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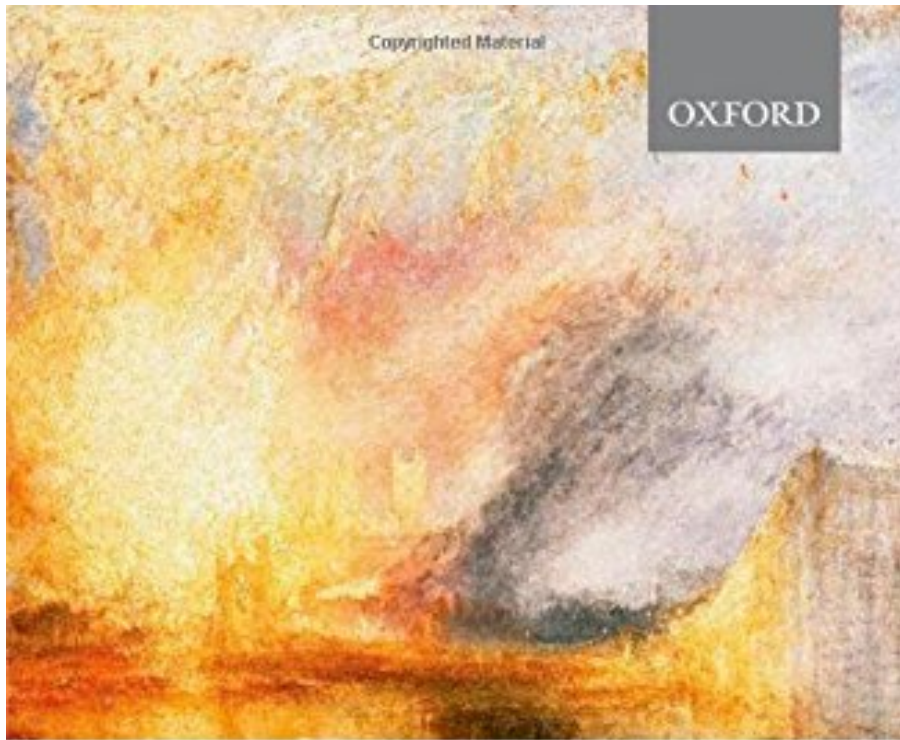
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REVISED EDITION

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`'This is exactly what the title says - it introduces students to many of the central topics of political philosophy and in the process to many of its most distinguished figures from Plato to John Rawls. By organizing his book around major issues, Wolff provides the structure that beginners
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About the Author
Jonathan Wolff is Professor of Philosophy at University College London.

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What would life be like without the state? What justifies the state? Who should rule? How much liberty should the citizen enjoy? How should property be justly distributed? This book examines the central problems involved in political philosophy and the past attempts to respond to these problems. Jonathan Wolff looks at the works of Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, Marx, and Rawls (among others), examining how the debates between philosophers have developed, and searching for possible answers to these provocative questions. His final chapter looks at more recent issues, particularly feminist political theory.

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About the Author
Jonathan Wolff is Professor of Philosophy at University College London.

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33 of 33 people found the following review helpful.
Excellent Introduction
By Christopher Hefele
I found this to be a great introduction to political philosophy. In an unbiased manner, Jonathan Wolff reviews the central ideas that are fundamental to the field: the state of nature, how one justifies the formation of the state, how to pick rulers, liberty, distribution of property, individualism, justice, rights, democracy, utilitarianism, and social contracts. He also reviews ideas of the major thinkers -- Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, etc. The book is organized by TOPIC, not by thinker, which is a format that I find was best suited for learning & for tying different thinker's ideas together. The writing is clear, simple, and chatty; it seems to have been written for college freshman. The only minor fault is that the book does not cover some major figures in political theory that I would have included: Aristotle & Machiavelli were not mentioned, for example. However, overall, I'd recommend this book. I'm keeping it on my bookself for reference.

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful.
Excellent book!
By Eris
This was required reading for my philosophy class. It is very thorough, but still understandable. This book is at the base of my entire understanding of political philosophy, and I still rely on it from time to time. For anyone in philosophy, Lincoln-Douglas debate, or just are interested, READ THIS!

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.
The perfect introduction
By Bruno
This is probably the best introduction available, being lucid and succinct, it also takes just the right approach to the subject for the beginner. Instead of a chapter by chapter guide to the main thinkers or theories, Wolff cleverly structures the book in such a way that the student is gently coaxed into exploring the fundamental questions of political philosophy for himself.

The author notes at the beginning that it is sometimes said that 'who gets what?' and 'who says so?' are the only two questions of importance in the subject. Whilst denying this to be entirely the case, Wolff puts these questions firmly into intial context by asking why we need the state at all and then proceeds to ask if we do need the state, who indeed should govern it? He then explores the issue of the distribution of goods before

returning to the 'who says who gets what?' and by the end of the book the reader should be able to explore that question through the lenses of the competing theories of today, such as feminism or communitarianism.

I was lucky enough to have the author as one of my lecturers at university and, indeed, to take my tutorials in political philosophy in my final year. As a working class student with zero self-esteem and who was failing abjectly to mix within the rarefied air of an elite university, Mr Wolff (unlike certain snobs and marxist posers) admirably strived to boost my confidence and every student found his tutorials and lectures to be models of patience and clarity. This book is imbubed with those qualities throughout and thus can't be recommended highly enough. Whether you are a high school student or a 1st year undergraduate, this book will have you asking the right questions and should put you in the perfect position to look in closer detail at the major issues.

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