

Political Responsibility: The Life of a Concept

Wednesdays, 12–14h Room HS 01 009 (FMF)
Fridays, 12–14h Room R 01036a (Alte Universität)
Syllabus as of 31 January 2022
ILLAS-Password: Responsibility_WS_2021

In a spectacularly short time, the concept of responsibility has risen from obscurity to prominence: Coined as a political concept in the debates surrounding the democratic revolutions in America and France, it was used to rethink the relation between the government and the people or the government and the parliament. These beginnings as well as the subsequent developments of the concept—its individualization in ethics (Max Weber), its usage in Germany to cope with an unbearable past after World War II (Karl Jasper), its connection to sustainability (Hans Jonas) and its newest offspring in international relations, the “responsibility to protect”, to name only a few stages—are the first set of core themes in this seminar.

The second set is comprised of critical reflections on the concept of political responsibility and on the methods used to understand its history. Whether history of ideas, conceptual history or genealogy, each way of writing the history of “political responsibility” has its own presuppositions which influence our understanding of that concept. Furthermore, “responsibility” and “political responsibility” are self-evident concepts which we frequently use but hardly ever question. So how can we get enough distance from them to not project our understanding onto older conceptions of responsibility?

Preparatory Reading

McKeon, Richard (1957): The Development and the Significance of the Concept of Responsibility. In: *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 39 (1), 3–32.
Vázquez-Arroyo, Antonio (2016): *Political Responsibility. Responding to Predicaments of Power*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Young, Iris Marion (2011): *Responsibility for Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Requirements

Graded Exam: The final assessment task is to write a term paper of up to 5,000 words, to be handed in before **15 March 2022** (as an electronic copy and in print). Please discuss the topic with me before you start writing.

Pass/Fail Exam: To be eligible for writing a term paper, students must give a **short (10min) presentation** of the core text (or texts, if there are more than one) in one session. This short presentation is intended to open up the discussion in class and should answer three questions:

- (a) What is the main argument in the text? How can we express its main thesis?
- (b) How does the argument work?
- (c) Where do you see problems? Identify where you find an argument hard to understand and where you think an argument is inconclusive.

Please be aware that you should reconstruct the argument and not just recall the text. Since you will not have time to include every detail, you must decide what is important and what is not. It is far better if we discover in the discussion that we do need some of the left-out passages than if you try to cramp everything into the presentation.

All core texts will be made available via ILLAS.

Sessions

#	Date	Topic	Core Texts	Further Reading (optional)
1	20.10.2021		Overview and organisation	
2	22.10.2021		Duff, Antony (1998): Responsibility. In: Edward Craig (ed.), <i>Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy</i> . London/New York: Routledge.	Vázquez-Arroyo, Antonio Y. (2015): Responsibility. In: Michael T. Gibbons (ed.), <i>The Encyclopedia of Political Thought</i> . Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 3248–3260.
3	27.10.2021	Conceptual History	McKeon, Richard (1957): The Development and the Significance of the Concept of Responsibility. In: <i>Revue Internationale de Philosophie</i> 39 (1), 3–32.	Raffoul, François (2010): <i>The Origin of Responsibility</i> . Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
4	29.10.2021	Conceptual History	Gluck, Carol (2009): Sekinin/Responsibility in Modern Japan. In: Carol Gluck and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (eds.), <i>Words in Motion. Toward a Global Lexicon</i> . Durham: Duke University Press, 83–106.	Sizoo, Edith (ed.) (2010): <i>Responsibility and Cultures of the World. Dialogue Around a Collective Challenge</i> . Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang.
5	03.11.2021 05.11.2021		NO CLASSES THIS WEEK	
6	10.11.2021	Reflections on Methods	Skinner, Quentin (2002 [1969]): Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas. In: <i>Visions of Politics</i> , Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 57–89.	Lacey, Nicola (2001): Responsibility and Modernity in Criminal Law. In: <i>Journal of Political Philosophy</i> 9, 249–277.
7	12.11.2021	Reflections on Methods	Koselleck, Reinhart (1994): Some Reflections on the Temporal Structure of Conceptual Change. In: Willem Melchong and Wyger Velem (eds.), <i>Main Trends in Cultural History</i> . Amsterdam/Atlanta, 7–16.	Koselleck, Reinhart (2018): <i>Sediments of Time. On Possible Histories</i> . Edited and translated by Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann and Sean Franzel. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
8	17.11.2021	Reflections on Methods	Nietzsche, Friedrich (1997 [1887]): <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> . Translated by Carol Diethe. Ed. by Keith Ansell-Pearson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3–9 & 35–67.	Foucault, Michel (1998 [1971]): Nietzsche, Genealogy, History. In: J. Faubion (ed.), <i>Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology: Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984</i> , vol. II. New York: The New Press, 369–391.

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9	19.11.2021	Reflections on Methods	Saar, Martin (2008): Understanding Genealogy: History, Power, and the Self. In: <i>Journal of the Philosophy of History</i> 2 (3), 295–314.	Owen, David (2002): Criticism and Captivity: On Genealogy and Critical Theory. In: <i>European Journal of Philosophy</i> 10 (2), 216–230.
10	24.11.2021	Early Conceptions	Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison and John Jay (2008 [1788]): <i>The Federalist Papers</i> . Ed. by Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Papers. No 1, 10, 37 & 62–66.	Borowiak, Craig T. (2007): Accountability Debates: The Federalists, The Anti-Federalists, and Democratic Deficits. In: <i>The Journal of Politics</i> 69 (4), 998–1014.
11	26.11.2021	Early Conceptions	Constant, Benjamin (1815): On the Responsibility of Ministers. In: <i>The Pamphleteer</i> X. You can leave out chapter XIV.	
12	01.12.2021	A New Ethics?	Weber, Max (2004 [1919]): The Vocation of Politics. In: idem, <i>The Essential Weber. A Reader</i> . Ed. by Sam Whimster. London: Routledge, 257–269.	
13	03.12.2021	A New Ethics?	Jaspers, Karl (2001): <i>The Question of German Guilt</i> . With a New Introduction by Joseph W. Koterski. Translated by E.B. Ashton. New York: Fordham University Press, pp. 21–75 & 96–117. (Note: The PDF has the complete text!)	Arendt, Hannah, »Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility«, in: Peter Baehr (Hg.): <i>The Portable Hannah Arendt</i> . New York 2000 [1945], 146–156. Schaap, Andrew (2001): Guilty subjects and political responsibility: Arendt, Jaspers and the resonance of the ‘German question’ in politics of reconciliation. In: <i>Political Studies</i> 49 (4), 749–766.
14	08.12.2021	A New Ethics?	Young, Iris Marion (2011): Responsibility and Historic Injustice. In: idem., <i>Responsibility for Justice</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 171–187.	McWhorter, Ladelle (2008): Racism and Responsibility. In: Shannon Sullivan and Dennis J. Schmidt (eds.), <i>Difficulties of Ethical Life</i> . New York: Fordham University Press, 147–161.

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15	10.12.2021	A New Ethics?	Jonas, Hans (1984 [1979]): <i>The Imperative of Responsibility. In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age</i> . Translated by Hans Jonas and David Herr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 1–12, 90–108 & 123–135.	
16	17.12.2021	A New Ethics?	Bernasconi, Robert (2008): Before Whom and for What? Accountability and the Invention of Ministerial, Hyperbolic, and Infinite Responsibility. In: Shannon Sullivan and Dennis J. Schmidt (eds.), <i>Difficulties of Ethical Life</i> . New York: Fordham University Press, 131–146.	Hoppe, Katharina (2019): Responding as Composing. Towards a Post-Anthropocentric, Feminist Ethics for the Anthropocene. In: <i>Distinktion</i> , 1–18.
17	22.12.2022		Gädeke, Dorothea (2021): Who Should Fight Domination? Individual Responsibility and Structural Injustice. In: <i>Politics, Philosophy & Economics</i> 20 (2), 180–201.	Jugov, Tamara and Lea Ypi (2019): Structural Injustice, Epistemic Opacity, and the Responsibilities of the Oppressed. In: <i>Journal of Social Philosophy</i> 50 (1), 7–27.
18	12.01.2022	Responsibility in Society	French, Peter A. (1979): The Corporation as a Moral Person. In: <i>American Philosophical Quarterly</i> 16 (3), 207–215. Friedman, Milton (1970): The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits. In: <i>The New York Times Magazine</i> 13.	
19	14.01.2022	Responsibility in Society	Shamir, Ronen (2008): The Age of Responsibilization. On Market Embedded Morality. In: <i>Economy and Society</i> 37 (1), 1–19.	Garland, David (1996): The Limits of the Sovereign State. Strategies of Crime Control in Contemporary Society. In: <i>British Journal of Criminology</i> 36 (4), 445–471.
20	19.01.2022	Responsibility in the International Sphere?	Young, Iris Marion (2006): Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model. In: <i>Social Philosophy and Policy</i> 23 (1), 102–130.	Young, Iris Marion (2011): <i>Responsibility for Justice</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press.
21	21.01.2022	Responsibility in the International Sphere?	Miller, David (2004): National Responsibility and International Justice. In: Deen K. Chatterjee (Hrsg.), <i>The Ethics</i>	Abdel-Nour, Farid (2003): National Responsibility. In: <i>Political Theory</i> 31 (5), 693–719.

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			<i>of Assistance. Morality and the Distant Needy</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 123–143.	
22	26.01.2022	Responsibility in the International Sphere?	Ypi, Lea (2010): On the Confusion between Ideal and Non-ideal in Recent Debates on Global Justice. In: <i>Political Studies</i> 58 (3), 536–555.	Pogge, Thomas W. (2002): Moral Universalism and Global Economic Justice. In: <i>Politics, Philosophy & Economics</i> 1 (1), 29–58.
23	28.01.2022	Responsibility in the International Sphere?	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) (2001): <i>The Responsibility to Protect</i> . Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, XI–XII, 1–45. United Nations (2005): <i>General Assembly, 2005 World Summit Outcome Document: Resolution, A/RES/60/1</i> , 24 October, §138–§140.	Orford, Anne (2011): <i>International Authority and Responsibility to Protect</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Bellamy, Alex J. (2010): The Responsibility to Protect – Five Years On. In: <i>Ethics & International Affairs</i> 24 (2), 143–169.
24	02.02.2022	Irresponsibility	Biebricher, Thomas (2011): (Ir-)Responsibilization, Genetics and Neuroscience. In: <i>European Journal of Social Theory</i> 14 (4), 469–488.	
25	09.02.2022	Final Discussion	Final Discussion & Presentation of ideas for term papers	