

POLITICAL & SOCIAL THOUGHT

Community, Justice & Goods

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

Walzer, M. (1983). *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality*. New York: Basic Books.
(Excerpts are from chapter 1, 3, and 13.)

Questions

1. What six propositions make up Michael Walzer's theory of goods and how does he understand justice? How is all this different from John Rawls' theory of justice?
2. What is the "sphere of security and welfare"? How is it related to community membership and communal provision? Walzer claims that a community must distribute goods according to need, but how are these needs determined? What is their extent, and how is this different from how Rawls would assess it?
3. What three principles of communal provision does Walzer advance, and how are they employed in the case of the American health care system?
4. Putting all this together, what sort of relativity of justice does Walzer's view justify?

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.