Description:
For most of the history of political thought in the West, the family has been either marginalized or idealized: some thinkers have ignored it as a purely private and therefore unworthy institution, and also as an impediment to the realization of collective purposes; others have conceived of it as a realm characterized by unconditional love, unity of interest, affection, and mutual dependence. While the first view makes justice inapplicable to the family, and the second one makes justice unnecessary, neither are ultimately defensible. Recent work in political theory has shown that the public and private spheres interpenetrate one another, raising important questions of familial (particular parental and spousal) justice. This course on contemporary political theory challenges the standing assumptions about the family in the Western philosophical tradition, by examining recent work on the normative aspects of the relations between children, families and the state.

Topics:
Topics and questions addressed include: what rights (if any) do children have? Should a democracy protect children’s autonomy or parental religious freedoms? Should there be mandatory civic education? How should talent differentials between children affect distributive justice? Is multiculturalism bad for women and children? Are religious and associative freedoms compatible with gender equality? What is a just distribution of domestic labour? Should the goal of feminism be the demise of gender per se, or only the demise of involuntarily assumed gender roles? Does equality of opportunity require banning private schools? How should a democratic society regulate abortion and euthanasia?

Assignments: participation (10%) two critical outlines (20%); one essay (40%); one final exam (30%).

Required texts:

There will also be required readings placed on short-term reserve at the Elizabeth Dafoe library. An illustrative bibliography of such readings is appended here.

**Bibliography:**


