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 contingent inequalities into access to political membership 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. Needless to say, all this is debatable, and 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:
Albert Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction*

I. Defining Right and Left
Norberto Bobbio, *Left and Right: The Significance of a Political Distinction*

Recommended:
Alain Noël Jean-Philippe Thérien *Left and Right in Global Politics*

II. Analytical approaches to equality and inequality:

A. Egalitarianism as concept
Bernard Williams, “The Idea of Equality” in *Problems of Self* (e-reserve)
B. The Rightward Swerve: Inequality Justified
Robert Nozick, Anarchy State and Utopia (attack on Williams) (selections on e-reserve)

C. Egalitarianism and Justice I
John Rawls, Theory of Justice (sections to be announced)

D. Egalitarianism and Justice II
Amartya Sen, Inequality Rexamined

E. Luck Egalitarianism

III. Egalitarian based on status, power and citizenship.

David Miller, “Equality and Justice,” ch. 12 of Principles of Social Justice. (e-reserve)

IV. Social Justice and the Attack on Meritocracy
Brian Barry, Why Social Justice Matters

VI. Adequacy of Luck and Status Egalitarianism
G. A. Cohen, If You’re and Egalitarian, Why are you so Rich

VII. Socialism and Equality
R. H. Tawney, Equality (selection on e-reserve)

VIII. The Right I: 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)

IX. The Right II: Strategies of Attacking Social Citizenship.

X. A response: Defenses of Inequality--Analytic Argument or Rhetorical Strategy?
Albert Hirschman, The Rhetoric of Reaction
Course Requirements
1. Each member of the seminar will have to give at least two presentations on the readings. 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 at hand 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 above all 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. For each presentation you are to prepare an outline clarifying your take on the argument at hand. It is be handed to other members of the class at the time of your presentation.
2. There will be a series of small papers each couple of weeks in which you will be asked to clarify some problem in the readings.
3. Each member will also be responsible to write a long research paper of about 20 pages. This paper should take up one of the questions we have been dealing with or go more deeply into one of the arguments we will be reading and the commentary surrounding it.

Office Hours
I shall have office hours in Milne 204 from 2-4 on Tuesdays and Thursdays but I could also meet with you on Wednesday afternoons. I can be reached at 442-5277 or at breiner@albany.edu