the Rawlsian way is to retreat by abstraction into an ideal point of view, but for the sake of common ground, overlapping consensus, coordination and the fair terms of social cooperation. But what happens when it is too late for ideal theory, as in the aftermath of historical injustice for example? Many critics have been deeply suspicious of Rawls' project and have critically reconstructed it in that light, and so we have a live issue with historical roots. I am interested in the historical and conceptual underpinnings of Rawls theory of justice, as well as the practical implications of Rawls' theory of justice in the aftermath of social injustice.

I am also interested in situating Rawls in the great internal disputes of the liberal canon, as well as the history of philosophy more generally, especially moral agency. Hume challenged to those who supposed that reason had ideas, ends, and desires of its own to bring their accounts forward and he would prove them wrong; Kant challenged others to provide a better account than his own as to how the right might be prior to the good. I am interested in the extent to which Rawls addresses Hume's challenge and Kant's challenge while avoiding the pitfalls of Kant's transcendental idealism. I am also interested in contemporary ways to address Hume's challenge and Kant's challenge for what they have to say about Rawls' theory of justice, especially Korsgaard's account where the categorical imperative is the law of self-constitution for finite rational beings.

As for how I supervise students, as I see it, professor and student share a collective responsibility to select the appropriate readings, to set up a schedule for office hours to discuss those readings and do the work in question. During the writing phase, I am happy to continue with regular meetings. I have supervised area exams on the following topics: the moral agency of Hobbes, Hume, and Kant, the philosophy of race, the politics of recognition, the philosophy of Indigenous rights, social contract theory and epistemic injustice, Rawls and pragmatism, and Rawls and feminism. I have supervised major research papers in the following topics: liberalism and oppression, Kant's moral philosophy, Hobbes' moral philosophy, the nature of Indigenous rights, the politics of recognition, Rawls and feminism, Rawls and egalitarianism, and Rawls and left libertarianism. I am flexible, but I like to stay in my lane more or less when it comes to supervision. I will stray for the right project however, and I am happy to get together to discuss the possibilities.

Yours,
Robert Murray