

Wednesday, 11 May 2016, 14:00-16:00

Alan Patten (Princeton University)

“Religious Accommodations in a Diverse Society”

Library Hall, Hermann-Föge-Weg 11, Göttingen

A month seldom passes by in which a new controversy over religious accommodation is not reported somewhere. Legislators judge a proposed law to be supported by valid reasons of public policy. The law conflicts with somebody’s religiously motivated conduct, however, and the question arises whether that conduct should be accommodated. A common liberal position, influenced by Locke, is skeptical about such accommodation claims. Provided the state is pursuing valid public policy reasons, and is not targeting particular religious views (or religion in general) for unfavorable treatment, the fact that a law conflicts with religious observance provides no justification for an accommodation. The Lockean view is based on a *neutrality* objection and a *responsibility* objection to religious accommodations. In the lecture, I consider both of these objections and show that they do not really support the Lockean view. Instead, they are consistent with what might be called the *fair opportunity* view, a view that supports accommodations in a significant range of cases.

ALAN PATTEN is Howard Harrison and Gabrielle Snyder Beck Professor of Politics at Princeton University. A citizen of Canada and the United States, he has a B.A. from McGill, an M.A. from Toronto and an M. Phil. and D. Phil. (1996) from Oxford. He previously taught at McGill University and the University of Exeter, and has visited at the State Islamic University of Indonesia in Jakarta.

His new book, *Equal Recognition: The Moral Foundations of Minority Rights*, appeared in 2014 with Princeton University Press.

He is also the author of *Hegel’s Idea of Freedom* (Oxford, 1999), which won the APSA First Book Prize in Political Theory and the C.B. Macpherson Prize awarded by the Canadian Political Science Association. He is the co-editor, with Will Kymlicka, of *Language Rights and Political Theory* (Oxford, 2003). His articles have appeared in *Political Theory*, *Ethics*, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, *Journal of Political Philosophy*, *History of Political Thought*, and the *American Political Science Review*.

Professor Patten has served as Associate Chair, Department of Politics, and as Acting Director, University Center for Human Values. He is currently editor of *Philosophy & Public Affairs*.

