An inquiry into the moral and political importance of equality, liberty, and democracy, emphasizing deep issues raised in this year’s U.S. presidential election. Six sessions will be led by eminent scholars who will come to Cornell as part of the Ethics and Public Life series, “Deep Issues of the 2012 Elections.” They are Jacob Hacker (Political Science, Yale), Larry Bartels (Political Science, Vanderbilt), David Schmidtz (Philosophy, Arizona), Harry Brighouse (Philosophy, Wisconsin-Madison), Doug McAdam (Sociology, Stanford), Hilary Hoynes (Economics, UC Davis). The other sessions will investigate enduring perspectives on these topics in political philosophy, including work by John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Ronald Dworkin, John Stuart Mill, and Edmund Burke. There is a detailed schedule of topics, readings, and visitor-led sessions at the end of this syllabus.

Course Admission:
Admission to the course is by permission. Undergraduates with relevant backgrounds are welcome, as well as graduate students. If you are an undergraduate and have not been admitted to the course already, please send your request for admission to us (ams3@cornell.edu, rwm5@cornell.edu), noting relevant courses that you have taken and grades received (interpreting relevance broadly). If you are a student in a Ph.D. program or Law, let us know the listing under which you want to enroll, and we will send you an admission code that you can use for this purpose. If you are in an M.A. program, please write to us to describe your relevant background, indicating your department.

Readings:
1.) Please buy these two books, substantial chunks of which will be assigned. They are on sale for this course at the Campus Store.
   Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Basic Books)
2.) The rest of our assigned readings will be posted in the Content section of our Blackboard site.

Course Requirements:
1. **Discussion Board contributions:** Every week, we will ask two or three people to take on the task of each contributing two or three questions or brief comments about next week’s readings to the Discussion Board on the course website. Of course, everyone is welcome to contribute. The contributions must be posted by 8:00 PM on Monday, so that everyone has a chance to read them. We would be glad to share Discussion Board postings with visitors, if the poster would like, if they are posted by 6:00 on Monday.

2. **Attendance and participation:** Everyone is expected to take part in discussions at each meeting of the seminar on the basis of knowledge of the readings and the Discussion Board contributions. We may ask for volunteers to make brief presentations on a topic or to present brief comments on a visitor’s presentation.

3. **Short paper:** A short paper, of from six to eight pages double spaced, will be due at class on October 16. We will hand out a list of topics, concerned with debates about the moral status of economic inequality and its relation to liberty, on September 25. If you would like to work on a topic not on the list, let’s talk about it. But this is not meant as a major project, just as a help in getting a sound grasp of this central controversy.

4. **Term paper:** A term paper, 12-15 pages long, will be due December 12. We will distribute a list of possible term paper topics on November 6. People are welcome to write a paper on any topic connected with our readings or visitors’ presentations, even if it is not on this list of possibilities. But we would like you to consult with one of us before committing yourself to a topic far removed from the list.

The weight of factors contributing to the final grade will be, approximately: term paper 60%; participation (including Discussion Board postings), 20%; short paper, 20%.

**Course schedule:**

In this schedule, the brief descriptions of visitor-led sessions only indicate the general topic that we expect to be addressed. By the week before each session, we will send out a description of the specific topic and assigned readings, which each visitor will provide.

August 28: introduction – the central debates over the moral importance of economic equality, its relation to liberty, and the value of democracy. The following readings, which will be e-mailed to those enrolled as well as posted on the Blackboard site, are optional but useful. Their basic arguments will be presented in class: Ronald Dworkin, “Why Liberals Should Care About Equality”; Harry Frankfurt, “Equality as a Moral Ideal,” *Ethics* 98 (1987), pp. 21-26 (“... fresh new pleasures to be enjoyed.”), 30 (“IV ...”)-41 (“... lively interest.”)


September 11: Jacob Hacker (Political Science, Yale) on the realities and prospects of the American Dream

September 25: Larry Bartels (Political Science, Vanderbilt) on the interaction of politics and economic inequality


[October 9: Spring Break]

October 16: David Schmidtz (Philosophy, Arizona) on the role of property rights in liberty


October 30: Harry Brighouse (Philosophy, Wisconsin-Madison) on fair equality of opportunity and education


November 13: Doug McAdam (Sociology, Stanford) on the interaction of elections and social movements; (his public lecture will be on the viability of American democracy)


November 27: Hilary Hoynes (Economics, UC Davis) on economic insecurity and the safety net