The Course:
This course is designed as a research seminar. We will be considering a central issue of liberal theory, the tension between individual rights and the community good. We will look at this tension in the context of current debates of individual rights and group rights in the context of multiculturalism and identity politics. Much of our discussion will focus on the philosophical and practical tensions to be found in our conceptions of liberalism and democracy: an appeal within liberalism to “universal human rights” accompanied by a simultaneous appeal to self-determination according to the democratic ideal of self-governance. Is the particularity expressed in the demos of popular and democratic sovereignty simply at odds with the universality of liberal moral and political equality? Is democratic sovereignty the “best” practical way to express our hope for universal rights? We shall see…. 

Readings:
The readings, which may be found on e-reserve, (password is POSC) reflect the contemporary debate on identity, culture, and rights among such authors as Iris Young, Vernon Van Dyke, Will Kymlicka, Seyla Benhabib, Anne Phillips, and Chandran Kukathas. As you shall see this debate has changed considerably between the last decade of the twentieth century and the “post-9/11–world” of the first decade of the twenty-first century. As we proceed, I will suggest connections to mid-twentieth–century works on civil rights and nineteenth-century works on empire and imperialism that you may wish to considered in your research.

Requirements:
This research seminar requires one major paper for the term. The topic for this paper should be selected very early in the term, to facilitate your research strategy and our class discussions (which will include time for your own research questions to be addressed).

You will present your 20 page paper orally and in writing. Please note the schedule for turning in topic proposals, drafts, etc. Twice during the term we have a look in detail at a range of views on a central philosophical problem in liberalism. Our first excursus is on the tension in liberal theory concerning the particular and the universal, focusing on ethical universalities and diversity among civil societies. Our second excursus concerns the liberal virtue, toleration. In addition to the common readings for these topics, you will join one of three groups to study several additional readings on a particular aspect of these topics. On both “Excursus Day” each groups will present its readings in class and you will write a 3–5 page analytical paper covering some point in your readings as it relates to our common reading. Your papers are due in class on the meeting following each of these Excursus Days.

Grades:
Grades are based on: two short analytical papers, participation in two group presentations of readings, a research paper, an oral presentation of your research paper, and general class participation (evidence that you’ve read the material assigned for our class meetings). There is no additional final exam; the research paper is due in class during our last meeting.

Assignments will be counted toward your final grade as follows:
Written research paper
(includes research design, drafting, and editing to improve drafts) 40 points
Oral presentation 10 points
Excursus paper I 20 points
Excursus paper II 20 points
Participation 10 points
Total 100 points

Assignments:
Part 1 Enduring Tensions in Liberal Theory: The Particular and the Universal, Individual Rights and Community Cohesion, Toleraton as a Liberal Virtue
Tues Sept 17 Introduction
Thurs Sept 19 Multiculturalism as a political issue and as a puzzle in liberal theory

Recommended on late-twentieth-century conceptions of identity and recognition rights:

Tues Sept 24 Liberalism and Multiculturalism

I. Liberal Theory and Multiculturalism

II. Feminist Theory and Multiculturalism

Thurs Sept 26 The Liberal Aporia—The Ideas of Chandran Kukathas

Part 2 Culture, Right, and Ethical Universalism

Tues Sept 29 Dilemmas of Culture

********* Initial Research Proposal (Topic/Title) Due in Class*********

Thurs Oct 3 Excursus I: On Ethical Universalism and Particularism:


Three Groups Reporting on:

AND

**Plus the following documents:**


And

**Plus the following documents:**


And

**Plus the following documents:**

---

**Tues Oct 8**

**Individual Rights and Collective Rights I**

********Analytical Paper from Excursus I Due in Class********

Part 3 Toleration and Other Liberal Virtues

Thurs Oct 10 Excurses II: On Toleration as a Liberal Virtue


Three Groups Reporting on:


Tues Oct 15 “Group,” “Collective,” and “Community”—The Ideas of Iris Young


Thurs Oct 17 Individual Rights and Collective Rights II—The Ideas of Anne Phillips


*********Refined Research Proposal Due in Class********

*(Statement of Question/Title, Paragraph Description, Initial Bibliography, Method/Approach)*

Mon Oct 21 MID TERM BREAK

Part 4 Theory Becomes Practice
Tues Oct 22  The Cosmopolitan Ideal—The Ideas of Seyla Benhabib

********Analytical Paper from Excursus II Due in Class********

Thurs Oct 24  The Virtue of Hospitality—The Ideas of Seyla Benhabib Continued

Rec as an Example: Deaf Culture as Languaculture

Tues Oct 29  Conceptualizing and Realizing “The Individual”

Thurs Oct 31  Conceptualizing and Realizing [Political? Cultural?] “Community”

Tues Nov 5  The Problem of “Sovereignty” The Ideas of Seyla Benhabib Continued

********Draft of Research Paper Due in Class********

Thurs Nov 7  Th Summarizing the Problem of “THE State”


Tues Nov 12  Institutional Evolution

**Thurs Nov 14**  
Possibilities  

**Tues Nov 19**  
Class Presentations  
***************Final Research Paper Due in Class***************