This seminar deals with a most fundamental question of political philosophy (and of day-to-day politics), 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 many things:

1. equality with regard to the distribution of rights, income and assets
2. equality of life chances,
3. equality with regard to the requisites and resources for directing one’s life freely according to one’s own reason,
4. equality of citizenship, especially with regard to “membership” in a polity and the freedom to participate in influencing political decisions vs inequality of membership and decision-making.
5. equality of power and political resources to influence decisions.
6. equality of treatment by the political order and by others.
7. equality of respect and dignity.

We will be examining the whole range of these meanings as we go along.

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 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:
Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics* (Yale)
Branko Milanovic, *The Haves and the Have-Nots* (Basic Books)

I. Egalitarianism as concept—what do we mean by equality?
   a. Stuart White, *Equality*, ch. 1
Recommended:

A short exercise 4-5 pages (to be assigned) on how far you would want things equalized based on reading White and Williams due in class February 2nd.

II. Egalitarianism based on status, power, and citizenship. Democracy, Political Equality and the Market—Political Notions of Equality and Inequality.

A. Political equality defined:
Stuart White, *Equality*, ch. 2.

B. Political equality vs. the Market.


Recommended:
David Miller, “Equality and Justice,” ch. 12 of *Principles of Social Justice*. (Blackboard)
Norberto Bobbio, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction*
Alain Noël Jean-Philippe Thérien *Left and Right in Global Politics*
Arthur Rosenberg, *Democracy and Socialism*

D. 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*

Paper on political equality and social justice, 6-8 pages due Tuesday February 24th in HuB16 by 3 pm. Note date.

III. Justice-driven notions of equality and inequality: Analytical approaches.

A. Liberal Left Egalitarianism and Justice—the problem of desert vs equality of
primary goods.

John Rawls, *Theory of Justice*

1. (The Principles of Justice) sections a)1-3, 5 10-15; (equality)16-17, 48, 67; b) (The original position) 4, 20-26, 29, 40; c) (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.

Recommended:
Stuart White *Equality* ch. 5 “Equality and Incentives”

B. Meritocracy and Inequality

Second paper on Rawls’s notion of equality vs Meritocracy due in Hu B16 by 3pm on March 12th.

C. Luck Egalitarianism and its problems

Recommended:

IV. Adequacy of Marx and Rawls as defense of Equality: Equality as an Ethos.
G. A. Cohen, *If You’re and Egalitarian, Why are you so Rich*, chs 1-3 (pp. 1-57); chs. 6-10 (101-179)

V. The Right Response:
A. Inequality and Contract:
Robert Nozick, *Anarchy State and Utopia* pp. 149-183 (on Blackboard)

B. Inequality and the Market (possibly recommended depending on time)
Friedrich von Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty* v.2 “Social or Distributive Justice” (on Blackboard)

B. Problems of Right Defenses of Inequality--Analytic Argument or Rhetorical Strategy?
Albert Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction* (entire)
The third paper on luck egalitarianism, its critics, and the right defense of inequality due
Monday April 8th in class.

VII. Problems of Inequality: Inequality of Income and Wealth:
A. Branko Milanovic, *The Haves and the Have-Nots*
   ch. 1 (“Unequal People”), pp. 1-60, 68-73.
   ch. 2 (Vignettes 2.2 and 2.3), pp. 115-123.
   ch. 3 (“Unequal World: Inequality Among Citizens in the World”) pp. 149-170, (Vignette 3.6 (“Income Inequality and the Global Financial Crises”) pp. 193-197.


VIII. Problems of Inequality of Membership II—Limited or Maximum Inclusion?
   Robert Goodin, "Enfranchising All Affected Interests, and Its Alternatives,” (on Blackboard)
D. Possibly additional reading on immigrants and citizenship.

IX. Summing Up

The topics for the last paper will be handed out on the last day of class, May 7th.

Course Requirements
I. 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. On occasion we may have
   two presentations with each person taking opposite sides of an issue.

II. There will be a series of four papers and one short exercise at the beginning and three 6-8
   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.
   1. A short 4 page exercise on how you far you would press equality due in class on
      February 2nd.
2. The first larger paper 6-8 pages on political equality and social justice will be due February 24th in HuB16 by 3 pm.
3. Second larger paper on Rawls’s notion of equality vs Meritocracy due in Hu B16 by 3pm on March 12th.
4. The third larger paper on luck egalitarianism, its critics, and the right defense of inequality due Monday April 8th in class.
5. The topics for the last paper—a take home final—on problems of egalitarianism (Income inequality or political membership, inclusion, and immigration) will be handed out on the last day of class, May 6th. In lieu of the assigned topics, I will be happy to allow students to forge their own topic going more deeply into one of the questions of the course as it relates to one of the last two issues. But you must discuss this option with me in advance—at least three weeks before the end of the semester.

Occasionally I will also ask you to write a one page reaction paper whose purpose will be to stimulate discussion. These papers will count in the participation category.

**Grading will be as follows:**
The first exercise will be 10% of the grade. Each of the other paper will count 25% with 15% for participation, presentations, and possible reaction papers. Participation, I know, is a relative matter as some of you are very loquacious and others quiet and reflective. So I will judge this 15% liberally—each person can engage relative to their style and temperament. But ideally we all will find much to discuss and a high grade in this area could very well be a collective good all can share in.

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. Grades for rewrites will be averaged in with the first version but there will be a bias in favor of the improved grade.

**Blackboard**
I will put the readings on Blackboard.

**Office Hours**
I shall have office hours uptown on Mondays and Wednesday in HU B16 from 10-11 but I could meet you after class at 12:30 or before class at 10 if necessary. I also will be available in Milne 204 from 2-4 on Mondays or by appointment. I can be reached at 442-5277 or at pbreiner@albany.edu

**Some Useful Overviews of Recent Debates on Equality:**

**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism means to pass off someone else’s work as your own. Please be warned that should I find you have plagiarized, you will receive an immediate E in the course and further actions will be taken, including sending your case before a university committee.