Politics 9505b/Philosophy 9122b (Winter 2019): Toleration

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In this course we shall examine the emergence of toleration as a political topic, in the debate between John Locke and Jonas Proast (1689-1704), consider the contemporary significance of toleration and the moral and/or epistemological premises on which it can be based, and finally discuss three case studies – the place of religion in public life, cultural accommodation, and the regulation of hate speech.

Topics and readings are listed below. Readings will be posted on OWL. The only required text is Locke on Toleration (Cambridge UP 2010, available in UWO bookstore and Weldon). It is assumed that students will have access to a copy of Mill On Liberty.

Evaluation: a final essay, due April 15, worth 70%; class participation, 30%. The essay (15-20 pages is expected) will critically explore one of the week’s topics, while also showing an appreciation of its place in the overall theme of the class. I am open to proposals for essay topics that will span two or more weeks’ readings.

Topics and readings:

1. Locke’s toleration – was it Protestant, fallibilist, or egalitarian? Let’s discuss it: Locke on Toleration pp 1-66.

2. Locke’s toleration – was it Protestant, fallibilist, or egalitarian? Let’s discuss it some more: Locke on Toleration, remainder of book

3. Interpretations:

Vernon, Locke on Toleration, Introduction


Adam Wolfson Persecution or Toleration? Lexington Books 2010 chapter 4

4. Toleration today (?):

Bernard Williams “Toleration: A Moral or Political Question?” Diogenes 1996,


T.M.Scanlon The Difficulty of Tolerance chapter 10

Anna Galeotti *Toleration as Recognition* Cambridge UP 2002 chapter 4


6. Epistemic modesty:

David Christensen “Disagreement as Evidence”, *Philosophy Compass* 2009


7. The moral-pluralist case:

Isaiah Berlin *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* Knopf 1991, chapter 2

Joseph Raz “Autonomy, Toleration and the Harm Principle” in Mendus ed. *Toleration*


8. Agonism:

W.B. Gallie “Essentially Contested Concepts” *Proceedings of the Aristotelean Society* 1956,

Stuart Hampshire *Justice is Conflict* Princeton UP 2000, chapter 1.


Sarah Conly *Against Autonomy* Cambridge UP 2013, chapter 1

Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein *Nudge* Penguin 2008, chapter 1

10. Religion in public life:


11. Cultural Accommodation:

Will Kymlicka *Liberalism, Community and Culture* Oxford UP 1989, chapter 8,

Kwame Anthony Appiah *The Ethics of Identity* Princeton UP 2003, chapter 4

12. Hate Speech:

J.S. Mill *On Liberty*, chapter 2

Dale Miller “J.S. Mill and Charlottesville” *Civil American* 2017