

# *The Politics of Inequality*

A POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE IDEA OF  
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN AMERICA

---

Michael J. Thompson

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS *New York*

# | Contents |

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xi

*Introduction.* The Political Dimensions of Economic Inequality 1

- 1 The Critique of Economic Inequality in Western Political Thought:  
The Continuity of an Idea 25
- 2 The Liberal Republic and the Emergence of Capitalism:  
The Political Theories of Optimism and Radicalism 57
- 3 The Transformation of American Capitalism:  
From Class Antagonism to Reconciliation 99
- 4 Embracing Inequality:  
The Reorientation of American Democracy 141

*Conclusion.* Restating the Case for Economic Equality 175

NOTES 199

BIBLIOGRAPHY 221

INDEX 237