Overview. This course examines recent liberal justifications, and a few common or well-cited non-liberal critiques, for policies of cultural diversity, mainly as theorized from within settler states such as the United States, Canada, and Australia. Because nearly all theorists make reference to or argue fine points about the contributions of John Rawls, we start by spending a few weeks on Rawls’s two paradigmatic approaches—the legitimate political concept of an overlapping consensus operative for a society in which there are incompatible moral views, and the theory of a more robustly just society. Further topics to be considered are whether liberal contractarianism generates implicit racial biases, whether “multiculturalism” per se adequately addresses the plight of descendants of former slaves, the blindspots of Rawlsian theory for culturally diverse societies, the fraught gendered effects of multiculturalism, and the problem of postcolonialism for liberal societies. We conclude the course with two political theorists’ accounts of the problems and promise of “culture” for “multicultural” politics.

Requirements. Aside from thorough and careful reading, there are two requirements for this seminar. First, each participant must launch discussion twice during the semester. Three elements comprise this task: (1) you must draw your colleagues’ attention to a passage from the assigned reading that you consider significant, paradoxical, or conceptually rich; (2) in a presentation of about ten minutes in length, you must analyze the passage in relation to the broader themes of the course; (3) you must pose at least three textually grounded questions to your colleagues as an entry point for discussion.

For the second, written, component, you may choose one of two tracks. Track A will be more useful to those preparing, or anticipating preparations, for field exams (and, too, the book review is an important genre of our discipline). Track B will be more useful to those who are already writing or plan to write theses, chapters, or other research statements on topics related to this course.

Track A: You may write between five and seven book reviews, each 3-5 pages in length, each on one of the books assigned in this course or another, related book chosen in consultation with me. These book reviews should provide a summary of the book’s argument(s), offer an overview on how the book builds on or intervenes in prior arguments, and finally explore criticisms that the argument opens itself (or arguments open themselves) up to. It might be useful to write at least one of these following the strictures of a particular journal. For example, Perspectives on Politics recommends a limit of 1200 words.

Track B: You may write a seminar paper of 20-25 pages on a topic of interest to you (related to the themes of this course) though in consultation with me.

Texts. The following books are required and available for purchase at A Room of One’s Own Bookstore. In addition to these texts, you will need to consult two shorter readings available online (indicated by a triple asterisk).


**Reading schedule.**

**A. The Rawlsian Paradigm.**

*9 September 2013.*
John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, through Lecture IV.

*16 September 2013.*
John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Lectures V-VIII.

*23 September 2013.*

**B. Racial Critique.**

*30 September 2013.*


**C. Alternative Approaches: Politics of Recognition or Difference.**

*7 October 2013.*
Charles Taylor et al., *Multiculturalism.*

Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, through p. 65.

*14 October 2013.*
Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, remainder.

**D. Liberal Multiculturalisms.**

*21 October 2013.*
Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship.*

E. Multiculturalism & Gender.

4 November 2013.
Susan Moller Okin et al., *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women*?.

11 November 2013.
Sarah Song, *Justice, Gender, and the Politics of Multiculturalism*.

F. Postcolonialism & Liberal Societies.

18 November 2013.
James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity*.

Duncan Ivison, *Postcolonial Liberalism*.

G. The “Culture” of Multiculturalism.

2 December 2013.
Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*.

9 December 2013.
Anne Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture*. 