Politics 9503a/Philosophy 9125a: Equality  (Sep-Dec 2018)

Tuesday 3:30-5:30, SSC 4105
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In this seminar course we discuss recent debates in political theory about the meaning and value of equality. The first part of the course considers competing answers to the questions, ‘Equality of what?’ and ‘Why equality?’, asking both what should be equalized and whether something other than equality is to be preferred. The discussion covers the arguments for and against John Rawls’s influential idea of democratic equality, Ronald Dworkin’s equality of resources, sufficiency and priority as against equality (Harry Frankfurt and Derek Parfit), and Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum’s equality of capabilities.

The second part of the course begins with defences of relational or social equality (Elizabeth Anderson and Samuel Scheffler) before considering the range of Tim Scanlon’s answers to the question, ‘Why does inequality matter?’ We conclude with two of the most important topics within the debates about egalitarianism: (1) the prospects for sex and gender equality, and (2) the value and possibility of global equality.

Most of the weekly readings will be posted on the OWL site for the course. You are required to purchase one book: T. M. Scanlon, Why Does Inequality Matter?, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. It is available at the UWO bookstore.

Evaluation
A final essay, due on the last day of classes, 50%: unless you get the instructors’ agreement, the essay is to be on one of the week’s topics, drawing on the assigned readings plus additional readings as appropriate. The essay should be 15-20 pages, double-spaced (approximately 4,500-6,000 words). Late essays are subject to a penalty of 2% per day.

Participation: 50%.
Your grade here will be based on your contributions to class discussion. To be eligible for this portion of the final grade, students must attend all classes except when there are medical or compassionate reasons, and hand in at the start of each class a weekly response to the readings.* This is to be one page, single-spaced, and should succinctly state what you take to be the main point and argument of each reading, and then state what issue or issues the readings pose for discussion. It will be assessed on a pass/fail basis. [*Note: you may miss one weeks’ written response without penalty; each further missed response will result in a two mark deduction from the participation grade.]

Students who meet this requirement will receive a mark that reflects their contributions to seminar discussion – average contributions will receive marks that translate into the B range, excellent contributions will receive marks that translate into the A or A+ range. It is expected that all students will contribute to every class, or at least will not fail to contribute to two classes in a row.
1. Introduction (Sep 11)

2. John Rawls’s Democratic Egalitarianism (Sep 18)

3. Critics of Rawls from Right and Left (Sep 25)


4. Ronald Dworkin on Equality of Welfare and Equality of Resources (Oct 2)


Reading Week (October 8-12)

5. Critics of Dworkin from Right and Left (Oct 16)


6. Equality, Sufficiency, and Priority (Oct 23)


7. Sen and Nussbaum on Equal Capabilities (Oct 30)


8. Relational Equality and the Critique of Luck Egalitarianism (Nov 6)


10. Scanlon on Why Inequality Matters: Part 2 (Nov 20)


11. Sex and Gender Equality (Nov 27)


12. Global Equality (Dec 4)

