POLITICAL & SOCIAL THOUGHT

Justice as Fairness

Instructions 📖

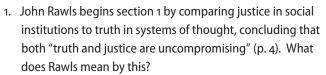When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

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 📖

Rawls, J. (1999). *A Theory of Justice* (Revised ed.). Cambridge, MA: Belknap. (Original work from 1971.)
(Excerpts are from sections 1, 3, and 4.)

Questions ❓

1. John Rawls begins section 1 by comparing justice in social institutions to truth in systems of thought, concluding that both "truth and justice are uncompromising" (p. 4). What does Rawls mean by this?
2. How does Rawls understand society, and what does it mean for a society to be well-ordered?
3. What is Rawls' idea of "justice as fairness"? What are the "original position" and the "veil of ignorance", and how are they part of justice as fairness? How are the original position and veil of ignorance justified?

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.