

Syllabus for Poli Sci 219: Democracy and Equality (Special Topics in Political Theory)

(Draft in progress, last updated December 10, 2020)

Instructor: Sean Ingham
Course time: Wednesdays, 3–5:50pm
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Course description

This course surveys literature on democratic theory and egalitarian theories of justice. While the survey is wide-ranging because it is intended to help graduate students prepare for the comprehensive exam in political theory, it is loosely organized around the idea of social equality—the idea of a society in which people relate to each other and respect each other as equals—and what it requires of institutions, social norms, and individual choices.

Zoom meeting

Here is the link for registering for the weekly Zoom meeting:

<https://ucsd.zoom.us/join/register/tJEsdemhrjMuGdaF36x1MAYywkb4492VQqmy>

Assignments and grades

The grade is an average of a grade for the writing assignments (50%) and a grade for participation (50%).

- **Writing assignments.** Students have two options:

Option A. The student submits a short memo on each week's reading (except the first week's reading assignment). The memo should be between 1-2 pages single-spaced, 11pt font (with the default page margins in L^AT_EX) (or about 400-700 words). Its purpose is to identify questions that merits further discussion in seminar and that might eventually generate a research question that could be investigated in a future paper. The memo should indicate some reasons for and against different answers to the questions and should read like a preview of a high-level seminar discussion of the questions. The memo should be emailed to singham@ucsd.edu by 3:30pm on the Tuesday before seminar.

Option B. The student submits a seminar paper at the end of the quarter. The student should submit a short, one-page memo (single-spaced), identifying the question the paper will answer and explaining its importance, and the reasons its answer is not obvious, by November 20.

- **Participation.** In addition to regularly participating in seminar discussions, students will do several short presentations, individually or in groups, depending on enrollment. *Presentations should not try to summarize the reading.* The purpose of the presentation is to set up and provide some structure to further discussion. The presenters should identify a question or puzzle that they would like the entire group to discuss, put forward some potential answers to the question, and sketch the reasons for and against them. A presentation should be no more than 15 minutes.

Weekly Reading schedule

A single asterisk (*) indicates that a reading is included on the department's guide for graduate students preparing for the comprehensive exam in political theory. A double asterisk (**) indicates that the reading belongs to what the guide describes as "the common core" of texts that all students taking the exam are expected to be familiar with.

W1 October 7. Justice as Fairness

What principles of justice would reasonable people accept as the basis for social cooperation? Can we think of these principles as the principles that rational agents would choose if they were to choose behind a "veil of ignorance," ignorant of their social position? Rawls's theory of justice as fairness has been enormously influential, and familiarity with it is necessary for appreciating much of the political theory produced since.

- John Rawls. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. §§1–4, 9, 11–17, 20–30, 33–35, 39, 40, 77.**

W2 October 14. The object of principles of justice

Do principles of justice apply to institutions only, or to individual choices and cultural norms as well? This question is an entry point for feminist, socialist, and libertarian critiques of Rawls's theory.

- Susan Moller Okin. 1989. *Justice, gender, and the family*. Basic Books. Ch. 5.*
- G.A. Cohen. 1997. "Where the action is: On the site of distributive justice." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 26(1): 3–30.*
- Robert Nozick. 1974. "Distributive Justice." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 3(1): 45–126 (or ch. 7 of Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*).*

W3 October 21. What ought to be equal?

If social justice requires some kind of equality, what ought to be equal? Opportunities for economic advantage and positions of power? Resources? Does justice permit inequality if it results from voluntary choices, as opposed to morally arbitrary luck?

- Ronald Dworkin. 2000. *Sovereign Virtue: Theory and Practice of Equality*. Harvard University Press. Chs. 1, 2.*
- G.A. Cohen. 1989. "On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice." *Ethics* 99(4): 906–944.*
- Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*. Chs. 1, 2.*

W4 October 28. Social equality

Relational egalitarians argue that what justice fundamentally requires is not equality of opportunities, income, or other resources per se, but rather institutions and social practices that enable individuals to relate to each other as equals. How can we make this idea of social equality more precise, and what kinds of institutions and social practices might it require?

- Elizabeth Anderson. 1999. “What is the point of equality?” *Ethics* 109(2): 287–337.*
- Carina Fourie. 2012. “What Is social equality? An analysis of status equality as a strongly egalitarian ideal.” *Res Publica* 18: 107–126.
- Emily McTernan. 2018. “Microaggressions, equality, and social practices.” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26(3): 261–281.

W5 November 4. Race, social inequality, and the contract metaphor

Social contract theory describes justice as a matter of reciprocity among persons who recognize each other as equals. Is the contract metaphor useful for identifying what people owe to each other in societies with histories of racial injustice? Or might it instead be more useful as a metaphor for diagnosing and explaining the implicit consensus among whites that sustains systems of white supremacy?

- Charles Mills. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Cornell University Press.*
- Desmond Jagmohan. 2015. “Race and the social contract: Charles Mills on the consensual foundations of white supremacy.” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 3: 488–503.
- Tommie Shelby. 2007. “Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto.” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 35(2): 126–160.

W6 November 11. No class. Veteran’s Day. A make-up session on a topic of students’ choosing will be scheduled conditional on student interest.

W7 November 18. Domination and social equality

In republican political theory, “domination” refers to relationships in which some people have arbitrary (or uncontrolled or unconstrained) power over others. Does the ideal of social equality require eliminating structures of domination, as republicans conceptualize it? What kinds of institutional changes would this require?

- Philip Pettit. 1997. *Republicanism*. Oxford University Press. Introduction, chs. 1–3, and the propositional summary in the appendix.
- Fabian Schuppert. 2015. “Non-domination, non-alienation and social equality: towards a republican understanding of equality.” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 18: 440–455.
- Marie Garrau & Cécile Laborde, “Relational Equality, Non-Domination, and Vulnerability” in *Social Equality: Essays on What It Means to be Equals*, eds. Carina Fourie, Fabian Schuppert and Ivo Wallimann-Helmer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.

W8 November 25. Democracy, power, and social equality

Is the value of social equality relevant to the justification of democracy? Does social equality require equality of political power? If so, is that compatible with electoral representation and other features of contemporary democracies?

- Niko Kolodny. 2014. “Rule over None II: Social Equality and the Justification of Democracy,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 42(4): 287–336.
- James Wilson. 2019. *Democratic Equality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chs. 2, 7.
- Optional: Sean Ingham, “Representative Democracy and Social Equality,” working paper.

W9 December 2. Democracy and diversity

What institutions and norms are required if democracy is to be genuinely inclusive? What kind of civic trust is needed for democracy, and what can be done to cultivate that trust in societies with histories of racial oppression? How can diversity improve the quality of democratic decision-making?

- Iris Marion Young. *Inclusion and Democracy*, ch. 4.*
- Danielle Allen. 2004. *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education*. University of Chicago Press. Prologue, chs. 1, 9–11.
- Elizabeth Anderson. 2013. *The Imperative of Integration*. Princeton University Press, chs. 1, 4–6.

W10 December 9. Democratic equality, elections, and lotteries.

Elections were historically considered an aristocratic method of selecting leaders, while lotteries were considered more democratic. Should it trouble someone committed to social equality if elections tend to select citizens from more socially advantaged backgrounds? If so, should social egalitarians support institutions, like deliberative mini-publics, that make use of random selection?

- Bernard Manin. 1997. *Principles of Representative Government*. Cambridge University Press. Ch. 4.**
- Christina Lafont. 2015. “Deliberation, participation, and democratic legitimacy: should deliberative mini-publics shape public policy?” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 23: 40–63.
- Helene Landemore. 2020. *Open Democracy: Reinventing Popular Rule for the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton University Press. Chapters 1, 4.
- Dimitri Landa and Ryan Pevnik. Forthcoming. “Is Random Selection a Cure for the Ills of Electoral Representation?” *Journal of Political Philosophy*.

W11 December 16 (make-up session). Epistemic democracy

- Kai Spiekermann and Robert Goodin. 2018. *An Epistemic Theory of Democracy*. Oxford University Press. Chapters 1–5.
- Optional: Helene Landemore. 2017. *Democratic reason: Politics, collective intelligence, and the rule of the many*. Princeton University Press.
- Optional: Sean Ingham. 2013. “Disagreement and Epistemic Arguments for Democracy.” *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 12(2): 135–154.