

EQUALITY AND ITS VALUE
Winter 2018
Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:50
Wieboldt 106

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A quick google search yields the following statistics: The wealthiest 85 people on the planet have more money than the poorest 3.5 billion people combined; four hundred Americans have more wealth than half of all Americans combined; the average white American's median wealth is 20 times higher than the average African American's. Assuming these assertions to be correct, should we be bothered by them? What, if anything, is wrong with inequality? In this seminar, we will explore these questions with the help of contemporary analytic philosophers (and one Aristotle).

The seminar consists of two modules. In the first module, we discuss equality as a *distributive* ideal. We aim to clarify the meaning and possibilities of egalitarianism, the view according to which it is bad that some have less than others. We will encounter powerful objections to egalitarianism, and confront it with three alternative views of distributive justice: sufficientarianism, prioritarianism and libertarianism.

In the second part of the seminar, we move to a non-distributive element that is central to the idea of equality: the thesis that all human beings are, in some sense, equal (sometimes referred to as "basic equality"). This idea has been remarkably influential on modern moral and political philosophy. In the last (and shorter) module of the seminar, we turn to reflect on questions like: In what sense are all human beings equal? How can we assert the equality of human beings given how different they are from one another? Am I really the equal of Hitler? We will also discuss the relevance of basic equality to the distributive questions with which we began our seminar.

Course Website: This seminar has a Canvas website. All the readings can be found on the website. Notice that some sessions require reading more than one text.

Grading:	First draft of research paper (up to 4,000 words):	20%
	Final draft (up to 4,000 words):	50%
	Participation:	30%

This is an intensive-track tutorial in philosophy. It will consist primarily in discussion in a relatively small group setting. There is an expectation of each of you to read the material in advance of each session, and think about it. During the session, do your best to contribute your share to a stimulating discussion. In addition, each meeting one of you will be asked to present the main argument of the assigned reading, and prepare a question for the group, with

which we will start our discussion. These presentations will count toward your participation credit.

In addition, each of you is required to write **one** paper of up to 4,000 words. Think of yourself writing a paper for a philosophy journal (we will discuss what that means in class, and will have plenty of examples in the assigned readings). A first draft should be submitted by the end of week 7. I will schedule meetings with you during week 8 to discuss your drafts. A second, revised, draft should be submitted by the end of the term.

The paper can be written on any topic related to the seminar's theme, but has to be philosophical and argumentative in nature.

Here is one way to find a topic for your paper: As you read the material for class, notice which arguments or views surprise you, make you angry, excited, or frustrated. Your paper can be an opportunity to reflect on one such argument/view and respond to it. You can offer reasons why the argument/view should be rejected, or alternatively how it could be defended in the face of some possible criticism or misunderstanding.

Readings:

Module 1: Equal Distributions

Week 1: Introduction

1/4 In class: discussion of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 5, Chapter 3.

Week 2: Equality and Sufficiency

1/9 Frankfurt, H. "Equality as a Moral Ideal," *Ethics* 98, no. 1 (October, 1987): 21–43.

1/11 Casal, P. "Why Sufficiency is not Enough," *Ethics* 117, no. 2 (January 2007): 296–326.

Week 3: Equality and Priority

1/16 Nagel, T. "Equality," in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 106–27.

1/18 Parfit, D. "Equality and Priority," *Ratio* 10, no. 3 (December 1997): 202–21.

Week 4: Equality and Liberty

- 1/23 Nozick, R. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 149–164.
- 1/25 Olsaretti, S. “Rescuing Justice and Equality from Libertarianism.” *Economics and Philosophy* 29, no. 1, (2003): 43-63.

Week 5: Egalitarianism Defended

- 1/30 Temkin, L. “Equality, Priority, and the Levelling Down Objection,” in Clayton and Williams ed. *The Ideal of Equality*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, pp. 126-161
- 2/1 Temkin, L. “Egalitarianism Defended,” *Ethics* 113, no. 4 (July 2003): 764–82.

Week 6: Luck Egalitarianism

- 2/6 Dworkin, R. “What is Equality? Part 1”, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Summer, 1981), pp. 185-246.
- 2/8 Dworkin, R. “What is Equality? Part 2”, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Autumn, 1981), pp. 283-345.

Week 7: Relational Egalitarianism

- 2/13 Anderson, E. S. "What Is the Point of Equality?". *Ethics* 109, no. 2 (1999): 287-337.
- 2/15 Scheffler, S. "The Practice of Equality." In *Social Equality*, edited by Carina Fourie, Fabian Schuppert and Ivo Wallimann-Helmer, 21-44. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Submit first draft of your paper by 2/17 at 11.59pm.

Module 2: Basic Equality

Week 8: The Skeptics

- 2/20 Steinhoff, U. "Against Equal Respect and Concern, Equal Rights, and Egalitarian Impartiality." In *Do All Persons Have Equal Moral Worth? On 'Basic Equality' and Equal Respect and Concern*, edited by Uwe Steinhoff, 142-72. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- 2/22 McMahan, J. "Challenges to Human Equality." *The Journal of Ethics* 12, no. 1 (2008/01//2008): 81-104.

Plan to meet with me during this week to discuss your drafts.

Week 9: Attempts at Justification

2/27 Carter, I. "Respect and the Basis of Equality," *Ethics* 121, no. 3 (April 1, 2011): 538–71.

3/1 Cupit, G. "The Basis of Equality." *Philosophy* 75, no. 291 (2000): 105–25.

And Ch. 5 of: Sher, George. *Equality for Inegalitarians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. (Entitled "Why we are moral equals")

Week 10: Basic Equality: A So(m)ber Ending?

3/6 Nussbaum, M. "Political Equality," in *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, ed. Joshua Cohen et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 1037–45.

And: Arneson, Richard J. "Basic Equality: Neither Acceptable nor Rejectable." In *Do All Persons Have Equal Moral Worth? On 'Basic Equality' and Equal Respect and Concern*, edited by Uwe Steinhoff, 30–52. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

3/8 Reading period.

Submit final draft of your paper by 3/15 at 11.59pm.