

Course Schedule and Required Reading (Tentative)

1. Topic: The Root of Tribalism

Sep 7

- **Chua, A. (2018) *Tribal World: Group Identity Is All*. Vol. 97. Council on Foreign Relations.**
- **Greene, J. D. (2013) *Moral tribes: emotion, reason, and the gap between us and them*. New York: Penguin Press, Introduction and Chapter 2**

Both legal theorist Amy Chua and philosopher/psychologist Joshua Greene share the view that humans are hard-wired to be tribalistic. What do they mean by "tribalistic"? What are some of the examples of problematic tribalistic practices they discuss? What evidence from neuroscience and psychological research is cited to corroborate their view?

Responsibilities:

Group 1 posts questions on Chua, to be answered by Group 3.

Group 2 posts questions on Greene, to be answered by Group 4.

Sep 14

- **Buchanan, A. E. (2020) *Our moral fate: evolution and the escape from tribalism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, Introduction, Chapters 2 and 7.**

Buchanan argues that humans are not hard-wired to be tribal. While historically we have been tribalistic, the reason is less biological than cultural. What does he mean by that? How does he explain the revival of tribalism in our contemporary world in Ch 7? What's the empirical evidence he provides? Is his interpretation of the empirics correct? What normative implications follow from Buchanan's cultural account of tribalism?

Responsibilities:

Group 3 posts questions on Intro, to be answered by Group 1.

Group 4 posts questions on Chs 2&7, to be answered by Group 2.

2. Topic: The (Un)Making of a Tribe

Sep 21

- **Gilbert, M. (2013) *Joint Commitment: How We Make the Social World*. [Online]. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, Chapter 15.**
- **Tollefsen, D. & Gallagher, S. (2017) *We-Narratives and the Stability and Depth of Shared Agency*. *Philosophy of the social sciences*. [Online] 47 (2), 95–110.**

While evolutionary theories look to the past to inform us why we are tribalistic, philosophy of social science seeks to explain what "we" are. What is the nature of this "we"? Is it real or just an imagination? An influential view, proposed by Margaret Gilbert, holds that the "we"

is a social fact (hence real!) and is constitutive of "joint commitment". What is this concept of "joint commitment"? How is it formed? Tollefsen and Gallagher argue that Gilbert, among other philosophers of social science, fails to explain how joint commitment comes about and is stabilized over time. More specifically, they argue that stable and deep "we"s are constitutive of "we"-narratives. What do they mean? What's we-narratives?

Responsibilities:

Group 1 posts questions on Gilbert, to be answered by Group 3.

Group 2 posts questions on Tollefsen and Gallagher, to be answered by Group 4.

Sep 28

- **MacIntyre, A. C. (2007) *After virtue: a study in moral theory*. 3rd ed. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, Chapter 15.**
- **Williams, B. (2009) *Life as Narrative*. *European journal of philosophy*. [Online] 17 (2), 305-314.**

This week, we take a deeper dive into the role of narrative in constituting the "we". Political philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre famously argues that on the individual and the group levels, action is only possible if it is intelligible and narratives are the sources of intelligibility. This has important implications for politics and political philosophy. MacIntyre is worried that liberalism, with its focus on neutrality and ahistoricity and neglect of particular narratives and traditions, cannot guide us to make good political communities. What is his thesis of narrative unity? Why and how does action presuppose narrative unity? Is this thesis too strong? Bernard Williams seems to think it is. What is his argument against MacIntyre's narrative sense of self?

Responsibilities:

Group 3 posts questions on MacIntyre, to be answered by Group 1.

Group 4 posts questions on Williams, to be answered by Group 2.

Oct 5

- **Jonathan Lear (2009) *Radical Hope*. Harvard University Press, Part 1.**

This is the final week of the ontology of tribes and we look at it from the flipside. Moral philosopher (with a background in psychoanalysis!) Jonathan Lear, following MacIntyre, argues that narratives and the traditions that supply them content are what constitute tribes. Instead of arguing for this view theoretically, Lear illustrates it by telling the story of the Crow Nation. Colonization destroyed their hunting tradition and the tribesmen's self-understanding as warriors, exposing them to what Lear calls "ontic vulnerability". Plenty Coups, the leader of the Crow Nation, said, "[W]hen the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened." How do we make sense of this? Through Lear's telling of the tragic story of the Crow, we will appreciate the crucial role of narratives in our existence.

Responsibilities

Groups 1 & 2 post questions on Part 1 of Radical Hope, to be answered by Groups 3 & 4.

3. Topic: Tribal Ethics

Oct 12

- **Kymlicka, W. (2002) *Contemporary political philosophy: an introduction*. 2nd ed. Oxford;: Oxford University Press, Chapter 6.**

Do members of a tribe owe anything to the tribe they belong? Put differently, can the tribe make any claims on us as members? Can we leave as we please? Do we owe our members any explanation if we want to leave? When we disagree with the majority of the tribe, do we owe them our deference? Or are we entitled to the right to dissent? Are we free to join another tribe or is this a violation of the obligation of loyalty? These are questions of tribal ethics.

It's not hard to appreciate why tribal ethics is generally frowned upon in modern-day liberal society. Liberalism which celebrates the ideal of liberty, among other things, makes little room for loyalty and deference. We begin the module on tribal ethics with an introduction to communitarianism by Will Kymlicka. In this long chapter, we look at attempts by some modern-day communitarians to revive some form of tribal ethics, and others who reconcile communitarianism and liberalism.

Responsibilities

Groups 3 & 4 post questions, to be answered by Groups 1 & 2.

Oct 19

- **Calhoun, C. (2009) What Good Is Commitment? *Ethics*. [Online] 119 (4), 613-641.**
- **Westlund, A. C. (2009) Deciding Together. *Philosophers' imprint*. 91-.**

Earlier, we have seen that "we" are constitutive of joint commitment. Gilbert argues that this joint commitment is a source of authority for its members who will them into place. But why should members respect the authority? Chesire Calhoun, though not exclusively concerned with joint commitment, argues that commitments make our life good. This can be seen as a teleological argument for why members ought to follow through with the joint commitment constitutive of them.

Andrew Westlund argues that in a we, we ought to reason differently than an individual loyal to no one. She offers an account of joint deliberation that centers on mutual responsiveness and decenters autonomy. How desirable is this picture of we-reasoning? Can we scale this up to a large we, say a political community?

Responsibilities

Group 1 posts questions on Calhoun, to be answered by Group 3.

Group 2 posts questions on Westlund, to be answered by Group 4.

Oct 26

- **Margalit, A. (2017) *On betrayal*. Harvard University Press, Chapters 3-4.**

Avishai Margalit argues that in modern-day society, there is a place for loyalty. It is one of the ethical ideals that keep "thick relations" ("us") in good form. He offers the argument from the flipside and explores what betrayal is and how it destroys thick relations.

Responsibilities

Group 3 posts questions on Ch. 3, to be answered by Group 1.

Group 4 posts questions on Ch. 4, to be answered by Group 2.

4. Topic: Tribal Politics

Nov 2

- **Forst, R. (2001) *The Rule of Reasons. Three Models of Deliberative Democracy*. *Ratio juris*. [Online] 14 (4), 345–378.**
- **Mouffe, C. (2013) 'For an agonistic model of democracy', in *Chantal Mouffe*. [Online]. Routledge. pp. 199–214.**

We are moving on to the last module of the course: tribal politics. A central question in this module is, can tribalism play a meaningful role in democratic life? As it turns out, the answer depends on the conception of democracy one holds.

By way of introduction, we read Rainer Forst's paper on *The Rule of Reasons*. In this paper, he maps out three normative models of deliberative democracy. In this paper, the author contrasts three models of deliberative democracy: a liberal one, a communitarian one, and an alternative to both, and defends the alternative. Do you think this rule of reasons constrains tribal life far too much?

From a very different tradition, Chantal Mouffe offers an "agonistic" model of democracy, according to which politics ought to be a rival between "us" and "them". She defends agonistic democracy on grounds of pluralism. If agonistic democracy is indeed a good form of democracy, perhaps tribalism is not only permissible but even desirable for democracy?

Responsibilities

Group 1 posts questions on Forst, to be answered by Group 3.

Group 2 posts questions on Mouffe, to be answered by Group 4.

Nov 9

- **Muirhead, Russell, 'The Case for Party Loyalty', in Sanford Levinson, Paul Woodruff, and Joel Parker (eds), *Loyalty: NOMOS LIV* (New York, NY, 2013; online edn, NYU Press Scholarship Online, 24 Mar. 2016)**

- **BEERBOHM, E. (2015) Is Democratic Leadership Possible? *The American political science review*. [Online] 109 (4), 639–652.**

Arguably, party politics is *the* channel of tribal politics. For many deliberative democrats (e.g. Forst), party politics is bad...It is a breeding ground of irrationality, antagonism, polarization, and extremism. Many argue that USA is an example of hyperpartisanship. Instead of voting in virtue of one's citizenship, Americans vote in virtue of their partisanship. That is, I vote for what my party stands for, regardless of what justice requires objectively speaking or what I personally prefer. This manifestation of partisan loyalty is widely regarded as a vice in democracy (that is, again if you're a deliberative democrat).

Arguing against the grain, political theorist Russell Muirhead defends the ideal of loyalty for partisans. Is his argument normative or merely sociological? Is loyal partisanship only plausible if there are rigorous constitutional constraints in place?

Eric Beerbohm offers another novel way to think about the role of tribal politics in politics. Liberals tend to locate the decision-making power in the individual citizens, and the fact that partisans defer to their tribe or their leaders makes them bad citizens. But what if as a tribe reasons collectively, yet still democratically, through "democratic leadership"? Beerbohm builds an account of democratic leadership on Gilbert's concept of joint commitment. If he is right, maybe followership is not necessarily a vice in democracy, so long as it is responsive and reciprocated by democratic leadership?

Responsibilities

Group 3 posts questions on Muirhead, to be answered by Group 1.

Group 4 posts questions on Beerbohm, to be answered by Group 2.

5. Group Presentation Topics:

Nov 23

Nov 30

Schedule (tentative)

Date	Topic	Reading
Sep 7, 2023	The Root of Tribalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chua, "Tribal World" ▪ Greene, <i>Moral Tribes</i>: Intro and Ch 2
Sep 14, 2023	The Root of Tribalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Buchanan, <i>Our Moral Fate</i>: Intro, Chs 2 & 7
Sep 21, 2023	The Making of a Tribe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gilbert, <i>Joint Commitment</i>, Ch 15 ▪ Tollefsen and Gallagher, "We-Narratives and the Stability and Depth of Shared Agency"
Sep 28, 2023	The Making of a Tribe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MacIntyre, <i>After Virtue</i>, Ch 15 ▪ Williams, "Life as Narrative"
Oct 5, 2023	The Unmaking of a Tribe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lear, <i>Radical Hope</i>, Part I
Oct 12, 2023	Tribal Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kymlicka, "Communitarianism"
Oct 19, 2023	Tribal Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Calhoun, "What good is commitment?" ▪ Westlund, "Deciding together"
Oct 26, 2023	Tribal Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Margalit, <i>On Betrayal</i>, Chs 3 & 4
Nov 2, 2023	Tribal Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forst, "The Rule of Reason" ▪ Mouffe, "For an Agonistic Model of Democracy"
Nov 9, 2023	Tribal Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Muirhead, "Loyal Partisan" ▪ Beerbohm, "Is Democratic Leadership Possible?"
Nov 23, 2023	Group 1 presents, and Group 3 discusses; Group 2 presents, and Group 4 discusses.	Topics TBC
Nov 30, 2023	Group 3 presents, and Group 1 discusses; Group 4 presents and Group 2 discusses.	Topics TBC