

# POLITICAL & SOCIAL THOUGHT

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## Equality & Women's Development

### Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What premises, assumptions, reasons, evidence, and other important considerations lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support and justify accepting the author's conclusions as opposed to other ones.

### Reading

Nussbaum, M. (1999, September). Women and Equality: The Capabilities Approach. *International Labor Review*, 138(3), 227–245.

### Questions

1. Martha Nussbaum is concerned about the treatment of women across all cultures.  
What three arguments claim to challenge universal or cross-cultural norms concerning women's rights? What are Nussbaum's responses for rejecting these arguments?
2. What are the two traditional economic approaches for measuring quality of life Nussbaum mentions? Why does she reject them both, especially as assessments for the quality of women's lives?
3. How is the capabilities approach different from those traditional economic approaches? What capabilities do people have that exert a moral claim on being developed? What justifies such a claim?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses (unless you miss or are late to class, and must then submit a written reading question review).

You do need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting. You may, during the following class, be randomly selected to present answers to these if selected to do so for a verbal reading question review.