This seminar deals with a most fundamental question of political philosophy, the meaning of equality. However, it will concentrate on a particular context in which the concept of equality is central, namely the definition of right and left. It will be a working assumption of this seminar that the right-left distinction is still operative in our politics and that it rotates around conflicting definitions of equality. Of course, equality is an empty concept unless we specify equality of what. For us the “what” consists of several things: equality with regard to the distribution of rights, income and assets, life chances, requisites for directing one’s life according to one’s own reason, political authority and power and political resources. We will also speak of equality of treatment with regard to citizenship and membership as well as respect and dignity. As for the right-left distinction, we will go back to a rather traditional way of defining this spectrum of political positions: namely that as we move left, politics aims toward greater equality in all the dimensions we have discussed above, and as we move right politics aims at transferring inequalities of circumstance or endowment to the distribution of economic, political and social goods. It also seeks to translate these inequalities into access to political influence and political resources, and the distribution of life chances. Often though not always, the market is considered a mechanism for such distribution. Somewhere between these positions is the whole debate on merit and desert and whether it makes sense to distribute fundamental goods on this basis. Hopefully, we will spend a good part of the seminar debating both the meaning of equality and whether right and left should be understood in its terms.

**Booklist:**
Norberto Bobbio, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction* (U of Chicago)
Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics* (Yale)

I. Defining Right and Left through the concept of equality: political and conceptual.

**Egalitarianism as a political principle.**
Norberto Bobbio, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction*
Recommended:
Alain Noël Jean-Philippe Thérien *Left and Right in Global Politics*
Arthur Rosenberg, *Democracy and Socialism*

**Egalitarianism as concept—what do we mean by equality?**
Bernard Williams, “The Idea of Equality” in *Problems of Self* (e-reserve)
Recommended:
II. Egalitarianism based on status, power, and citizenship. Democracy, Political Equality and the Market

A. Political equality vs. the Market.


For Graduate Students:
Stuart White, Equality, ch 2, “Democracy.”

Recommended:
David Miller, “Equality and Justice,” ch. 12 of Principles of Social Justice. (e-reserve)
Anne Phillips, Which Equalities Matter (selection on e-reserve).

C. Political Equality and Effective Participation vs. Pluralism

Robert Dahl, Democracy and its Critics, chs. 1,2, 8,* 9,* 12-14, 15-16, 18 (251-253), 20-21, 22-23*

First paper on political equality and social justice due Wed March 6th in HuB16 by 3 pm.

III. Analytical approaches to equality and inequality:

A. Liberal Left Egalitarianism and Justice—the problem of desert.

John Rawls, Theory of Justice

1. (The Principles of Justice) sections 1-3, 5 10-15; (equality)16-17, 48, 67; (The original position) 4, 20-26, 29, 40; (Equality of liberty) 31-33 39; (Political Justice, Political Constitutions, and Equality of Political Participation and its limits) 36-37,

2. (Justice, Equality and Political Economy) 41-43, (attack on merit as basis for economic distribution) 48; (Summing up--a well-ordered society and its justification) 69, 87.

For Graduate Students:
Stuart White, Equality, ch. 3, “Meritocracy.”
Second paper on Rawls and equality due in Hu B16 by 3pm on March 27th

B. Luck Egalitarianism and its problems
For graduate students:
Stuart White, Equality, ch. 4, “Luck Egalitarianism.”
Recommended:

C. Social Justice and the Attack on Meritocracy
Brian Barry, Why Social Justice Matters (selections to be announced)

IV. Adequacy of Marx and Rawls as answer to Luck and Status Egalitarianism
G. A. Cohen, If You’re and Egalitarian, Why are you so Rich, chs 1-3 (pp. 1-57); chs. 6-10 (101-179)

The third paper on luck egalitarianism, equal opportunity, and its critics due Monday April 22nd in HuB16 by 3 pm.

V. The Right Response:

A. Inequality and Contract:
Robert Nozick, Anarchy State and Utopia pp. 149-183 (on e-reserve)

B. Capitalist claims for inequality--The Market, Legality, and Negative Liberty.
Friedrich von Hayek, Law, Legislation, and Liberty v.2 “Social or Distributive Justice” (on e-reserve)

VI. A Response to the Right: Defenses of Inequality--Analytic Argument or Rhetorical Strategy?
Albert Hirschman, The Rhetoric of Reaction

VII. Socialism and Equality (read one)
R. H. Tawney, Equality (selection on e-res)

The topics for the last paper will be handed out on the last day of class, May 7th.
Course Requirements
1. Each member of the seminar will have to give at least one presentation on the readings on a question that I will pose. I will select volunteers from week to week. Your presentation should have at least three components: 1) it should lay out the core underlying assumptions of the argument you are discussing; 2) it should discuss how the argument fits in with the theme of the course as well as arguments we have already discussed—does it attack, refute, complement previous arguments; 3) and it should critically assess the strengths and weakness of the argument both conceptually and empirically. This last requirement means that you should present your own argument on the strength or weakness of the one we are reading.

2. There will be a series of four papers of about 6-7 pages a piece in which you will be asked to clarify some problem in the readings. I will assign the topics and the papers as we go along. The first paper on political equality and social justice will be due Wed March 6th in HuB16 by 3 pm. The second paper on Rawls and equality will be due in Hu B16 by 3 pm on March 27th. The third paper on luck egalitarianism, equal opportunity, and its critics will be due Monday April 22nd in HuB16 by 3 pm. The topics for the last paper on the right wing response to egalitarianism will be handed out on the last day of class, May 7th. I will also ask you on occasion to write for me a one page reaction paper whose purpose will be to stimulate discussion.

Each member of the seminar will have a chance to rewrite the first three papers as long as the rewrite is handed in by the end of the week in which the paper is returned. Each paper will count 20% with 20% for participation, presentations, and possible reaction papers.

E-Reserve
I will put the readings on e-reserve under Pos419. The password will be pos419 (lower case). Pos 500 will use the same e-reserve.

Office Hours
I shall have office hours uptown in HU B16 from 11:40-12:40 but I could meet you after 12:40 if necessary. I also will be available in Milne 204 from 1-3 on Wednesdays or by appointment. I can be reached at 442-5277 or at pbreiner@albany.edu

Some Useful Overviews of Recent Debates on Equality: