Are the outcomes of capitalist exchanges fair or unfair? Is capitalism supportive or detrimental to democratic virtues? Does the welfare state rectify the problems of capitalism or exacerbate them? John Rawls’ work *A Theory of Justice* has greatly shaped these considerations of the welfare state. His theory refined many of the debates concerning the fairness of capitalist economic outcomes and the effects capital accumulation has on democratic virtues. According to Rawls, the welfare state in some form was necessary for capitalism to have morally acceptable outcomes. But, critics of Rawls have called into question welfare state interventions, many finding them economically inefficient and detrimental to democratic virtues. Other critics have founds Rawls’ theory to be too limited in its impact, thereby supporting more extensive interventions into capital accumulation. In this course we will try to answer questions about the morality of capitalist accumulation by studying theoretical conceptions of Rawls’ work and the responses of his critics. The main texts of Rawls’ critics we will consider are Nozick’s *Distributive Justice* and Cohen’s *Rescuing Justice and Equality*. These theoretical conceptions will be contrasted with the case studies contained in Esping-Andersen’s *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*.

**Course Objective**: The objective of this course is to introduce to students the history and theory of welfare state, philosophic notions of distributive justice, and contemporary ideas about how to improve the well-being of individuals.

**Required Readings**


* Note: All texts have been ordered at the New York University bookstore. Students should use the editions cited above.

(i) Note: These readings are on reserve at the library.

(j) Note: These readings are available on JSTOR.

(c) Note: These readings are available on the course's classes site.

**Suggested Readings**

**On the Welfare State:**


**On Employment and Income:**


**On Rawls and the Philosophy of Distribution:**


In addition, students interested in current data on poverty, income, and unemployment can use the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau web pages: [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov) and [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). Two important publications are “The Employment Situation” published the first Friday of each month (approximately) by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States*, published each year by the Census. For international data, see *Employment Outlook* and *Economic Outlook* both published yearly by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, at [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org). The Social Security Administration publishes comparisons of social insurance and other welfare benefits between countries, see *Social Security Throughout the World*.

**Course Requirements:**

1) **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory.
2) **Papers:** Your written work should be a genuine attempt to fulfill the paper topics. If I find your paper not to be a genuine attempt I will tell you. All papers must be handed in. No late papers are accepted. There are no extensions for papers. Papers must be typed and double-spaced. See paper requirement options below.
3) **Class Participation:** This class is a seminar so regular participation is required. A seminar class won’t work if you don’t participate in discussions. Each day of class students will come prepared to discuss the text assigned to be read by that day.
4) **Being prepared to discuss the text entails bringing questions about the text to class.** Students are required to bring two questions to class every day. These questions are to be written down and handed in at the end of class.

**Paper Requirement**

There are two options that fulfill the paper requirement. You can choose either one.

**Paper requirement option A: one term paper**

Requirement A is a 4000- to 5000-word term paper on a topic of your choice relevant to the course. All papers must be handed in by Monday, May 19th by the end of the day. Papers are due by email. A 300-word description of your topic is due no later than Friday, April 18th. Please send your topic descriptions to my email address.

**Paper requirement option B: two papers**

Requirement B is two papers each 2000- to 2500-words in length. Your papers should be a genuine attempt to address the paper topics.

- Paper 1 is due on Friday, April 11th by the end of the day. Papers are due by email.
- Paper 2 is due on Monday, May 19th by the end of the day. Papers are due by email.

**Topic for paper 1 requirement B**

1. Argue for or against Rawls conclusions established within the original position. In your paper discuss the notions of the veil of ignorance, principles of justice, the difference principle, primary goods, the Aristotelian Principle, utilitarianism, and self-esteem.

**Topics for paper 2 requirement B**

Select one:
1. Discuss the critiques of Rawls made by (pick two) Nozick, Cohen, Sen, Fisk, Okin, Daniels, Dworkin, Gomberg, Miller, Hart, Sandel, Van Parijs, and Nagel. Argue why their positions concerning justice are
superior or inferior to Rawls’. You can supplement your argument with your own research.

2. Compare the ideas of welfare discussed by Esping-Andersen and/or Rawls with any of the authors of the course. Argue for a theory of welfare based on your review of the literature. You can supplement your argument with your own research.

**Grade Weights:**
- Paper 1: 30%
- Paper 2: 40%
- Participation: 30%

**Note on plagiarism:**
All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the dean. If you have any questions regarding what is considered plagiarism please ask me.

**Schedule of Readings:**
1/31: Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds* ch. 1-3
2/7: Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds* ch. 6-9
2/21: Rawls, sections 1-5, 11-17, 24-27
2/28: Rawls, sections 41-50
3/7: Rawls, sections 60-68
3/14: Rawls, sections 69-77
3/21: no class
3/28: Rawls, sections 78-87
4/4: Nozick
4/11: Cohen, pp. 1-115
4/18: Cohen, pp. 116-225
4/25: Sen, pp. 3-159
5/2: Sen, pp. 160-298
5/9: Papers by Van Parijs, Mitchell and Watts, and Kaboub