

Reading/Discussion Questions for October 1
17.042 Citizenship and Pluralism

1. Taylor argues that today minority or “subaltern” groups, including women and racial and ethnic minorities, demand recognition. What does such recognition entail? Recognition of what/whom by whom?
2. How did recognition come to be seen as a “vital human need” (p. 26)? What does dignity and authenticity have to do with recognition?
3. What counts as recognition? Who says what counts and whether a group’s claim of recognition has been met?
4. Taylor contrasts what he calls procedural or difference-blind liberalism with an alternative model of liberal society which is open to differential treatment of different groups. What does he think is wrong with procedural liberalism? What does the alternative “communitarian” model he favors look like? Do you agree about its desirability over procedural liberalism? Be sure to consider the comments by Walzer and Habermas on this question.
5. Taylor concludes by arguing that we should presume that all cultures are equally worthy of respect. Why should we presume this, in his view?
6. Appiah states that he is less disposed to grant special protections to contemporary cultural groups demanding recognition because such recognition “presupposes conceptions of collective identity that are remarkably unsubtle in their understandings of the processes by which identities, both individual and collective, develop” (156). Do you agree? Why or why not?