In the United States, as throughout the world, many people worry about the extent of economic inequality, the state of democracy, threats of intrusion on liberty, and divisions among fellow-citizens. On all of these topics, facts, explanations and policies are disputed. In addition to their disagreements about facts, causes and consequences, people debate what moral standards to apply. For example, measures to reduce economic inequality that some support are, for others, threats to liberty or attempts to impose a morally meaningless pattern. Some regard abortion rights as a victory for liberty, others as a license for immoral killing. Immigration restrictions are, for some, an important expression of patriotic concern, while others take them to be, at best, unjustified exclusion of people seeking honest self-advancement. The economic inequality that has long been part of American economic life is hard to reconcile with democratic values for some, entirely compatible for others. "Equality, Liberty and Democracy" will investigate both the best current social-scientific descriptions of the inequalities, differences and power relations that some find troubling and the leading debates in political philosophy over the moral standards to be used in deciding what justice requires. We will mostly consider aspects of American society, but international comparisons and questions of how to respond to foreign political and economic burdens will also play a role. There is a detailed schedule of topics and readings at the end of this syllabus.

Readings:
Readings will be posted in the Contents section of our Blackboard site, except for those taken from the one book that is a required purchase. This is:
It is on sale for the course at the Campus Store.

Format: When we meet as a whole class on Mondays and Wednesdays, lectures will be interspersed with class discussions. Still, inevitably, the Friday discussion sections will be the most important opportunity for students to exchange views, questions and arguments. These are an essential and required part of the course.

There will be a Discussion Board on our topics and readings. In addition, I would be very grateful for suggestions and comments concerning the course, and will set up a Discussion Board forum for such help (with an option of anonymity.)

Course requirements:
1.) Written work will consist of three papers, 5-7 pages in length, and a final exam. In each paper, you will be asked to write on one of a list of questions, distributed at least 10 days in advance. The first paper is due March 4, the second April 10, and the third May 6
2.) Students are expected to attend lectures and sections, having done the reading assigned in the syllabus.
3.) The written work will be weighted as follows to arrive at a "benchmark" grade: 20% for each paper, 25% for the final exam, 15% for the quality and frequency of participation in class, section and Discussion Board discussions.

Office hours:
My office hours are M, 4:00-5:00 and by appointment, 329 Goldwin Smith. My e-address is rwm5@cornell.edu.
Course schedule:

Nearly all assignments from articles will be excerpts. Of course, this is true of all assignments from books, as well. Since readings from Rawls' book, *A Theory of Justice*, will be directly from this required purchase, I have specified assignments from it in detail, below. Otherwise, I have mostly postponed specification until the readings are posted in our Blackboard site.

1/21: Introduction

1/23 (section): A discussion of our initial judgments of major current inequalities in the United States

I. Economic Inequality


1/28: Causing and reducing inequality -- and the moral question of whether equality matters. Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, "Winner-Take-All Politics;" Suzanne Mettler, *Degrees of Inequality*; Harry Frankfurt, "Equality as a Moral Ideal."

1/30 (section): To what extent should we try to reduce economic inequality?


2/6 (section): Should the greatest happiness principle guide public policy?


2/11: Equality and social justice: John Rawls' Justice as Fairness. In *A Theory of Justice*, sections are the basic, small units of the book. E.g., sec. 1 = pp. 3-6. For the first assignment, please read sections 1-3, 11-14, and 26, EXCEPT for the following parts, which are not assigned, p. 58 (top, "At this point…") to the start of first full paragraph on p. 62, p. 65 bottom ("THE DIFFERENCE PRINCIPLE…" to the start of the last paragraph on p. 67, p 70 ("CHAIN CONNECTION …")- to the start of the first full paragraph on p. 72. Basically, this is a license to skip discussions of graphs that few find illuminating, which are not important in the book as a whole.

2/13 (section): How promising is Rawls' approach as a way of judging economic inequality?

[2/16: February Break]

2/18: Completing the arguments for Rawls' principles. *A Theory of Justice*, secs. 29, 33, 82.

2/20 (section): How powerful is Rawls' argument for his principles of justice?

II. The Claims of Liberty


2/25: The libertarian critique of Rawls. Nozick, "Distributive Justice;" Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* pp. xiii-xvi, sec 17. We are using parts of Nozick's article for copyright-related reasons. They appear in his book as well. The brief Rawls assignment elaborates some points that are especially relevant to his controversy with Nozick.


3/6 (section): To what extent should women be free to have abortions?

III. The Significance of Difference: Nationality, Race and Class


3/13 (section): To what extent are immigration restrictions morally justifiable?


3/20 (section): How important is race today? What should be done to counter racial disadvantages? [Topics for second paper distributed.]


3/25: Reproducing class differences: Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods*

3/27: (section): Is there anything to the idea of an exploited working class? [Spring Break]

IV. Debating Democracy


4/10 (section): Should we care about equality of political influence as such? [Second paper due.]


4/17 (section): What changes, if any, do democratic values require in economic life?

VI. Global Questions


4/24 (section): Should democracy be promoted everywhere? [Topics for third paper distributed.]


5/1 (section): What political duties do people in developed countries have to help the global poor?

VII. Equality, Liberty and Community
