

Sociology 919: Productive Democracy: 21st Century Egalitarian Possibilities  
F2011, Tuesdays, 8:45-10:45 AM  
8108 Sewell Social Sciences Building

Social democracy and its Keynesian welfare state (KWS) were the only successful reconciliation of liberty and equality under liberal pluralist political conditions, themselves thus far achieved only within capitalist democracies. Over the past generation, the particular form of reconciliation offered by the KWA has been severely challenged. Changes in the organization of the economy, citizen expectations of government, and risks associated with typical life course have together served to fracture its social base, placed new demands and changed the content of its most critical services, and underscored the limits of the practical capacity of its chief administrative agent, the executive-centered nation state. This course examines the rise and decline of the KWS and current efforts at its reform and rejuvenation. It also speculates on the needed institutions and constitutional political economy of a new reconciliation of liberty and equality, and the likelihood of their achievement. This speculation assumes realist constraints, i.e., reasonable assumptions about human nature, institutional capacity, and international political and economic competition; concern for system stability, adaptation, and learning; and the identification of at least plausible agents for the transformation in existing power centers and relations that it implies. Along with identifying the requirement elements and plausibility of this new liberal egalitarianism, we hope to identify important questions about its prospect and operation that might be tractable to research.