

# POLITICAL & SOCIAL THOUGHT

## Defending Economic & Social Rights

### Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What premises, assumptions, reasons, evidence, and other important considerations lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support and justify accepting the author's conclusions as opposed to other ones.

### Reading

Nickel, J. W. (2005, July). Poverty and Rights. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 55(220), 385–402.

### Questions

1. Economic and social rights may be understood as rights to certain goods and services, such as job opportunities, healthcare, and education.  
While Libertarians like Robert Nozick, Friedrich Hayek, and Milton Friedman would undoubtedly agree that all people equally possess a general right to liberty and freedom, they all would likely deny that everyone possesses a rights to a good and service.  
In this article, James Nickel wants to defend economic and social rights from such hostility.  
Why is Nickel dissatisfied with more traditional understandings of economic and social rights as being either “too minimal” (p. 387) or too “excessively grandiose” (p. 387)?
2. What is the “Vance” conception of economic and social rights? Why does Nickel argue this is better than the traditional understandings?
3. How does Nickel justify economic and social rights using the Vance conception?
4. What are “linkage arguments” (p. 395), and how might such arguments be used against Libertarians to justify economic and social rights?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses (unless you miss or are late to class, and must then submit a written reading question review).

You do need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting. You may, during the following class, be randomly selected to present answers to these if selected to do so for a verbal reading question review.