

# PSC 235: Equality and Social Justice

## Fall 2019

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**Class Time:** Mon/Wed 2:40-4:10

**Location:** Arts and Letters room 211

### Course Description

Providing and maintaining justice has long been seen as one of the primary reasons for the existence of political authority. Indeed, political thinkers as far back as Plato and Aristotle saw justice as the primary purpose of government. While there is agreement on the need for justice, however, there are widely varying ideas about what, exactly, justice *is* in the first place.

Among the many questions that are part of the debate over justice, equality is perhaps the most controversial. In what sense, if any, should all people be treated as equals? Can political power be legitimately used to make people more equal? Does treating people equally simply mean that government must be neutral—that is, not favor any one individual or group over others—or must it actively try to create equality where it does not exist? Are some kinds of inequality more natural, acceptable, or just than others? If so, why? Are equality and justice complementary or opposing concepts?

This course will explore these questions through a variety of historical and contemporary readings. We will focus on primarily on economic or material equality, investigating the relationships between this kind of equality and justice, other kinds of equality, and other important political values like freedom. By considering arguments from a variety of perspectives, we will try to come to an understanding of what is at stake in debates about the relationship between justice and equality.

## **Readings**

All readings for this course will be available on the course D2L site. There are no textbooks to be purchased. Please let me know immediately if you have any difficulty accessing D2L, or any of the posted readings.

## **Assignments and Grading**

Your grade in this course will come primarily from three writing assignments. You will write two short (5-7 page) papers, each responding to a prompt that will be distributed in class. Each of these papers is worth 20% of your final grade; due dates for the papers are in the schedule below. The final assignment is a 10-page take-home final exam, again in response to a series of questions that will be distributed on the final day of class. The final exam will be due Monday, November 25, by 5:00 PM, and is worth 40% of your final grade.

The final 20% of your grade will come from attendance and participation. Note that this means that participation matters as much to your grade as one of the papers, so take it seriously. Attendance will be taken every day, and having more than two unexcused absences will affect your grade directly. You are also expected to be prepared to participate in discussion of the assigned readings for each class meeting.

## **Grade scale and breakdown:**

Paper #1: 20%	A: 100-94
Paper #2: 20%	A-: 90-93
Final Exam: 40%	B+: 87-89
Participation: 20%	B: 84-86
Total: 100%	B-: 80-83

## **Plagiarism:**

The submission of work that is not entirely your own—be it from another student or from published sources, in print or online—without proper attribution is plagiarism. The smallest possible consequence for plagiarism is that you will receive a zero on the assignment in question. It is also possible for you to receive a failing grade in the course, or to be subjected to further disciplinary action at the University level. Do not do it. If you have any questions about how to properly cite your sources, ask. As a rule of thumb, it is better to cite too much rather than not enough, so when in doubt, include a citation.

### **Classroom Behavior:**

Behavior that is distracting or disruptive is unacceptable. That includes the use of cell phones or other mobile devices (talking, texting, ringing, etc.). It also includes the inappropriate use of a computer (i.e., looking at social media instead of paying attention). Most fundamentally, it includes creating noise or other disturbances that undermine the ability of your fellow students to participate fully in the class. You will also be respectful at all times of the opinions and perspectives of others students, or you will be asked to leave the class.

# Course Schedule and Readings

Wed Sept 11: Course Introduction

Mon Sept 16: U.S. Declaration of Independence  
14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution  
Equal Rights Amendment (proposed)  
United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Wed Sept 18: *Plessy v. Ferguson*  
*Brown vs. Board of Education*

Mon Sept 23: Meyerson: “The Forty Year Slump”  
Irwin: “To Understand Rising Inequality, Consider the Janitors at Two Top Companies, then and Now”  
Desmond: “Americans Want to Believe Jobs Are the Solution to Poverty. They’re Not.”

**Topics for Paper #1 Distributed in Class**

Wed Sept 25: Wilkinson: “Thinking Clearly About Economic Inequality”  
Kolbert: “The Psychology of Inequality”

Mon Sept 30: Milton and Rose Friedman: *Free to Choose*, Ch. 1, “The Power of the Market”  
Milton Friedman: “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits”  
Business Roundtable: “Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation”

Wed Oct 2: Hayek: “Equality, Value, and Merit”

Mon Oct 7: Film in Class: *2084*  
Kurt Vonnegut: “Harrison Bergeron”

**Paper #1 Due in Class**

Wed Oct 9: Hayes: *Twilight of the Elites*, Ch. 2, “Meritocracy and its Discontents”  
Ta-Nehisi Coates: “The Case for Reparations”  
Mihm: “Where Slavery Thrived, Inequality Rules Today”

Mon Oct 14: Fraser: “From Redistribution to Recognition?”

Wed Oct 16: Dahl: *Preface to Economic Democracy*, Ch. 3-4  
McGreal: “Is Bezos Holding Seattle Hostage? The Costs of Being Amazon’s Home”

Mon Oct 21: Poggi: *Forms of Power*, Ch. 7, “Economic Power”  
Longman: “Why the Economic Fates of America’s Cities Diverged”  
**Topics for Paper #2 Distributed in Class**

Wed Oct 23: Shapiro: *Toxic Inequality*, Ch. 5, pp. 147-181

Mon Oct 28: Sandel: *What Money Can’t Buy*, pp. 3-15 and 107-114  
Schwartz: “The Doctor is In. Co-Pay? \$40,000.”  
Schwartz: “In an Age of Privilege, Not Everyone is in the Same Boat”

Wed Oct 30: Brennan and Jaworski: “Markets without Symbolic Limits”

Mon Nov 4: LeGuin: “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”  
**Paper #2 Due in Class**

Wed Nov 6: Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 60-65, 75-80, 100-108

Mon Nov 11: Nozick: *Anarchy, State, Utopia*, pp. ix-xiv, 149-164, 232-238, 246-253

Wed Nov 13: Nussbaum: *Creating Capabilities*, Ch. 2, “The Central Capabilities”

Mon Nov 18: Walzer: “In Defense of Equality”  
Final Exam Distributed in Class

**FINAL EXAM DUE TO D2L BY MONDAY,  
NOVEMBER 25, BY 5:00 PM**

## PSC 235: Equality and Social Justice

### General Paper Guidelines

The following guidelines apply to all of the papers you will write for this class. Please keep this so that you can refer back to it as we continue through the course.

#### Formatting:

- Both of the first two papers should be 5-7 pages, double-spaced, with a normal 12-point font and one-inch margins. (Note: five full pages is the minimum length—not four and a half). The final exam will be 8-10 pages—and again, 8 *full* pages is the minimum length. Pages should be numbered.
- Include in-text citations (either parenthetical or footnotes) for all references to the assigned readings. It does not matter to me which citation format you use, as long as you use one. If you are not familiar with any standard citation format (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.), then please look up how to properly cite sources using one of these formats. The DePaul library website has links to guides for all of the major citation formats.  
(At <http://libguides.depaul.edu/research101/research101-cite-sources>).
  - You need a citation any time you quote someone, *as well as any time you reference their ideas or arguments*. If there is an idea or point in a sentence that is not your own, original idea, then that sentence should end in a citation. As a general rule of thumb, it is always better to have too many citations than too few, so if you are at all in doubt, cite.
  - Long quotations (anything over four *lines* of text) should be formatted as block quotes—smaller margins, smaller font, single-spaced. In general, avoid using very many long quotations, even if properly cited; the majority of the paper should be your own words, thoughts, and ideas.
  - Make sure to *explain* the quotations that you use; do not simply drop in a quotation and expect that its connection to your argument will be self-explanatory. If you don't really understand it, don't use it—or ask me for clarification.
- You do not need to include a bibliography or works cited page unless you have used outside sources (i.e., sources not found in the course syllabus). If you do use outside sources, please include a complete bibliography for all of them.

## **Substantive Guidelines:**

The goal of all of the papers in this course is to make a persuasive argument using the assigned readings. You will be graded on how clearly and thoroughly you present your argument, as well as how effectively you make use of the assigned sources in supporting it. There are several things to keep in mind that will help you to do these things effectively:

- Have a clear idea in mind of what you are arguing. If you need to sit down and start writing in order to figure out what your argument will be, that is fine, but you will need to revise the paper to support that argument once you have clarified it to yourself. Your argument should be stated clearly within the first page or so of the paper; do not wait to state it until the end. The reader should always know how the points you are making relate to and support your main argument. *If you cannot express your argument in a sentence or two, then the paper is not done.*
- Make use of *all* the texts that apply to the argument you are making. Do not ignore certain authors or readings because you prefer others, or because some are more difficult to work with.
  - Relatedly, be sure to *address counter arguments*. Ignoring authors who present opposition or difficulties for your argument makes your paper weaker, not stronger. If someone disagrees with you, do not leave them out—argue against them to show why they are wrong.
- These are relatively short papers; you have little space in which to state and support very complex ideas. Keep this in mind, and make sure that everything you include in the paper does some work for you—in other words, that it contributes to the claims you are trying to make.
  - This is especially important for the readings/authors you will be citing to support your argument. You will find it necessary to summarize their arguments, or parts of those arguments, in order to show how they support your own; at the same time, you should not summarize for the sake of summarizing. Explain the argument of the person you are citing as much as you have to in order to show the connections between their argument and your own, but feel free to leave out things that do not bear upon the point you are trying to make.
- Do feel free to use “I” statements (e.g., “I believe that...”). In these papers you are presenting your own thoughts and ideas, and it is acceptable to present the argument as coming from yourself