Course times: Mon 13:30-15:00, Wed 15:15-16:45
Seminar leader: Ewa Atanassow
Email: e.atanassow@berlin.bard.edu
Office hours: Wed 13:30-15, and by appt

Course Description

What are the origins of the egalitarian ideal? What does equality actually mean? Is it possible and desirable to realize it in practice? Alongside freedom, equality is among the central categories of ethical and political thought and, arguably, the defining ideal of modern society. This course will be dedicated to scrutinizing this ideal through a sustained examination of the meanings and value of equality. Our investigation will proceed in two parts: we begin by probing the historical wellsprings of equality by engaging with some of its most influential ancient, Christian and modern articulations. Against this historical and conceptual background, in part two we’ll reflect on the experience and competing interpretations of equality that inform the institutions and practices of democratic society. Taking as our guide Tocqueville’s comprehensive analysis of the American polity, and considering more recent case studies, we’ll pose questions about the effects and preconditions of actualizing the egalitarian ideal, and its status in liberal democracy.

Readings

B. Williams, “The Idea of Equality” /Course Reader/
J. R. Lucas, “Against Equality” /CR/
Solon’s Poems, Plutarch’s Solon /CR/
* Aristotle’s Politics
* Aristophanes, Assemblywomen
Gospel of Matthew /CR/
Martin Luther, Address to the Nobility of the German Nation /CR/
* Locke, Letter on Toleration
* Rousseau, Discourse on the Origins of Inequality
American Declaration of Independence /CR/
Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen /CR/
Babeuf and Marechal, Manifesto of the Equals /CR/
Marx and Engels, Communist Manifesto /CR/
* Alexis de Tocqueville’s Democracy in America
Hannah Arendt’s “The Crisis in Education” /CR/
Leo Strauss, “What is Liberal Education?” /CR/
J. M. Keynes, “The End of Laissez-faire” /CR/
F. von Hayek, “Equality, Value and Merit” /CR/
W. Brown, “Civilizational delusions: secularism, tolerance, equality” /CR/
Requirements
This course is dedicated to studying the origins, evolution and the social and political ramifications of the egalitarian ideal. As we explore various conceptions of equality, we’ll seek to implement them in seminar practice, turning the seminar room into a laboratory of equality. Thus, along with the equal right to have a say in seminar discussions, the class format will include an equal duty to introduce the reading for a particular session, as well as judge the contribution of fellow participants and be judged by them in return. Regular attendance is essential. Missing more than two sessions over the course of the semester will significantly affect the final grade.

Assessment
1) Seminar participation (50 %), including:
   • systematic preparation and active engagement in the seminar discussion 20 %
   • one class presentation (10-minute long): 15 %
   • 10 evaluations of class presentations (300 words/each): 15 %

2) Writing assignments (50 %), including:
   • Midterm paper (1500 words): 15 %
   • Proposal (500 words) for a final essay topic, discussed at a tutorial: 10 %
   • Final essay (3000 words) on a topic of your choice: 25 %

Guidelines for presentations:
The presentation should introduce - in no more than 15 min - the reading for the day by briefly analyzing one key point, and formulating one question for discussion. Do not summarize the reading. You may choose to structure your presentation in response to the following questions: What in today’s reading struck you as most important? What is the main claim and how do you understand it? What do you find compelling, puzzling or problematic, and why? What further question does it raise?

Guidelines for presentation evaluations:
The evaluation of each presentation should consist of 3 elements: i) what you take to be the main purpose or central claim of the presentation; ii) what in your view is its positive achievement; iii) what can be done better and how. Evaluation criteria: clear and thoughtful, grounded in the text, triggering discussion.

Deadlines
• Presentation assessments are due by noon on Mondays
• Midterm papers are due at 23:59 on Friday, October 13
• Proposals for final essays are due at 23:59 on Friday, December 4
• Final essay due at 23:59 on TBA

Late essays will be downgraded according to the Late Submissions Policy in the Student Handbook.
### Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Aug 31-Sep 4</td>
<td>Introductory</td>
<td>Equality: pros and cons</td>
<td>Why equality?</td>
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#### Part I: Wellsprings of Equality

| 2: Sep 7-11 | Solon | Aristotle, *Politics* book 1 | Greek origins |
| 5: Sep 28-Oct 2 | Luther’s *Address* | Locke, *Letter on Toleration* |

#### Part II: Equality and Liberal Democracy

| 9: Nov 2-6 | Tocqueville, DA I 1.2 | Tocqueville, DA I 1.3-4 |
| 10: Nov 9-13 | Tocqueville, DA I 2.6-8 | Tocqueville, DA I 2.10 | Equality and race |
| 13: Nov 30-Dec 4 | Tocqueville, DA II 3.1, 5, 8-12, 17-19 | Tocqueville, DA II 4.1-3, 6-8 | Equality and liberty |
| 14: Dec 7-11 | Tocqueville, DA II 3.1, 5, 8-12, 17-19 | Tocqueville, DA II 4.1-3, 6-8 | Equality and liberty |
| 15: Dec 14-18 | Tocqueville, DA II 3.1, 5, 8-12, 17-19 | Tocqueville, DA II 4.1-3, 6-8 | Equality and liberty |
| 15: Dec 14-18 | Tocqueville, DA II 3.1, 5, 8-12, 17-19 | Tocqueville, DA II 4.1-3, 6-8 | Equality and liberty |

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*Equality 3*