

draft 211125

YHU2270 Contemporary Egalitarianism

AY2021-22 SII

Sandra Leonie Field

Seminars Tu Fr 1430-1350 Y-PgRm1

Office hours Tu Fr 1030-1130 by appointment; sign up at [Calendly](#).

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Synopsis: Is it unjust for a society to be unequal? If equality is desirable, what kind of equality? Equality of opportunity? or equal welfare? or equal capabilities? Contemporary political philosophy offers rich materials to answer these questions; we will read authors such as Rawls, Nozick, Cohen, Sen, and Anderson.

- On successful completion of the course, students should be able to:
conceptualise political and social equality
- defend a view regarding the normative status of political and social inequality
- apply these normative and conceptual tools to current affairs

Prerequisite(s): none.

Majors: The course counts towards the PPE and the Philosophy majors. The course satisfies the following dimensions of the Philosophy major: Skills, problems; Historical, new.

Required texts

- Rawls, John. 1999. *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. ISBN 978-0674000780. (=Rawls, TJ)
- Nozick, Robert. 1974. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. New York: Basic Books. ISBN 978-0465051007. (=Nozick, ASU)
- Teo You Yenn. 2018. *This Is What Inequality Looks Like*. Singapore: Ethos Books. [2018 or 2019 editions are equally good]
- Walzer, Michael. 1983. *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality*. Basic Books. ISBN 978-0465081899.

I strongly recommend purchasing the first two books if you are in a financial position to do so. We spend a total of 4 weeks on them; two concept quizzes will be on them; and one or other of them may well feature in your scholarly paper.

The third book is a worthy purchase because of how it assists us to approach Singaporean realities, but it will not be studied with such intensity as the first two. The fourth book, Walzer, has 2-3 chapters that I'd like us to read, which will probably be beyond what is possible as reserve. Consider buying it, because not only is it a scholarly classic, it is also a very readable book.

If for some reason you are not in a position to purchase the required texts, you may use them in the Yale-NUS library reserve (hard copies).

Assignments and assessments

Assessment for this course has four components.

1. Participation and citizenship, including submission of 10 sets of reading questions over the semester (10%).
2. Concept quizzes (4 x 25 minute in-class exercises, 28%): Tue 25 Jan; Fri 11 Feb; Fri 1 Mar; Fri 25 Mar.
3. Scholarly essay (2000 words, 30%): 12 midnight Sun 13 Mar; scholarly essay draft (1%): 12 midnight Thu 10 Mar.
4. Opinion piece (1500 words, 30%): 12 midnight Fri 29 Apr; opinion piece draft (1%): 12 midnight Mon 11 Apr.

All four components of the course assessment must be completed in order to complete the course.

1. Participation and citizenship (10%)

You fulfill this component of the course assessment by (a) doing the readings; (b) submitting 'reading questions' for 10 seminars across the semester; (c) attending and participating in class.

a. doing the readings

Do the readings in advance of class, and be prepared to discuss them in class.

For particularly dense readings, I may post some guidelines and pointers to assist and focus your preparation

b. reading questions

Submit reading question(s) to 10 separate seminars (which have reading assigned) over the semester, on the discussion thread for the relevant seminar. Questions are due at 10.30am on the day of the seminar; late submissions will not be read or credited. You are responsible for ensuring you complete the required 10 submissions by the end of semester.

Reading questions are questions or comments about the seminar's readings; this will give me an index of how you have received the materials and what we might need to focus on in class. Please feel free to ask either very basic questions, very sophisticated ones, or anything in between, according to how far along your thinking is in connection with the materials.

Only posts for seminars with assigned readings can count towards your required 10 submissions. (I will certainly read and respond to posts for seminars without new readings, they will just not count towards your 10).

c. attending and participating in class

In your class participation, I am looking for both *scholarship* and *citizenship*. Scholarship is the depth of understanding of course materials displayed in your class participation. But the course materials are difficult and controversial, so serious engagement, even if ultimately incorrect or misguided, is equally highly valued. Citizenship is the interpersonal aspect of your class participation. Seminar citizenship means making an effort to contribute in class, letting others speak and engaging constructively with their contributions, not playing with your phone, not whispering or having side-conversations while others are speaking, and then also the basics of attendance and punctuality.

It is also my job to provide a class atmosphere which includes everyone, recognising and supporting diverse modes of contribution.

2. Concept quizzes (4 x 25 minute in-class exercises, 28%): Tue 25 Jan; Fri 11 Feb; Fri 1 Mar; Fri 25 Mar.

In the past, I have held a mid-term exam, with the intent of encouraging students to keep up with the topics across the entire course, so that students have the full range of conceptual tools at their disposal before writing their final paper. However, there are numerous downsides to exams, and they are not the best index of student learning. Instead of an exam, we will have 4 x 25 minute in-class written exercises, held at the start of the teaching session. For each exercise, you will write a response to one prompt, from a choice of two. You will type your answer on your computer, and you will have access to your notes and books during the exercise. More details, and preparation guidance, to be released closer to the time.

3a. Scholarly essay (2000 words, 30%): 12 midnight Sun 13 Mar

Essay questions will be released via Canvas by Fri 18 Feb. I will circulate a 'writing tips' document for guidance with writing this paper, including citation guidelines.

3b. Scholarly essay draft (1%): 12 midnight Thu 10 Mar.

Please submit a full draft of your first paper, along with a one-page outline of your argument, by 12 midnight on Thu 10 Mar.

Drafting papers in advance of submission is the most powerful way to improve your writing. It also allows me to ensure that your papers are on the right track. The rationale for requiring the outline in addition to the full draft is that writing an outline forces you to clarify to yourself what your paper is attempting to achieve, and what it needs to do to get there. Submit your draft via the draft submission boxes. Late submissions will not be accepted, as I will not be able to read them prior to class. Drafts will be graded for effort/completion only, not for quality: F for late or non-submission; C for an incomplete, rough, or sketchy submission; A for a serious submission.

4a. Opinion piece (1500 words, 30%): 12 midnight Fri 29 Apr

Write an opinion piece that relates the content of this course to some contemporary situation or event. So for instance, you might identify a form of inequality in a particular polity, and argue why it is or is not problematic. Or again, you might identify a conflict between the pursuit of different kinds of equality.

This genre of writing should connect scholarly ideas to practical issues, and thereby make the ideas interesting and comprehensible to a serious but non-specialist audience. You may choose whatever example you like, but certainly, it would be a valuable contribution to public life in this country if you would reflect on issues in Singapore.

This course, along with my other course Democratic Theory, has a beautiful pedagogical website, *Equality&Democracy* (<https://equalitydemocracy.commons.yale-nus.edu.sg/>), generously funded through a grant from the Yale-NUS Centre for Teaching and Learning. The site is available, password protected, to students enrolled in the course as a resource.

Prior to writing your own piece, please do read previous cohorts' efforts. If someone has already written on a topic that interests you, you might like your opinion piece to continue the conversation. Do you agree or disagree with their analysis? Is there some new application or connection that should be considered? Is there a different frame for thinking about the issue? However, your opinion pieces are not required to respond to existing articles on the site; you may also strike out in a whole new direction.

For high-quality examples of the kind of reflection and debate we are trying to generate, you might like to look at *Boston Review* (<https://bostonreview.net/forum/ubi-van-parijs>). There are some differences of convention regarding citation in this form of writing compared to

conventional academic writing. We will discuss these differences closer to the time. Nonetheless, if you are uncertain, a good rule of thumb is always to cite more rather than less.

Equality&Democracy was previously a public site. Unfortunately, due to FICA legislation, the legality of the site is now unclear, resulting in the change to password protected access. Unless I am unable to obtain legal clearance to make the site public again, we will not go through the process of publishing your work on the site.

4b. Opinion piece draft (1%): 12 midnight Mon 11 Apr

Please think of an idea for your final opinion piece to discuss in class on Tue 12 Apr.

Please submit a written draft by 12 midnight on Mon 11 Apr, in order to be able to workshop it in class on Tue 12 Apr. Submit your draft via the draft submission boxes. Late submissions will not be accepted, as I will not be able to read them prior to class. Drafts will be graded for effort/completion only, not for quality: F for late or non-submission; C for an incomplete, rough, or sketchy submission; A for a serious submission.

Course Policies

Technology

The serious pedagogical problems relating to technology in the classroom.

I would strongly encourage students to try to minimise their reliance on their laptops during class where possible. Consider bringing hard-copies of your readings, and notepaper to write on. When your laptop needs to be open, please shut down any sources of distraction (web browsers, messaging, email).

Communications

I will make announcements relating to readings, preparation, and assignments via the Canvas announcement function, and also via Canvas course emails. Please ensure you have configured your profile to receive these communications.

I will respond to email queries within one working day. Please restrict email queries to administrative or organisational questions; if you have a substantive issue you need to discuss, please make an appointment.

Lateness

Please note the following from the College Undergraduate Regulations (p29):

Students are expected to plan and manage their workloads, and to ensure they do not lose work through IT malfunction. Students are expected to submit work on or before the deadlines specified in the syllabi or as advised in class. Faculty members may penalise students for work submitted after a deadline in accord with their policy, which will be clearly stated on the course syllabus.

Accordingly, I don't excuse lateness when the cause is something predictable in advance (including technology failure).

For the two papers, late submissions will be accepted, but with a lateness penalty of one third of a letter grade for the each 24 hours late (or part thereof).

PLEASE NOTE: For the essay drafts, reading questions, and in-class tests, late submissions will not be accepted.

Attendance

Your attendance is expected at all seminars. Please contact me if you are unable to attend a given seminar.

Of course, absences for medical reasons or for personal emergencies are excused.

I will allow one unexcused absence, no questions asked, without any effect on your participation grade. Save it up to use wisely, whether to cover a fieldwork absence, or for whatever other personal reason you may have. It is your responsibility to catch up on the work you may miss. Any further unexcused absences will have an incremental effect on your participation grade.

Health and Wellness

If you are experiencing undue stress or feel you might benefit from private counselling, please contact the Yale-NUS Health and Wellness Centre). You may also wish to reach out to the Assistant Dean within your Residential College.

Academic Integrity

Acting with academic integrity requires that (a) students do their own work; (b) students not interfere with the work of others; (c) students accurately and honestly represent the content of their work; and (d) students properly attribute others' work.

Please familiarise yourself with College standards of academic integrity, and uphold them.

Resources are available at:

<http://studentlife.yale-nus.edu.sg/policies/academic-integrity/>

<https://library.yale-nus.edu.sg/avoiding-plagiarism/>

<https://library.yale-nus.edu.sg/citing-your-sources/>

If you are uncertain, please raise your concerns with me.

Alleged breaches of academic integrity will be referred to the College Committee on Integrity and Discipline.

Intellectual Property and Privacy

Our academic model encourages open and penetrating discussion of what can sometimes be challenging materials. Additionally, we seek to cultivate an intellectual space in which, as stated in the Faculty Statement on the Freedom of Expression, “there are no questions that cannot be asked, no answers that cannot be discussed and debated.” This kind of intellectual exploration requires trust and privacy. Therefore, students may not record and/or distribute course discussions, lectures, lecture slides or handouts, readings, videos, or any course related materials without prior permission of the instructor. This includes audio recording, video, transcription, and photography. Lectures and seminars that are delivered in-person, online, or as a pre-recorded videos should never be recorded or distributed beyond the course for which it was intended. Any notes which a student takes for their own learning and retention should not be shared beyond the Yale-NUS community. Students are encouraged to reflect upon and share their own learning experiences and ideas in whatever forum they wish. However, they should not share course content produced by their professors or their peers (e.g. a peer's essay, comments made in class, posts to a Canvas discussion thread) without prior permission through any channels including social media.

Violation of this policy is addressed in the student Code of Conduct and could result in disciplinary and/or legal consequences. As per Clause F2(a) of Policies Relating To Yale-NUS College Intellectual Property, copyright to an Authored Work shall be owned by the University Member who authored it. Authored Work could include syllabi, tests, examination

scripts, study guides, lecture notes and teaching materials, including lectures recorded on audio and/or visual recordings.

Grade Appeals

If you are unsatisfied with a grade-assessment, you can submit the assignment to me, along with a two-page note explaining why you think a re-evaluation is justified. I will then re-evaluate the paper, but reserve the right to raise or lower the grade, and this second decision is final.

Course schedule

01A 11/1

Teo You Yenn, 2018/2019. *This is what inequality looks like*. Singapore: Ethos Books.

- 'Step 1: Disrupt the Narrative', 17-40 in 2018 edition
- 'Differentiated Deservedness', 153-182 in 2018 edition

01B 14/1

Rawls, TJ §§1-4, 9.

02A 18/1

Rawls, TJ §§11-17. (*Skip 'efficiency' (58-61), 'the difference principle' (65-67), and 'chain connection' (70-71).*)

02B 21/1

Rawls, TJ §§20-26, 29.

03A 25/1

Concept quiz 1

Rawls, TJ §§31, 41-43, 48.

03B 28/1

Nozick, ASU, 149-182. (*Skip 164-166.*)

04A 1/2 Chinese New Year

Public Holiday, no class

04B 4/2

Nozick, ASU, 183-213. (*Skip 210-213.*)

05A 8/2

Nozick, ASU, 213-238.

supplementary reading:

Cohen, G. A. 1995 [1977]. 'Robert Nozick and Wilt Chamberlain: How Patterns Preserve Liberty', in Cohen, G. A. *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp19-37.

05B 11/2

Concept quiz 2

Dworkin, Ronald. 1981. 'What is Equality? Part 1: Equality of Welfare', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 10 (3): 185-246, selections.

- I&II read 185-first para 190
- III skip
- IV skip 'political preferences' and 'impersonal preferences' (197-204)
- IV read 204-217 (to 'not in some cases only, but altogether')
- V skip
- VI read
- VII skip

- VIII skip
- IX read
- X skip

06A 15/2

Dworkin, Ronald. 1981. 'What is Equality? Part 2: Equality of Resources', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 10 (4): 283-345, selections.

- I read
- II skip
- III read
- IV read (but skip from near top 307 to top 311)
- V read
- VI skip
- VII skip

06B 18/2

Dworkin, Ronald. 2002. *Sovereign Virtue*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Chapter 9.

RECESS WEEK

07A 1/3

Concept quiz 3

van Parijs, Philip. 1991. 'Why Surfers Should Be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 20 (2): 101-131.

07B 4/3

Sen, Amartya. 1997 [1982]. 'Equality of What?', in Sen, Amartya. *Choice, Welfare, and Measurement*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 353-369.

08A 8/3

Nussbaum, Martha. 2000. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp34-110.

[Scholarly paper draft due, 10/3]

08B 11/3

Cohen, G. A. 2008. 'The Incentives Argument', in Cohen, G. A. *Rescuing Justice and Equality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp27-86.

[Scholarly paper due, 13/3]

09A 15/3

Anderson, Elizabeth. 1999. 'What is the Point of Equality?' *Ethics*, 109 (2): 287-337.

09B 18/3

Anderson, continued.

Supplementary reading:

Fraser, Nancy. 2016. 'Contradictions of Capital and Care' *New Left Review*, 100: 99-117.

10A 22/3

Walzer, Michael. 1983. *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality*. Basic Books, pp3-30.

10B 25/3

Concept quiz 4

11A 29/3

Walzer, Michael. 1983. 'Membership', in Walzer, Michael. *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality*. Basic Books, pp31-63.

Supplementary reading:

Walzer, Michael. 1983. 'Hard Work', in Walzer, Michael. *Spheres of Justice: A Defence of Pluralism and Equality*. Basic Books, pp165-183.

11B 1/4

Carens, Joseph H. 2008. 'Live-in Domestic, Seasonal Workers, and Others Hard to Locate on the Map of Democracy,' *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 16 (4): 419-445.

Supplementary reading:

Chin Chuanfei. 2019. 'Precarious Work and its Complicit Network: Migrant Labour in Singapore,' *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 49 (4).

Au, Alex. 2020. *The Trouble with Foreign Workers*. Singapore: Epigram Books.

12A 5/4

Ready to discuss idea for opinion piece.

Ypi, Lea. 2018. 'Borders of Class: Migration and Citizenship in the Capitalist State,' *Ethics and International Affairs* 32 (2): 141-152.

Tronto, Joan. 2005. 'Care as the Work of Citizens: A Modest Proposal'. In Friedman, Marilyn, ed., *Women and Citizenship*, Oxford University Press, 130-145.

Supplementary reading:

Ferracioli, Luara & Barry, Christian. 2018. 'On the Rights of Temporary Migrants,' *The Journal of Legal Studies* 47 (S1): S149-S168.

12B 8/4

Bieber, Friedemann & Moggia, Jakob. 2021. 'Risk Shifts in the Gig Economy: The Normative Case for an Insurance Regime against the Effects of Precarious Work,' *Journal of Political Philosophy* 29 (3): 281-304.

[Opinion piece draft due, 11/4]

13A 12/4

Workshopping opinion piece drafts

13B 12/4 Good Friday

Public Holiday, no class

[Opinion piece due, 29/4]