THE POLITICAL THEORY OF EQUALITY (EQU40050)

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The purpose of this course is to explore a number of questions in egalitarian theory. There is a slight but unavoidable overlap between the course and the Equality Studies module Egalitarian Theory and Practice but we will try to use this as constructively as possible and should not present a problem for students from other programmes. The literature in egalitarian theory is vast, so this module will inevitably be selective. Its main aim is to provide you with an opportunity to read and discuss some work in contemporary egalitarian theory. Running through a number of the issues is the work of G.A. Cohen, who was the foremost egalitarian political philosopher in recent times.

Please note that there will be no class on 7 March.

Note on locations:
- BBRO = available in the Required and Other Readings folder of the Readings folder on Blackboard
- GEN = location in main library
- SLC = short loan collection (‘multiple copy library’)
- PC = SLC photocopy collection (now often easier to find online)
- BB = accessible through the Readings folder on Blackboard under Sources Available Online
- EJ = accessible online through UCD Connect Library E-Journals page
- nil = not in library (used sparingly; none of these are essential readings.).

All handouts distributed will be available online in the Course Documents folder on Blackboard.

General

The course is set out in 6 Sections to make its overall structure as intelligible as possible; my intention is to devote one or more classes to each Section. The number of readings under each title is somewhat arbitrary and does not indicate weight. Required readings are double-starred (**) – these may change. You are advised to read at least one starred (*) reading in each Section in addition to the required reading. For most of the core readings, specific pages are highlighted for special attention.

As this course is based on the intensive discussion of the required readings, it is essential that you do the readings and attend the classes.

There is no textbook for the course, but these are some works that are referred to several times in the reading list and for which full bibliographical details are given here.


Clayton, Matthew and Andrew Williams, eds (2002) The Ideal of Equality (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) SLC 305/CLA


There is a list of publication in egalitarian theory as well as a collection of unpublished manuscripts at the Equality Exchange site [http://mora.rente.nhh.no/projects/EqualityExchange/][BB].

**Section 1. Introduction to the course**

1.1. What is the point of a normative theory of equality?

Discussion of some issues that give rise to theoretical problems. Introduction to political theory.


Brighouse, *Justice*, ch. 2. SLC 320.011/BRI


1.2. Some key issues in egalitarian theory

Overview/review of the issues used to structure the rest of the course.

**Section 2. Distributive justice: Rawls’s Difference Principle**

This section of the course is devoted to texts setting out ideas that have been seminal in the development of normative egalitarian theory since the 1970s. Although typically developed within the liberal egalitarian tradition, these ideas are essential for understanding debates about more radical egalitarian views.

2.1. Rawls’s ‘justice as fairness’

Rawls is the most prominent liberal egalitarian. Being familiar with the key ideas in his theory is essential for following the central arguments in contemporary egalitarian theory generally. A great deal of the work on Rawls concerns his method of justifying his principles using the device of the Original Position, which is outlined in the ‘contextual reading’ below. Our discussion in class will focus on one part of his second principle of justice, the Difference Principle.


Essential contextual reading: chapter I secs. 1-4; chapter II sec. 10
Core passages for discussion in class: chapter II secs. 11-13 (but you can skip the technical discussions on pp. 59-60, 65-67, 70-71)
Useful for subsequent seminars: chapter II secs. 15, 17


2.1.1. Equality or priority?

A key issue raised by Rawls’s Difference Principle is the choice between strict equality and priority.


This is a shorted version of:

Parfit, Derek (1995) ‘Equality or Priority?’, Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas. PC 16677; reprinted in Clayton and Williams, eds., *The Ideal of Equality*, pp. 81-125 SLC 305/CLA


2.1.2. Equality or sufficiency?

A related issue, which we may not get to discuss, is the choice between equality and sufficiency.


There are some further sources and a bibliography in the Readings folder of Blackboard.

2.2. Cohen’s critique


   ** First week
   ‘The Pareto Argument’ (ch. 2) [BBRO]
   ** Essential contextual reading: pp. 87-106
   ** Core passages for discussion in class: pp. 97-106

   ** Second week
   ‘The Freedom Objection’ (ch. 5) [BBRO].
   ** Essential contextual reading: sections 1-2
   ** Core passages for discussion in class: pp. 181-193 (but you can skip discussion of Sen pp. 187-88)

I’d encourage you to read sections 4-6 as well if you have time.

For some criticisms of Cohen (some of which concentrate on other chapters of the book) see:
Political Theory of Equality, page 4

* Casal, Paula (2010) ‘Mill, Rawls, Cohen and the Egalitarian Trilemma’ (forthcoming) [BBRO] (There is link to a podcast of Paula Casal’s paper in the Course Materials folder.)


- Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality* ch. 8 is a reply to Williams.

Volume 21 No 4 (December 2008) of *Ratio* is devoted to Cohen’s book [EJ].

**Other relevant theoretical readings**


White, *Equality*, ch. 5.


2.3. **Empirical issues on incentives**

This sub-section contains some material that is quite dated but may be a good starting-off point if you want to pursue these issues. You will want to search for newer items if you decide to pursue these questions.

2.3.1. **Motivation in capitalist firms**

There are many discussions of worker motivation in management textbooks shelved at GEN 658, such as:


Books specifically on workplace motivation are mostly shelved at 158.7 and 658.314, for example:


2.3.2. Moral and material incentives

This sub-section relates to a debate about practices in the (then) 'actually-existing socialist societies’ and may be of interest.


Cleek, Peter (1970?) ‘Moral versus Material Incentives’ Social Theory and Practice 1. [print journal J 100]


Section 3. Relational Justice 1: Love, care and solidarity

In this and the following three sections of the course, we investigate some of the issues involved in thinking about a couple of the less well explored different dimensions of equality set out in Equality: From Theory to Action. Section 2 concerns the distribution of resources; this section and section 4 might by contrast be thought of as having to do with ‘relational’ justice.

The growing literature on whether and how love and care are matters of justice moves in many directions. Some of the literature (e.g. Kittay 1999) is set out by way of a critique of Rawls. Some (e.g. Nussbaum 2000) is integrated into the exposition of the capability approach. Others (e.g. Brighouse and Swift 2009) are concerned with the impact of unequal care on other inequalities (in their case inequality of opportunity). The reading for this seminar is a recent article that raises a number of important issues about love and care and should, I hope, be a good basis for discussion.


  - There is a symposium on Kittay’s book, with a reply by her in: Hypatia 17 (3) (Summer 2002). [BB/EJ]


Bubeck, Diemut Elisabet (1995) Care, Gender, and Justice (Oxford: Oxford University Press), esp. ch. 5. SLC 305.43/BUB
Section 4. Relational Justice 2: respect and recognition

The idea of ‘respect for persons’ plays an important role in contemporary egalitarianism, ultimately stemming from Kant. There are many interesting issues under this heading, including what arguments (if any) justify equal respect and the relationship between the idea of respect and other putative egalitarian principles, on both of which issues there are some references below. The main issue we will focus on in class is whether respecting people as equals requires us to ‘recognise’ group-related differences between them (4.2 below), and in particular the alleged difference between ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘interculturalism’.

In subsection 4.1 I have listed below some background literature on respect for persons, but we will concentrate on the debate about group-related recognition.

4.1. Background: the idea of respect for persons

4.1.1. Arguments for respect for persons

Lukes, Steven (1977) ‘Socialism and Equality’ in his Essays in Social Theory PC 1189 [BBRO]


- These works all draw on:

4.1.2. Proponents of respect for (or recognition of) other individuals as equals as the defining idea of egalitarianism

Walzer, Spheres of Justice, ch. 11. SLC 305/WAL


4.2. ‘Recognition’ of group-related differences

4.2.1. Proponents of recognition

There are several prominent proponents of group-related recognition, each with different lines of argument and emphases. For the purpose of class discussion I have chosen Young as a point of discussion but if you decide to work on this area you will want to read some of the other authors listed here.

** Young, Justice and the Politics of Difference SLC 320.011/YOU

Essential contextual reading: ch. 2: pp. 58-61, and ch. 6: pp. 156-83 [BBRO]

Core passages for discussion in class: pp. 159-173.


4.2.2. Criticisms of recognition

As with proponents of recognition, critics take various positions. Barry’s is probably the most robust and entertaining. It is somewhat arbitrary to choose ch. 7 but it addresses some key issues.

** Essential contextual reading:** ch 7, secs. 1-4 [BBRO]

** Core passages for discussion in class:** pp. 267-71

- For a collection of responses to this book, and a reply by Barry, see:


- There is a recent special issue on recognition in *European Journal of Political Theory* 8, 1 (2009) [EJ]


4.2.3. Attempts at reconciling these positions


- Possibly some of the titles under 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 really belong under this heading – let me know if you think so!

4.3. Multiculturalism v Interculturalism?

In some recent work and in public debate, interculturalism has been proposed as an alternative to multiculturalism. This sub-section is particularly concerned with that debate. All of these are in the Readings folder of Blackboard as a separate item called ‘Sources on interculturalism’.


**Taylor, Charles (2012), 'Interculturalism or multiculturalism?', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 38 (4-5), 413-23.**

The term intercultural is used extensively at both EU and national level and examples can be easily found with a search engine.

**Section 5. Contributive Justice: work**

Working and learning is identified in *Equality: From Theory to Action* as a dimension of equality but this dimension is rarely discussed by egalitarians. Recent work by Paul Gomberg and Andrew Sayer has revived attention to this aspect of justice. The readings below concern both theoretical developments and policy proposals.

**7.1. Work in general**


Barry, *Why Social Justice Matters*, ch. 15; ch. 6 is also relevant. GEN 303.372/BAR


International Labour Organization (ILO) (1941) *Constitution* as amended to include the Declaration Concerning the Aims and Purposes of the ILO. [BB]


Walzer, Spheres of Justice, ch. 6. SLC 305/WAL

* Young, Justice and the Politics of Difference esp. ch. 7 SLC 320.011/YOU [BBRO]

See also materials from the ETUI under the heading ‘Recent work on Job Quality’ in the Readings folder of Blackboard

7.2. Care work as an issue for egalitarianism

Bubeck, Diemut Elisabet (1995) Care, Gender, and Justice (Oxford: Oxford University Press), esp. ch. 5. SLC 305.43/BUB


Section 6: Institutionalising egalitarian justice

In this section of the course, we will look at a number of theoretical issues to do with the institutional design of an egalitarian society. The readings below are indicative of the issues for this section of the course but are not entirely up to date, so you should use your initiative if you wish to pursue this further. A key text for this section will be:

Wright, Erik Olin (2010), Envisioning Real Utopias (London: Verso), esp. Part II. GEN 335 [BBRO],

6.1. Participatory democracy

**Wright (2010) Envisaging Real Utopias, ch. 6 [BBRO]


* See the works cited in this chapter for other references.


Barber, Benjamin (1984), Strong Democracy (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), SLC 321.8
**Wright (2010) Envisaging Real Utopias, first part of ch. 7 (pp. 135-156 of typescript, esp. 153-156) [BBRO]**

- See also the works cited in this chapter for other references, some of which are listed below.

### 6.2.1. General discussions:


**Baker, John (2008) ‘All things considered, should feminists embrace basic income?’, Basic Income Studies 3, 3, Article 6. available at [http://hdl.handle.net/10197/2055](http://hdl.handle.net/10197/2055)**

- This is part of a symposium on feminism and basic income, available in the Readings folder of BB.


**Lerner, Sally C (1999) Basic Income: economic security for all Canadians. (Toronto: Between the Lines). GEN 362.58/LER**

**Levine, Andrew (1998) Rethinking Liberal Equality: From a ‘Utopian’ Point of View. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. ch. 1 (‘Fairness to Idleness’) GEN 323.42/LEV**


Rawls, Justice as Fairness: A Restatement, sec. 53. SLC 320.011/RAW


6.2.2. Specific applications to Ireland


6.2.3. Titles in social policy/economics areas:


You will find a lot of information about basic income at the website of the BIEN (Basic Income Earth Network) [http://www.basicincome.org](http://www.basicincome.org).

6.3. Socialism

This list below is divided into 3 main parts, but they cannot be wholly distinguished from each other, particularly because each set contains criticisms of the other. 6.3.1 contains general theoretical discussion of socialism and will be the focus of class discussion. 6.3.2 contains texts which concentrate on forms of ‘market socialism’, although the collections contain some critical material. Since this contains the bulk of the references, I have tried to classify the material though the classification is incomplete. 6.3.3 contains texts which put the case for a ‘democratically planned socialism’.

6.3.1. Theoretical discussions


- There has been quite a lot of discussion of Cohen’s book. The following are all in BBRO in the item titled ‘Cohen 2009 Why not socialism and discussions’:


*Wright (2010) Envisaging Real Utopias, remaining part of ch. 7 (pp. 157-189 of typescript, esp. 173-186) [BBRO]

- See the works cited in this chapter for other references.

6.3.2. Market Socialism Models

(a) Historical source(s)


(b) Public ownership models


- Arneson, Richard J. (19920 'Is Socialism Dead? A Comment on Market Socialism and Basic Income Capitalism', Ethics 102, 3 (April 1992) [discusses Roemer's article in same issue]

Yunker, James (1979) Socialism in the Free Market (New York: Nellin) GEN 335

Yunker, James (1992) Socialism Revised and Modernized: The Case for Pragmatic Market Socialism (New York: Praeger) GEN 335.4

(c) 'Democratic firm' models


Schweickart, David (1994) *Against Capitalism* (Cambridge: CUP) GEN 330.122 SCH

(d) Applications of democratic theory to economics


Cunningham, Frank (1987) *Democratic Theory and Socialism* (Cambridge: CUP) GEN 320.531 CUN


6.3.3. Democratic Planning models


Albert, Michael & Robin Hahnel (1992) 'Participatory Planning', *Science and Society* 56


Assessment

The assessment for this module is in two parts. 20% is based on an agreed task which you may tailor to your own interests and abilities. 80% is based on an essay of 3000-4000 words.

Part 1. Agreed self-assessed piece of work

You will be asked to specify an in-term task for yourself together with the criteria you think it should be assessed by. You should set out this task and criteria exactly as you would like it to be set out if someone were assigning you to do it, i.e. to specify both the task and the assessment criteria as clearly as possible. We will then take whatever steps are necessary to agree that this is a reasonable task and well-specified. You will then be asked to assess your work according to your criteria, and I will assess it as well. We will take whatever steps are necessary to come to an agreed grade. Here are some suggestions of appropriate tasks based on previous students’ choices:

a) A more-or-less weekly individual blog in which you comment on the readings and/or classes (say 8 in total). This would be a kind of learning journal and appropriate criteria for assessment might be things like relevance, accuracy to texts, punctuality.

b) A set of short analyses of specific texts and/or issues. This would be a way of engaging a little more deeply with the texts and appropriate criteria might be things like relevance, accuracy, thoughtfulness, argument, punctuality.

c) A collective blog in which different members rotate in terms of main comments and responses. This would be a way of conducting a dialogue about the issues and appropriate criteria might be things like relevance, inventiveness, responsiveness and punctuality.

d) A class-based presentation or workshop. This would be a way of sharing your insights with others and appropriate criteria might be things like accuracy, structure, clarity and insight.

Other ideas are welcome.

If you want to do something written as per a-c above, you might take 1500-2000 words to be your total word-count, e.g. 8 short blogs of about 200-250 words, 4 longer analyses of 400-500 words. If you want to do a presentation or workshop, we will probably schedule this in the last class of the semester.

For more ideas about what you might like to do, have a look at http://www.ucd.ie/teaching/resources/assessment/

Part 2. Research Essay

Here are some suggested topics, but they are expressed quite generally and you are encouraged to develop your own question. Do please agree this with me in advance.

1. Are you convinced by Cohen’s critique of Rawls? You may concentrate on one or more aspects of the argument.

2. Are there effective ways to motive people to work that do not require inequality?

3. Articulate one or two of the central issues egalitarians need to address in relation to love, care and solidarity, and use some of the published literature to formulate a response.

4. Should we ‘recognise’ social groups? If so, is multiculturalism the best way to do so?

5. Articulate one or two of the central issues egalitarians need to address in relation to work, and use some of the published literature to formulate a response.

6. Assess either participatory democracy or basic income or socialism as a model for institutionalising egalitarian justice.

It is perfectly reasonable to concentrate on three or four readings from the list. (One reading is definitely not enough.) Be critical: since the authors disagree, they can’t all be right!
Organise your discussion as an argument, drawing on the authors when this helps to express or develop the argument rather than simply summarising their views in turn.

You should aim to write 3,000-4,000 words (max. 4,000). I strongly recommend that you give me a draft of your essay well before the final due date (26 July 2013) so that I can arrange to discuss it with you and provide some feedback before your final submission.

Presentation of Essays. Please read the following carefully!

1. Essays must be typed.
2. Quotations must be properly documented. Plagiarism will be penalised.
3. Please proof-read your essay carefully. Use spell-checking before you hand it in.
4. Please number your pages, preferably in the top right-hand corner.
5. I prefer essays to be stapled in the top left-hand corner, without covers.
6. Essays must include a bibliography which contains all of the works cited in the essay.
7. Please follow the School’s other general instructions for submitting essays.
Some general advice on sources, structure, quotations, referencing, etc

This is simply a list of points that commonly come up when I read people’s work, so I thought it might be useful to share them.

Say something about the general plan of your essay in your first or second paragraph.

Long quotations should be uniformly indented from the left margin and have no quotation marks. Don’t italicise quotations unless (a) they are italicised in the original (and if they are, say so in parentheses at the end), or (b) you want to emphasise something yourself (in which case, mention in parentheses at the end that it is your emphasis).

You do not have to start quotations with an ellipsis (…) where you are continuing a sentence: the use of lower case and the fact that the text preceding it is itself an incomplete sentence is enough to indicate that you have left out the beginning of the sentence you are quoting.

Whenever you quote an author, ask yourself whether the quotation actually illustrates the point you are trying to make.

It is easier to follow your paragraphing if you use indented paragraphs. If you prefer unindented paragraphs you need to put a blank line between them.

The usual convention is to italicise the titles of books and periodicals and to put the titles of articles in inverted commas.

If you discuss topics A, B and C in that order, then the sentence or paragraph introducing that discussion should mention A, B and C in the same order.

Use a consistent system for referencing, preferably the Harvard system as advised in essay-writing workshops.

The rule for hyphenation is to put the hyphen at natural breaks in the word, at the end of syllables or between structurally distinct parts of the word, e.g.

im-potential

‘Criteria’ is plural; the singular is ‘criterion’. ‘Phenomenon’ is singular, ‘phenomena’ is plural.