

Distributive Justice 2013

Plan for seminars

Hilde Bojer

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Those who write papers should preferably write an electronic version and upload it on Fronter not later than 12 noon the Thursday before the seminar.

Seminar 1: 5 February

Special exercises in utility functions and drawing graphs.

Income	Utility1	MU1	Utility2	MU2
0	0		0	
1	10		13	
2	19		25	
3	27		35	
4	34		44	
5	40		52	
6	45		59	
7	49		66	
8	52		72	
9	54		77	
10	55	?	81	?

The table shows income and two utility functions. MU 1 and MU 2 are the respective marginal utilities. Note that the bottom line MUs are unknown, since we do not know the utility corresponding to income = 11.

1. Draw a graph of both functions

2. Compute the marginal utilities for both functions.
3. Now draw a graph of the two MUs.
4. Assume two persons, both with utility functions 1. Distribute a total income of 10 between them so as to maximise the sum of their utilities.
5. Write down the utility and marginal utility of each person, and the sum of their utilities for this distribution.
6. Compute the sum of utilities for one or two other distributions of the same sum.
7. Assume two persons, one with utility function 1, the other with utility function 2. Repeat exercises 4,5 and 6. The answers may be approximate.
8. Find the distribution which gives equal utilities to 1 and 2 in this last case.
9. Draw a diagram similar to figure 4.3 in the text book and with the two given utility functions.
10. Which of the two persons is the more efficient utility machine?

Seminar 2- 12 February

Review questions on welfarism

1. Define welfarism
2. What is the basic tenet of utilitarianism?
3. How can it be justified?
4. What is a utility function?
5. What is marginal utility?
6. What is the utilitarian criterion for just distribution of income?
7. Under which assumption will utilitarianism lead to economic equality?
8. What are expensive preferences?

9. How will a welfare egalitarian divide income between two persons with different utility functions?
10. How will a utilitarian divide them
11. What are the main criticisms of welfarism?
12. What is the difference between respectful welfarism and paternalistic welfarism?

Seminar 3. 26. February

Exam 2009

In this exam, we ask you to give critical exposition of Rawls's theory of justice.

Discuss in particular

- the social contract
- the original position and the veil of ignorance
- the two main principles deduced from the original position
- the concept of social primary goods.

What are the main criticisms of Rawls? Do you agree with them?

Seminar 4: 5. March. The capability approach

The capability approach

Important concepts

1. What is the difference between capability and functioning?
2. Give an example of a functioning and the corresponding capability (not taken from the books)

3. Explain what is meant by conversion factor (Robeyns)

Which capabilities?

Martha Nussbaum proposes a list of important capabilities.

Do you agree with this list?

Would you remove some and introduce others?

Can you suggest which policies would promote one or more of them?

Discussion

Can you think of some arguments pro and con the capability approach as an element of distributive justice?

Seminar 5: 12 March

Excerpt from postponed exam 2010

1. In egalitarian theories, various concepts of what would be equal are put forward: welfare, social primary goods, resources, capabilities.

Please explain these concepts, and give a critical discussion of them.

Seminar 6: 9. April

Libertarianism

1. Hayek maintains that the market does not lead to a just distribution, but that “Social justice“ is only possible in a totalitarian state. A milder version of his argument, maintained by many, is that there is a trade off between liberty and economic equality.

Please discuss.

2. Nozick maintains, on the contrary, that the market does result in a just distribution. Please explain why.

Seminar 7: 16. April

Excerpt from Exam Spring 2011 (Regular)

All questions should be answered! The first two questions count 10 per cent each. Question 3 counts 20 per cent and question 4 60 per cent.

1. What is meant by a. Consequential justice? b. Procedural justice?

2. Is Rawls’s theory of justice procedural or consequential? Explain why.

3. Robert Nozick’s libertarianism is purely procedural. What are his rules for justice in distribution? Explain what is meant by justice in acquisition and justice in transfer.

Seminar 8: 23. April

Sex and social justice

Give a summary of Okin Moller’s criticism of Rawls. Do you agree?

Discuss briefly the position of women and children in welfarism and libertarianism.

Seminar 9: 30. April

Review questions