Freedom and equality are typically taken to be two of the fundamental conditions for democracy and, as such, they provide the ethical basis for much of contemporary political theory. The course explores conflicting conceptions of freedom and equality emerging within modern political thought. It analyzes the interrelationship and tensions between the two concepts and the different understandings of each concept associated with a range of beliefs about political and economic life across the spectrum from Left to Right. Also considered are the implications of contemporary developments in this important field of political morality bearing on such issues as public welfare, human rights, and justice.

Requirements:

a) preparedness and participation in each seminar discussion (20% of grade);
b) development and delivery of an oral presentation (approx. 10 minutes) of your critical reflections on the listed readings of a seminar session of his or her choosing (10% of grade);
You should select a week to present during the first seminar session and no later than prior to the beginning of the second seminar session. Choose a week either because you have an interest in getting greater exposure to a topic than is offered by the readings and discussion alone or because you anticipate writing a research paper in that area. Your presentation should not summarize the readings but rather offer to us something that would not otherwise be a part of the seminar discussion: for example, a critical argument about the gaps and weaknesses in the readings; a consideration of how the work relates to other work not on the syllabus; or an exploration of the relevance of the work to historical and contemporary developments not examined already.

c) proposal for a research paper (4 double-space pgs max) for submission as an email attachment by October 30th 4pm (20% of grade);
The proposal offers you an opportunity to articulate concisely the basic question and puzzle that will guide the development of you research paper; outline the argument you will craft (basically, your answer to your question); describe how you will try to convince me and other readers of its plausibility (that is, through analysis, interpretation, or data); specify a core bibliography; make sure you are on the right track before you have written your full research paper; and learn something about
the art of proposal writing. It is best for each of you to set up a meeting with me to discuss your ideas prior to writing your proposal.

Students will be expected to briefly present their research in the final seminar session.

d) complete the research paper by 4pm December 11th (14 double-space pgs max) (50% of grade) and submit it via email. Your paper can be on any topic relating to the substance of the seminar. You are free to find ways of linking the seminar topics to your ongoing and future interests regarding postgraduate work or study.

Policies

Any changes to the class schedule (e.g. due dates; additional or omitted materials, events, rescheduling of classes, etc.) will be announced on Moodle and if possible discussed in class. You are responsible for knowing about such changes (even if you are absent on the day they are discussed) – that is, by following Moodle announcements.

Further guidelines for the essays and oral presentation will be provided in class.

Grading, Assignment Submission, and Lateness Penalties:

Grading: The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York: A+ 90-100% exceptional; A 80-89 excellent; B+ 75-79 very good; B 70-74 good; C+ 65-69 competent; C 60-64 fairly competent; D+ 55-59 passing; D 50-54 barely passing; E 40-49 marginally failing; F 0-39 failing

(For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf)

Assignment Submission: Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment (on reading response dates, see above). Assignments are to be handed in to the instructor as an attachment in an email.

Lateness Penalty: Assignments, received later than the due date, will be penalized 3 points per day. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the instructor but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter; accident report etc.).

Plagiarism is not tolerated. You must provide citations for other people’s ideas and work in every written or oral presentation. Why bother plagiarizing when so much material is available? Feel free to borrow, build on, sample, incorporate, or insert materials you think are pertinent to your work. Just cite and identify the source! And if you want at least a decent grade you need situate the material within your own analysis. (it’s not enough to “like” something: you need to comment on it one way or another). Please also read the webpage on academic honesty and integrity (see below).

IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents): http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm
Required Texts:

Other readings will be posted to Moodle or available via York Library eResources.

Meetings and Readings

Week 1. September 8th
Introduction to course topics, readings, and requirements.

Week 2. September 15th


Week 3. September 22nd

Suggested Reading: Kant, I. ‘On the common saying: this may be true in theory but it does not apply in practice’, 1793

Week 4. September 29th

Week 5. October 6th

No Seminar, October 13th – Thanksgiving Day
Midterm Proposal Due by 4pm October 30th, ***

Week 6. October 20th
Marshall, Peter, Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism, excerpt

Suggested Reading:

Week 7. October 27th
Van Parijs, Phillipe. Real Freedom for All (Chap 1)


Week 8. November 3rd


Costa, Alexandre. Climate Change: Engine of Inequality. At http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/980.php#continue

Suggested Reading:

Week 9. November 10th

Week 10. November 17th

Week 11. November 24th
   Todd May, cont. Chap 3 and 4

Week 12. December 1st
   Todd May, cont. Chap. 5

***Final Paper Due: 4pm December 11th***