

The Idea and Ideal of Equality

English 861, Section 001 Political Science 773, section 001 Mondays 3—5:30 PM Instructors:
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This team-taught graduate seminar will examine what the idea of equality means in modern political societies—and the ways that it has functioned as an ideal that motivates political action. Political, social, economic, and legal equality will all be considered, but with a decided focus on economic equality. Related issues like discrimination, equal opportunity, and various understandings of justice will also be addressed. We will spend four weeks considering historical formulations of the ideal of equality from the Renaissance to 1900. Then we will focus on a series of 20th century debates, particularly in relation to the redistribution of wealth (or other resources) and questions of gender and racial equality. The context for this whole examination is the central place of the ideal of equality to traditional liberalism, and the widespread contestation of that ideal by conservatives and radicals in the 20th century.

In addition to the classes listed below, we will watch the film *Gattaca*, on a mutually agreed upon evening.

Requirements: Students will be assigned the responsibility to lead class discussions twice during the semester, write three short reading responses (three to four pages) during the term on the readings, will be required to write one long seminar paper, and will present their ideas from that paper to the seminar. Students should email their preferred first two paper schedules (listed below) to Jeff Spinner-Halev by January 18th.

Readings:

All books are available at the bookstore.

Shakespeare, *King Lear* (Simon and Schuster)
David Schmitz, *Elements of Justice* (Cambridge)
Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (eos)
Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (Transaction)
Anne Phillips, *Which Equalities Matter?* (Polity)
John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness* (Harvard)
David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anthropology* (Prickly Paradigm)

Jan 9	No Class
Jan 16	Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i> ; Phillips, <i>Which Equalities Matter?</i>
Jan 23	Putney Debates (excerpt); Overton, “A Remonstrance of Many Thousand Citizens”; Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , ch. 13; More, <i>Village Politics</i> ; Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> , (excerpts); Kant, <i>Groundwork of a Metaphysics of Morals</i> ; <i>Practical Philosophy</i> (excerpts)

- Jan 30 Bernard Williams, "The Idea of Equality"; Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*; Sumner, *What the Social Classes Owe to Each Other*
- Feb 6 Weber, "Class, Status, Party"; Bourdieu, "Introduction" to *Distinction*; Tilly, "Historical Perspectives on Inequality;" T. H. Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class";
- Feb 13 Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, parts I and II and pp. 80-89, 111-119, 122-4, 130-140, 148-153; Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 75-101 (on Dworkin)
- Feb 20 Cohen, *If you are an Egalitarian, Why are you so Rich?*, pp. 117-182; Arneson, "Equality and Equal Opportunity for Welfare"; Van Parijs, "Why Surfers Should be Fed;" Schmidtz, *Elements of Justice*, part 2
- Feb 27 Sen, "Equality of What?" Nussbaum, Chapters 2 & 3 of *Creating Capabilities*; Anderson, "What is the Point of Equality?"
- March 5 No class (Spring Break)
- March 12 Jonathan Wolff, "Equality"; Arneson, "Luck Egalitarianism and Prioritarianism"; Arneson, "Luck Egalitarianism: A Primer," Hacker/Pierson essay; Hayek, "Equality, Value and Merit," (Chapter Eight of *The Constitution of Liberty*)
- March 19 Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron"; Schmidtz, *Elements of Justice*, parts 3-5; Miller, "Two Cheers for Meritocracy"
- March 26 Fraser, Chapters 2, 3, & 6 of *Scales of Justice*; Okin, "Gender Inequality and Cultural Differences;" Monique Deveaux, "A Deliberative Approach to Conflicts of Culture"
- April 2 David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*; Charles Beitz, "Does Global Inequality Matter?"; Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality"; Michael Blake, "Distributive Justice, State Coercion and Autonomy" Walzer, "In Defense of Equality"
- April 9 Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*. Presentations.
- April 16 Presentations
- April 23 Presentations

Paper Schedule #1: January 23, February 13, March 12
 Paper Schedule #2: January 30, February 20, March 19

Paper Schedule #3: February 6, February 27, March 26
Paper Schedule #4: February 6, February 27, April 2nd