

Timothy Syme

Curriculum Vitae

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AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION: Social and Political Philosophy, Moral Theory

AREAS OF COMPETENCE: Early Modern Philosophy, Modern Continental Philosophy, Philosophy of Social Science

EMPLOYMENT:

Independent researcher, August 2020 – present.

IE University, Madrid, International Teaching Fellow, September 2015 – August 2020.

EDUCATION

- 2015 *Brown University*: Ph.D. Philosophy
Dissertation: *Everyday Life and the Demands of Justice*
Committee: David Estlund (Chair), Charles Larmore, Sharon Krause (Political Science)
- 2007 *University of Edinburgh*: M.A. (Hons) Philosophy and Politics, 2007 (First Class Honors)

PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- 2019 'Charity vs revolution: Effective Altruism and the systemic change objection' in *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*
- 2017 'The pervasive structure of society' in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*

WORK IN PREPARATION

- 'The social epistemology of effective altruism'
'Radicalising Rawls: expansive institutionalism and the culture of occupational choice'
'Social permissions, parental partiality and the moral division of labor'
'Everyday life and the demands of justice' (monograph)

TEACHING

Instructor: Course design and teaching

- 2019 Fall and Spring Political Theory, Plato to Present, (undergraduate), IE University
2018 Fall and Spring Introduction to Philosophy, (undergraduate), IE University
Political Theory, Plato to Present, (undergraduate), IE University

2017 Fall and Spring	Political Theory, Plato to Present, (undergraduate), IE University
2016 Fall and Spring	Political Theory, Plato to Present, (undergraduate), IE University
2015 Fall and Spring	Political Theory, 18th Century to Present, (undergraduate), IE University
Summer	Democracy: Philosophy, Politics and Power; (pre-college), Brown University
2014 Spring	Contemporary Moral Problems, Brown University, (undergraduate)
Summer	Democracy: Philosophy, Politics and Power; (pre-college), Brown University
2013 Summer	Democracy: Philosophy, Politics and Power; (pre-college), Brown University
2011 Summer	Democracy: Philosophy, Politics and Power; (pre-college), Brown University

Teaching Assistant: Grading and discussion sections

2013	Ethics and the Novel, Brown University, (Felicia Nimue Ackerman)
2012	Marxism; Brown University, (Charles Larmore)
2011	Early Modern Philosophy; Brown University, (Justin Brookes)
2010	Introduction to Political Philosophy; Brown University, (David Estlund)
	Existentialism; Brown University, (Bernard Reginster)
2009	Environmental Ethics; Brown University, (Jason Brennan)

EXTERNAL PRESENTATIONS

2016	‘An internal critique of Effective Altruism’, Seventh Braga Meeting on Ethics and Political Philosophy, University of Minho
2015	‘Everyday life and the demands of justice’, Political Philosophy Conference - Economic Justice and Political Action, University of Barcelona
2014	‘Sociology and social justice’, Collective Intentionality IX, Bloomington, Indiana, ‘Three senses of political’, X is Political: 17 th Annual Comparative Literature Intra-Student Faculty Forum, Ann Arbor, Michigan

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS AT BROWN

2014	‘Communities of practice: a context-relative account of social justice’, Graduate Political Philosophy Workshop
2013	‘Stability, ethos and egalitarian greed’, Graduate Political Philosophy Workshop ‘Responsibility for justice: change the way you live’, Philosophy Dissertation Workshop ‘How is X political?’, Mellon Graduate Student Workshop, Publics and Politics: Liberal Democracy and the Cultural Turn
2012	‘Individuals and the demands of justice’, Philosophy Dissertation Workshop ‘Normative individualism and group agency’ to Philosophy Dissertation Workshop ‘Basic structure: the subject of justice’ Graduate Political Philosophy Workshop
2011	‘Rawls on desert’, Graduate Political Philosophy Workshop ‘Plato’s democratic man: an ambiguity in the state-soul analogy’, Philosophy Dissertation Workshop.

SERVICE

2019 – 2020	Coordinator of IE Undergraduate Philosophy Club
2019 – present	Referee for <i>Futures</i>
2019 – present	Referee for <i>Utilitas</i>
2015 – present	Referee for <i>The Journal of Value Inquiry</i>
2011	Conference Co-organizer: Shapiro Philosophy Graduate Conference

2008-2010 Coordinator, Graduate Political Philosophy Workshop
Graduate Student Department Representative

GRADUATE COURSEWORK AND INSTRUCTORS (* = AUDIT)

19th Century Philosophy (Bernard Reginster)
Metaphysics of Mind (Jaegwon Kim)
Philosophy of Bernard Williams (Charles Larmore)
Analytic Philosophy Proseminar (Katherine Dunlop)
Value Theory Proseminar (Nomy Arpaly)
Philosophical Issues from Freud* (Bernard Reginster)
Epistemology (Joshua Schechter)
20th Century Continental Philosophy* (Charles Larmore)
Philosophical Logic (Joshua Schechter)
Ancients and Moderns (Sharon Krause)
Understanding Actions (Jaegwon Kim)
Rawls (Charles Larmore)
Ideal Theory and Political Philosophy (David Estlund)
The Ethics of Belief (Charles Larmore)
Plato's Republic (Mary Louise Gill)
Groups as Agents* (David Estlund)
Democracy, Justice and the Law (Corey Brettschneider)
Realism and Idealism in Political Philosophy* (David Estlund)
Freedom* (Sharon Krause)

RELATED ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2011-2015 Instructor, Summer@Brown Pre-College Program
2007 Teaching Assistant, Austrian Education Ministry/British Council

AWARDS AND HONORS

2020 Award for Teaching Excellence, IE University
2018 Award for Teaching Excellence, IE University
2016 Award for Teaching Excellence, IE University
2013-2014 Brown University Dissertation Completion Fellowship
2008-2013 Brown University Graduate Fellowship
2006 Bruce of Grangehill Prize in Philosophy, University of Edinburgh
2005 Simon Gray Prize in Politics, University of Edinburgh

REFERENCES

David Estlund

Lombardo Family Professor of Humanities
Department of Philosophy, Brown University, 401.863.6346; David_Estlund@Brown.edu

Charles Larmore

W. Duncan MacMillan Family Professor in the Humanities
Department of Philosophy, Brown University, 401.863.6346; Charles_Larmore@Brown.edu

Sharon Krause

Professor of Political Science

Department of Political Science, Brown University, 401.863.2825; Sharon_Krause@Brown.edu

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Professor of Humanities

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Everyday Life and the Demands of Justice

The ‘personal is political’ in part because basic social goods, like the right to bodily integrity, are constructed and distributed by ordinary people in their everyday interactions. This implies that some intimate and ostensibly private activities, such as family life and economic choice, are directly subject to the demands of justice. This is in tension with the similarly widespread insistence that justice is a distinctively structural value and thus that the demands of justice apply only to the institutions and rules within which individual actions occur and never to particular actions within these rules.

I resolve the tension with an account of the structural scope of justice that includes all ‘pervasive’ social practices: those that are monitored, enforced and complied with by almost everyone virtually all of the time. The fact of quotidian distribution is fatal to the standard ‘governmental’ approach justice because pervasive linguistic and gender practices, for example, are, I argue, identical to political institutions in all ethically relevant respects: they are collectively enacted, effectively inescapable social rules that regulate all activities within them. This account contributes to debates about individual responsibility for justice; the different sites of justice, such as states and global institutions; anarchistic organizational forms; and the methodology and subject matter of political philosophy.

I argue that the demands of justice apply to the institutional whole formed by the pervasive practices of a group of people. This holistic structure necessarily sets the terms for all interactions between its participants. It includes apparently trivial pervasive norms, such as those of conversational etiquette, because they interact with other norms, such as those of class, and so can shape distribution. It excludes social rules that are causally significant without being pervasive. Specific tax laws or the internal norms of a dominant social class, for example, impact distribution but are only applied in everyday life by a subset of the society’s population and so do not regulate all interactions within it. These rules are subject to the demands of justice indirectly, in virtue of the genuinely pervasive norms upon which their impact depends, such as the rules regulating authority over taxation or the practices establishing hierarchical class distinctions.

The central practical implication of this account is that justice can require people to undertake ‘everyday direct action’ to help transform unjust social practices, as well as conventional political action, like voting or protesting. Everyday direct action includes subverting and reforming unjust practices, such as by trying to impose social sanctions on sexist or greedy actions; exiting unjust practices, perhaps by quitting a job at a private corporation; and seeking to establish more just practices, such as by raising children to reject traditional gender distinctions.

The quotidian requirements of justice may be very demanding, because pervasive social practices exercise a formative influence on their participants, shaping their identities as, say, male or white, and their conception of their material needs, such as the comforts of affluence. I argue that any plausible account of individual responsibility for justice must confront the uncomfortable fact that justice may require people to fundamentally alter the way they work, talk, shop, socialize and raise their children, as well as to pursue changes in law or government policy.

The pervasive structure account also implies that the demands of justice apply to all individual actions, but only insofar as they are salient to the enactment of a pervasive practice. This productively re-

frames puzzles about the institutional realization of egalitarian justice, such as the legitimacy of economic incentives for the talented. Occupational choices are inevitably relevant to justice but should not be directly controlled by social institutions. But informal cultural norms inevitably help regulate individual's decisions, such as norms permitting people to ignore considerations of equality and sanctioning attempts to hold people to account for being greedy. The pervasive structure account illuminates the possibility that societies could promote economic equality while respecting freedom of occupational choice by transforming the cultural practices within which occupational choices are made, such as those of advice and privacy, as well as by more conventional redistributive methods.

The pervasive structure account also has implications for debates about global justice. I argue that any 'community of practice' is a potentially significant site of justice. Linguistic groups, families and professions, for example, have pervasive structures which organize the distribution of their distinctive goods. I offer a general account of 'boundary' norms as mutually recognized performative criteria of membership that, when met, trigger the application of the other norms of a practice. For example: being an agent with a human body triggers the application of norms of gender and race; physical location triggers the norms of spatially defined communities, like states; and being a competent speaker of a language means that other speakers will apply its linguistic rules to one's utterances.

This account provides a framework for investigating questions which are often occluded by a focus on governmental institutions, such as the evaluation of boundaries themselves and the relationships between the myriad communities of practice that make up the social world. This framework also makes it possible to evaluate which community is most relevant to a particular distributive outcome, such as domestic labor within a family or labor rights within international economic practices, rather than insisting that one domain, like the state, is inherently privileged.

By re-orientating political philosophy around everyday practices, rather than authoritative institutions, my project also facilitates a fresh approach to debates about political anarchism and horizontal organization more generally. Social practices are, of course, sites of power and domination. But they are necessarily enacted through a decentralized process involving the actions and choices of all of their participants. This analysis allows for the critical evaluation of authority relations and organizational forms without any dogmatic statist or anarchist assumptions. It also lays the foundation for a novel form of sociological anarchism.

Political philosophy is often closely aligned with public policy and jurisprudence. In order to understand and evaluate the quotidian foundations of social order and, thus, of social justice, political philosophy should expand its disciplinary horizons to embrace ethnography and ethno-methodology, critical accounts of power, ideology and everyday resistance; and analyses of the collective intentionality of social construction. Political philosophy can, in turn, contribute normative evaluations and recommendations that these critical and empirical disciplines often omit or reject. My dissertation contributes to and provides an example of the productive integration of these hitherto divergent and often opposed approaches to fundamental social and political questions.