

The Future of Work and the Promise of Universal Basic Income

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Description This course employs the tools of political philosophy to examine the future of work and the promise of universal basic income, which is touted as a potential solution to technological unemployment. On the work side, we will examine the goods and bads of work; whether justice should be concerned with the distribution of free time and sleep; gender and age discrimination; the value of economic growth; and the perils of automation. On the basic income side, we will consider the political history of this idea; liberal, republican, egalitarian, and racial justice-based arguments for basic income; whether it is preferable to job guarantee and basic capital schemes; and its feasibility.

Level Advanced undergraduate course.

Prerequisites No previous work in philosophy is required or assumed.

Requirements This course will be held in a lecture format. You will review the assigned materials in advance of each lecture, and then discuss them in your weekly seminar.

Student grades are determined by five components:

- First paper (1000 words): 20%
- Second paper (1500 words): 20%
- Third paper (2500 words): 25%
- Class participation: 25%
- Oral presentation: 10%

Class participation is very important in this course. I am asking you do two things:

- Post a reaction to at least one of the assigned materials on the course discussion board by midnight on the day before the seminar. You can clarify a tricky aspect of the paper, raise an objection, ask a pertinent question, bring attention to an interesting case study, or simply identify an issue that you would like us to talk about during the seminar. I will read your comments and do my best take them up during the seminar.
- Actively participate in discussions during the seminar. Please bear in mind that the topics covered in this course can be controversial. At the same time, do not hesitate to argue in support of unpopular positions or object to those that are widely held.

You are required to do one oral presentation on a topic of your choosing. A presentation should be no more than 8-10 minutes. It can consist of a philosophical commentary on one of the readings, an explanation of the 'technical' aspects of one of the discussed issues, or a case study applying philosophical concepts to a specific practical issue. You must meet with your TA a few days before your presentation to go over an outline.

Blind grading Please submit your work with no identifying information other than your student number.

Office hours I hold weekly office hours. I welcome you to use this opportunity. You don't need to come with a specific question about the readings or an assignment. We can just grab a cup of coffee and talk about philosophy.

Resources Don't be discouraged if you have difficulty following an argument in an assigned reading or if you misunderstand something. Philosophy is challenging and many philosophers are not gifted stylists. I often read philosophical articles twice and encourage you to do the same. You can find helpful tips about reading philosophical texts, seminar participation, and writings essays in the [Pink Guide to Philosophy](#) by Helena de Bres. Another great resource used by both students and professors is the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#).

I. THE FUTURE OF WORK

Week 1: The goods and bads of work

Gheaus and Herzog argue that work is important because it gives us an opportunity to attain excellence, make a social contribution, experience community, and gain social recognition. Anderson points to a dark side of work: it is a major source of freedom-undermining domination in our lives.

- Anca Gheaus & Lisa Herzog. (2016). The Goods of Work (Other Than Money!). *Journal of Social Philosophy*. (20 pages)
- Elizabeth Anderson. (2017). Chapter 2: Private Government. In her *Private Government: How Employers Rule Our Lives (and Why We Don't Talk About It)*. (35 pages)

Week 2: Free Time and Sleep

Rose argues that all citizens are entitled to a fair share of free time because they require it to exercise their formal freedoms. White contends that important problems of justice arise when sleep is widely lacking, disrupted, or unevenly distributed.

- Julie Rose. (2016). The Claim to Free Time. In her *Free Time*. (27 pages)
- Jonathan White. (forthcoming). Circadian Justice. *Journal of Political Philosophy*. (25 pages)

Week 3: Gendered Division of Labour

Schouten first reviews the empirical literature to demonstrate that paid work and unpaid caregiving labour remain unequally distributed between genders. She then argues that a liberal society cannot remain stable over time if this inequality persists.

- Gina Schouten. (2019). A stalled revolution and the gender-egalitarian policy agenda. In her *Liberalism, Neutrality, and the Gendered Division of Labour*. (32 pages)
- Gina Schouten. (2019). The Political Case for Gender Egalitarianism. In her *Liberalism, Neutrality, and the Gendered Division of Labour*. (30 pages)

Week 4: Mandatory Retirement and Age Discrimination

Levmore argues that the US law should permit mandatory retirement or reduced compensation at a certain age. Lippert-Rasmussen defends the opposing perspective and argues that the EU should adopt stricter standards on age discrimination and prohibit mandatory retirement.

- Saul Levmore. (2017). Must we retire? In *Aging Thoughtfully*. (15 pages)
- Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen. (2019). The EU and age discrimination: abolish mandatory retirement. *Twelve Stars*. (5 pages)

Week 5: Economic Growth

Herzog analyses Adam Smith's influential endorsement of economic growth. Rose critiques the popular view that continued economic growth is necessary for improving the condition of the worst-off, promoting innovation, and fostering the attitudes essential to the functioning of a liberal democracy.

- Lisa Herzog. (2015). The Normative Stakes of Economic Growth. *Journal of Politics*. (13 pages)
- Julie Rose. (2020). On the Value of Economic Growth. *Philosophy, Politics, and Economics*. (26 pages)

Week 6: Automation and Technological Unemployment

Frey and Osborne examine which jobs are likely to be automated. Parr critiques the 'automation tax' idea.

- Carl Frey and Michael Osborne. (2017). The future of employment: how susceptible are jobs to computerisation? *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*. (16 pages)
- Tom Parr. (2022). Automation, Unemployment, and Taxation. *Social Theory and Practice*. (22 pages)

II. THE PROMISE OF UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

Week 7: Introduction to Universal Basic Income

Bidadanure outlines the basic of idea and contemporary literature on this topic. Van Parijs and Vanderborght retrace the history of this idea, starting with the 18th century.

- Juliana Bidadanure. (2019). The Political Theory of Universal Basic Income. *Annual Review of Political Science*. (23 pages)
- Philippe Van Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght. (2017). Ch4 History: From Utopian Dream to Worldwide Movement. In their *Basic Income*. (29 pages)

Week 8: Freedom

Van Parijs offers a liberal case for basic income. Pettit argues that the republican conception of freedom as non-interference is better suited to support a right to basic income.

- Philippe Van Parijs. (1991). Why Surfers Should be Fed? The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income. (31 pages)
- Philip Pettit. (2007). A Republican Right to Basic Income? *Basic Income Studies*. (7 pages)

Week 9: Equality

Baker offers an egalitarian case for basic income. Rogers contends that standalone basic income would not achieve its egalitarian aims.

- John Baker. (1992). An Egalitarian Case for Basic Income. In *Arguing for Basic Income*. (23 pages)
- Brishen Rogers. (2017). Basic Income in a Just Society. *Boston Review*. (11 pages)

Week 10: Racial Justice

King argues that basic income would be the simplest and the most effective solution to poverty. Shelby argues that basic income could empower Black workers. Warren suggests that basic income could function as reparations.

- Martin Luther King Jr. (1967/2010). Where are we going. In his *Where Do We Go From Here*. (33 pages)
- Tommie Shelby. (2017). A Blow to Ghettoization. *Boston Review*. (8 pages)
- Daniel T. Warren. (2017). Reparations and Basic Income. *Boston Review*. (7 pages)

Week 11: Alternatives

Harvey argues that basic income would be more costly and less effective than a job guarantee. Bidadanure considers the idea that, instead of receiving basic income in regular instalments, citizens would receive a lump-sum grant in early adulthood.

- Philip Harvey. (2013). More for Less: The Job Guarantee Strategy. *Basic Income Studies*. (16 pages)
- Juliana Bidadanure. (2019). Basic Income versus Basic Capital. In her *Justice Across Ages*. (26 pages)

Week 12: Feasibility

Van Parijs and Vanderborght respond to two challenges: that basic income cannot be sustainably funded and that it's not a politically feasible proposal.

- Philippe Van Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght. (2017). Ch6 Economically Sustainable? Funding, Experiments, and Transitions. In their *Basic Income*. (37 pages)
- Philippe Van Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght. (2017). Ch7 Politically Achievable? Civil Society, Parties, and the Back Door. In their *Basic Income*. (46 pages)