

**Abstracts Plenary speakers**  
**"Equal is not enough.**  
**Equal Opportunities in a diverse society"**  
**13, 14 & 15 September 2006.**  
**University of Antwerp, Belgium**

**Wednesday 13 September 2006 - 19.00**

**"Equal Opportunities: Too Much or Not Enough?"**

Prof. dr. [Philippe Van Parijs](#), Harvard University (UK), University of Louvain-la-Neuve (B)

If there is anything like a consensus about what social justice, it is that it requires the equalization of opportunities or, in different words, real freedom for all. But there are different ways of interpreting these expressions. Under some interpretations, demanding the equalization of opportunities is demanding far too much. Under other interpretations, it is demanding far too little. Is there any interpretation under which it may be demanding neither too much nor too little? The answer, I fear, may be "No".

**Thursday 14 September 2006 - 9.45**

**Equal to What, to Whom? - About normativity and cultural cloning.**

Prof. dr. [Philomena Essed](#), Antioch University (USA)

Racism is one of the major obstacles to ethnically peaceful societies. An exclusive focus on 'race', racial' and 'racism', however, conflicts with the view that one-dimensional approaches cannot sufficiently account for the complexity of racial injustices. Elements of domination are interconnected, reciprocate, and mutually constitutive, interwoven into more general principles related to modernity and beyond. More and more scholars in the area of women's and gender studies, in particular those influenced by race critical studies and multiculturalism agree that 'gender' is not thinkable without immediately perceiving its embodiments in terms of race, ethnicity, age, physical capacity, and within national, religious or cultural contexts.

A pitfall of the 'many-isms-approach' is that the focus on 'differences' leaves in tact the normativity of what is globally projected as the superior human profile: white, male, able bodied, heterosexual, highly educated. The framework of cloning cultures draws from, and at the same time goes beyond, the 'isms' in identifying the cultural context of preference for sameness and the underlying culture of cloning that has emerged from modernity and the era of technology.

**Friday 15 September 2006 - 9.15**

**If meritocracy is bad, how can equality of opportunity be good?**

Prof. dr. [Anne Phillips](#), Gender Institute and Government Department, London School of Economics (UK)

Equality of opportunity used to be considered a rather modest version of equality. It was either contrasted to the more radical equality of outcome; or taken to refer to the kind of recruitment and employment practices that have become standard in larger organisations, aimed at eliminating discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, sexuality and so on. In both these versions, equality of opportunity is compatible with very considerable inequality of outcome. Indeed, it is premised on this, since it requires only that people have equal chances to compete, and the very notion of a competition implies sorting out the best from the worst, and awarding them the prizes. But equality of opportunity has also been employed by radical egalitarians who represent it as very different to meritocracy, and argue that, properly understood, it demands more redistribution of resources and justifies less inequality of outcome than is commonly supposed. The question here is whether it is possible to separate in this way meritocracy (bad) from equality of opportunity (good). I illustrate mainly with reference to inequalities of gender, ethnicity, and culture.