

Course Title (Version: Spring 2020)

The Politics of Inequality, Opportunity, and Redistribution: Theory, Empirics, and Methods

Professor

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Course Description and Objectives

This course focuses on both the substantive and analytical/methodological aspects of the relationship between politics and economic inequality, which I define broadly to include inequality in outcomes (e.g., wages, income, wealth) and in opportunities (e.g., employment, education), as well as between social groups defined by class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, etc., though the emphasis in this course will be on class and race/ethnic inequalities. Also, as we will discuss, what "inequality" encompasses is not always clear.

Theoretically and substantively, the main objective of the course is to become familiar with the different levels of analysis involved in the study of the politics of inequality, namely, the roles of (1) political institutions and (2) behavioral dynamics. The former includes parties, electoral systems, policy regimes, history and context, and is sometimes referred to as the "supply side" of politics, or what the political structure supplies or constrains in terms of political and policy ideas and options. The latter (behavioral dynamics) includes individual and group beliefs, policy preferences, voting choices, organized interests, and protest, and is sometimes referred to as the "demand side" of politics, or what individuals and groups in a representative democracy demand from their government. Needless to say, the two levels interact in complicated ways, particularly, I would argue, when social and economic realities (e.g., economic inequality) shift in ways that fit uneasily with existing institutional and behavioral logics. How do individuals, groups, and government respond?

Analytically and methodologically, the main objective of the course is to examine the strengths and weaknesses of various methodological approaches to analyzing institutional and behavioral processes -- such as survey, experimental, ethnographic, historical, textual, and political economy methods and frameworks -- as they are applied to the problem of economic inequality, broadly conceived. Just as we will not want to rely on only institutional or only behavioral frameworks to understand the politics of inequality, so too will we want to refrain from drawing conclusions about these issues from only one methodological perspective and/or from only one study (article or book). Unfortunately, this is all too common in the literature on economic inequality, which is why I have chosen to take an explicitly methodological perspective in this course.

Students therefore will learn both theoretical and methodological skills, and their interdependence, in the study of the politics of inequality, opportunity, and redistribution. As noted above, we will also integrate the research on class inequality with ongoing research on other dimensions of inequality, such as racial/ethnic and gender inequality (though, unfortunately, there's much less on the latter than on the former). While a good deal of the voluminous and longstanding literature on the welfare state includes an analysis of race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, this is less the case for the much more recent literature on rising economic inequality and its political and policy dimensions. This course will attempt to bring these literatures closer together, something that a growing number of scholars are attempting to do.

To accomplish these substantive and methodological objectives, readings will range widely across disciplines and methodological approaches, though the balance will tilt toward quantitative studies in political science, sociology, economics, psychology, and history.

One last, important note. Admittedly, this is a lot of material to cover in a one-semester course. At the same time, I've structured the readings in a somewhat non-linear way, with some repetition in order to aid in constructing and maintaining a larger narrative about the politics of inequality that spans various time periods and topics. We begin conventionally enough with theoretical and historical perspectives but we also dive into empirical and methodological approaches from the beginning. We then narrow our vision to contemporary debates on the very specific topic of the American political response to rising economic inequality. In later sections, we take a closer look at some of the same topics raised in earlier weeks and branch out to other related subjects (e.g., the politics of education, social mobility, employment, and wage policy; the intersecting politics of recognition and redistribution). But, all the while, we will maintain a focus on broader analytical and methodological questions.

Required Reading

Four books are required reading for this course. They are listed below in the order they appear on the syllabus. Choose only one of the third to fifth books (either Cramer, Hochschild, or Silva). All other readings are available electronically through the library or will be made available on Blackboard.

1. Jamila Michener. 2018. *Fragmented Democracy* (Cambridge University Press).
2. Alexander Hertel-Fernandez. 2019. *State Capture* (Oxford University Press).
3. Katherine Cramer. 2016. *The Politics of Resentment* (University of Chicago Press).
4. Arlie Hochschild. 2016. *Strangers in Their Own Land* (The New Press).
5. Jennifer Silva. 2019. *We're Still Here* (Oxford University Press).
6. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. 2016. *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Haymarket).

Assignments

There are four types of assignments in this course, which will be discussed further in class:

1. **Regular participation in class discussions (20%).**

Demonstrated knowledge of the reading material is required for credit.

2. **Presentation of class material for two weeks of readings (20%).**
There are twelve weeks of readings for which presenters are needed. Teams of two will lead discussion with VERY short description of subject matter and discussion questions.
3. **Six responses to the readings (30%; try to spread out throughout course sections).**
Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence and methods used to support author claims about some aspect of the politics of inequality. Length should be one single-spaced page (please, no longer).
4. **A final research paper (30%).**
Rigorously examine the evidence on some topic related to the subject matter of this course. This could be a literature review or it could entail original data collection and analysis.

Course and Reading Schedule

Note: Full citations are at the end of the syllabus and **additional** readings are **optional**.

Week 1, Jan. 29.

PREFACE: Key trends in and patterns of socio-economic inequality (mainly in US).

Background Reading:

Piketty and Saez, *Science* (2014)

Milanovic, *Global Inequality* (2016: Chp. 1)

Blau and Kahn, *JEL* (2017)

Chetty et al, *Science* (2017)

Quillian et al., *PNAS* (2017) & *Sociological Science* (2019)

Bayer and Charles, *QJE* (2018)

Nolan, *Inequality and Inclusive Growth in Rich Countries* (2018)

PART I: Setting the stage conceptually, historically, and methodologically.

Week 2, Feb. 5.

*Methods (1): Introducing broad themes of the course through a case study of the politics of Medicaid in the U.S. Discussion will focus on main concepts, dynamics, definitions, and empirical approaches in the study of inequality and politics, such as: institutional constraints and factors, individual political behaviour, the relationship between the supply and demand sides of politics, the **use of multiple methodological approaches** in research on politics and inequality, and the definition and scope of "inequality" and "politics."*

Required reading:

Michener, *Fragmented Democracy* (2018).

Skim:

Tach and Edin, *ARS* (2017)

Background:

Campbell, *ARPS* (2012)

Week 3, Feb. 12: No class (holiday)

Week 4: Feb. 19.

Historical background and development of the welfare state, labor unions, and political parties as vehicles for reducing risk and inequality and for representing group interests; and contemporary updates.

Required reading:

Page and Gilens, *PoP* (2014)

Eidlin, *ASR* (2016)

Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances* (2010: Chp. 1, Afterward)

Levy and Temin, Working Paper (2007)

Kenworthy, *Social Democratic America* (2014: pp. 70-148)

Skim:

Brady and Bostic, *ASR* (2015)

Additional reading:

Enns, *PoP* (2015)

Lax et al., *APSR* (2019)

Fox, *AJS* (2010)

de Leon, *Labor Studies Journal* (2017)

Lichtenstein, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order* (1989: Chp. 5)

Hacker, *APSR* (2004)

McCarty and Schickler, *ARPS* (2018)

Milkman, *On Gender, Labor, and Inequality* (2016: Chps. 3-4)

Mosimann and Pontusson, *WP* (2017)

Evans and Tilley, *The New Politics of Class* (2017)

Background reading:

Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950)

R. Smith, *APSR* (1993)

S. Jacoby, *Modern Manors* (1997)

Korpi and Palme, *ASR* (1998)

Alesina and Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe* (2004)

Week 5, Feb. 26.

Methods (2): historical research on the rise of far-right ideology, organizations, and policy, which seek to overturn the inequality- and risk-reducing policies discussed in the prior weeks.

Required reading:

Hertel-Fernandez, *State Capture* (2019)

Additional reading:

Martin, *The Permanent Tax Revolt* (2008)

McLean, *Democracy in Chains* (2017)

Part II: The American political response to rising economic inequality.

Week 6, Mar. 4.

Methods (3): a look at public opinion surveys and polls; debates over their meaning from multiple perspectives (e.g., individual/behavioural, informational, institutional, contextual); focus on public opinion about traditional redistributive tax policy by the government in addition to alternative policy options.

Required reading:

Bartels, *PoP* (2005)

Hacker and Pierson, *PoP* (2005)

Lupia et al., *PoP* (2007)

Cramer and Toff, *PoP* (2017)

Broockman and Skovren, *APSR* (2018)

Skim:

Williamson, *Read My Lips* (2016: Preface and Chp. 1)

Public opinion about the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017

Current media surrounding candidate positions on taxes

Additional reading:

Newman and Hayes, *PB* (2017)

Scheve and Stravage, *Taxing the Rich* (2016: Chp. 1)

Wright, *PB* (2017)

Rehm et al., *APSR* (2012)

McKabe, *PB* (2016)

Week 7, Mar. 11.

Methods (4): experimental approaches to public opinion and beliefs about class inequality, racial inequality, economic opportunity, and redistribution.

Required reading:

Kuziemko et al., *AER* (2015)
McCall et al., *PNAS* (2017)
Sands, *PNAS* (2017)
Mo and Conn, *APSR* (2018) [sub: Londono-Velez, Working Paper (2020) or Rao, *AER* (2019)]
Gilens and Thal, *POQ* (2018)

Additional:

Trump and White, *JEPS* (2018)
Cruces, *JPE* (2013)

Background reading:

Meltzer and Richard, *JPE* (1981)
Fehr and Schmidt, *QJE* (2001)
Durante et al., *JEEA* (2014)

PART III: Economic insecurity and identity politics: are they part of the rising inequality issue and what are their political effects on the drive to reduce inequality?

***** NOTE: NEW WEEK NUMBERS AND DATES INSERTED *****

Week 8: CANCELED DUE TO COVID-19 "PAUSE"

Weeks 9 and 10, Mar. 25 and Apr. 1.

Intersections of economic interests and non-economic considerations; roles of culture, recognition, political ideology, partisanship and other forms of identity in shaping the politics of inequality; multidimensionality of ideology and identity.

Required reading, Part I (Identity and Ideology):

Bernstein, *ARS* (2005)
Park, *SF* (2017)
Iyengar et al., *ARPS* (2019)
Klar et al., *POQ* (2018)
Kuo et al., *JOP* (2017)
Edin et al., *JEP* (2019)

Skim:

Craig and Richeson, *CDPS* (2016)
Junn & Matsuoka, *PoP* (2020)

Required reading, Part II (Political Effects of Identity and Ideology):

Brady and Finnegan, *ASR* (2014)
Naumann & Stoetzer, *West European Politics* (2018)
Autor et al., *AER* (2020)
Green & McElwee, *PoP* (2019)
Morgan & Lee, *Socius* (2019)
Broockman and Kalla, *Science* (2017)

Additional reading (both weeks):

Fraser, *Scales of Justice* (2009: chp 6)
Moran, *EJST* (2018)
McDermott et al., *ASIPP* (2019)
Valentino et al., *BJPS* (2017)
Mutz, *PNAS* (2018) & *Socius* (2018)
Morgan, *Socius* (2018)
Broockman, *LSQ* (2016)
McGrath, *QJPS* (2015)
Ruhm, Working Paper (2018)
W. Jacoby, *APSR* (2014)
Beramendi et al., *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism* (2015)
Norris and Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash* (2019)
Inglehart and Norris, Working Paper (2017)
Gidron and Hall, *BJS* (2017)
Bobo, *BJS* (2017)
McCall and Orloff, *BJS* (2017)
Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck, *Identity Crisis* (2018)

Week 11, Apr. 7 (Tuesday is Wednesday schedule).

Methods (5): ethnographic research on the intersection of cultural, identity and economic considerations in support of conservative parties and ideologies; implications for inequality; some attention to the issue of environmental justice.

Required reading:

Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment* (2016)
or
Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land* (2016)
or
Silva, *We're Still Here* (2019)

Week 12, Apr. 15: No class (spring break).

Week 13, Apr. 22.

Methods (6): the role of media and political and elite discourses in shaping politics in general and also of inequality and recognition specifically; using content analysis methods to systematically examine economic, political, and cultural discourses.

Required reading:

Tesler, *AJPS* (2015)
Bonikowski and Gidron, *SF* (2016)
Allcott and Gentzkow, *JEP* (2017)
Guess et al., *Science Advances* (2019)

Roberts et al., *AJPS* (2014)

Skim:

Nelson et al, *SRM* (2018)

Healy and Lenz, *AJPS* (2014)

Additional reading:

McCall, *The Undeserving Rich* (2013: Chp. 2)

Prior, *ARPS* (2013)

Hutchings & Valentino, *ARPS* (2004)

M. Smith, *The Right Talk* (2007)

Oliver and Rahn, *AAPSS* (2016)

Lamont et al., *BJS* (2017)

Collingwood et al., *PB* (2018)

Jensen et al., *BPEA* (2012)

PART IV: The politics of opportunity: education, social mobility, and the labor market.

Weeks 14 & 15, Apr. 29 and May 6.

The politics of social mobility and educational opportunity.

Required reading, Part I (Social Mobility):

Amartya Sen, TBA

Crespo and Ferreira, *The Great Gap* (2011: Chp. 2)

Alesina et al., *AER* (2018)

Cheng and Wen, *PNAS* (2019)

Deitze et al., Working Paper (2020)

Skim:

Healy et al., *APSR* (2017)

Required Reading for Part II (Education):

Pattillo, *DBR* (2015)

Shedd, *Unequal City* (2015: Chp. 3)

Mendelberg et al., *AJPS* (2015)

Biasi, Working Paper (2019)

McCall and Kenworthy, *PoP* (2009)

Additional reading:

OECD, *Divided We Stand* (2011: Chp. 8)

DeLuca et al, *Coming of Age* (2016: Chp. 7)

Busemeyer, *Skills and Inequality* (2014)

McCall, *The Undeserving Rich* (2013: Chp. 4)

Reeves, *Dream Hoarders* (2017)

Background reading:

Corak, *JEP* (2013)
Chetty et al., *Science* (2017)
Bloome, *SF* (2015)

Week 16, May 13.

Corporate employment and wage-setting practices and norms; policies that address labor market inequality.

Required reading:

Atkinson, *Inequality: What Can Be Done* (2015: Chps. 4 and 5)
Thelen, *PoP* (2019)
Stout, *Brookings Issues in Governance Studies* (2012)
Andrias, *HLPR* (2017)
Kochan et al., *ILRR* (2019)

Skim:

Media coverage of Amazon withdrawing from NYC Headquarters.
Naidu et al., *Harvard Law Review* (2018)
Osterman, *ILRR* (2017)
Lindh and McCall, Working Paper (2019)

Additional reading:

Nieuwenhuis et al, *Acta Sociologica* (2019)
Wilmers, *AJS* (2017)
Dube, *Research Brief* (2018)
King and Pearce, *ARS* (2010)
Green, *CPP* (2014)
Sjoberg, *ASR* (2009)
Mizruchi, *Fracturing of the Corporate Elite* (2013)
McDonald, *The Golden Passport* (2017)
Thelen, *Varieties of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity* (2014)
Luce, *NLF* (2015)
Galvin, *PoP* (2016)
Lyon, *PB* (2018)
Rosenfeld and Denice, *ASR* (2015)
Hertel-Fernandez, *PoP* (2016)

PART V: Protest and other forms of political expression and participation (or non-participation) in response to political and economic exclusion, and wrap up.

Week 17: May 20.

Political exclusion and political mobilization in the public and private spheres around issues of inequality.

Required reading:

Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (2016)

Skim:

Hooker, *PT* (2016)

Milkman, *ASR* (2015)

Additional reading:

Hajnal and Trounstein, *APSA Report* (2016)

Levine, *American Insecurity* (2015: Chp. 1)

Klar and Krupnikov, *Independent Politics* (2016: Chp. 5 or 8)

Week 18, May 25 (Monday, 5pm): Papers due.**References** (Note: incomplete; will adjust week by week.)

Alcott H, Gentzkow M. 2017. "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31(2): 211-236.

Alesina A, Glaeser EL. 2004. *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference*. Oxford University Press.

Alesina A., Stancheva S, Teso E. 2018. "Intergenerational mobility and preferences for redistribution." *American Economic Review* 108(2): 521–554.

Andrias, Kate. 2017. "Social Bargaining in States and Cities: Toward a More Egalitarian and Democratic Workplace Law." *Harv. L. & Pol'y Rev.* Online Labor Law Reform Symposium (2017).

Atkinson AB. 2015. *Inequality: What is to be done?* Harvard University Press.

Autor D, Dorn D, Hanson G, Majlesi K. 2020 (forth.). "Importing political polarization? The electoral consequences of rising trade exposure." *American Economic Review*.

Bartels, L. 2005. "Homer Get's a Tax Cut." *Perspectives on Politics* 3(1): 15-31.

Bayer P, Charles KK. 2018. "Divergent Paths: A New Perspective on Earnings Differences Between White and Black Men Since 1940." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 1459–1501.

Beramendi P, Häusermann S, Kitschelt H, Kriesi H, eds. 2015. *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*. Cambridge University Press.

Bernstein M. 2005. "Identity politics." *Annual Review of Sociology* 31:47-74.

Biasi B. 2019. "School finance equalization increases intergenerational mobility: evidence from a simulated-instruments approach." Working paper.

Blasi JR, Freeman RB, Kruse DL. 2013. *The Citizen's Share: Reducing Inequality in the 21st Century*. Yale University Press.

- Blau FD, Kahn LM. 2017. "The Gender Wage Gap: Extents, Trends and Explanations." *Journal of Economic Literature* 55(3), 789–865.
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- Bobo LD. 2017. "Racism in Trump's America: Reflections on Culture, Sociology, and the 2016 US Presidential Election." *British Journal of Sociology* 68(S1): S85-S104.
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- Brady D, Finnegan R. 2014. "Does Immigration Undermine Public Support for Social Policy?" *American Sociological Review* 79(1):17-42.
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- Broockman D, Kalla J. 2018. "Durably Reducing Transphobia: A Field Experiment on Door-to-Door Canvassing." *Science* 352(6282): 220-224.
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- Busemeyer MR. 2014. *Skills and Inequality: Partisan Politics and the Political Economy of Education Reforms in Western Welfare States*. Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell AL. 2012. "Policy Makes Mass Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15:333-351.
- Cheng S, Wen F. 2019. "Americans overestimate the intergenerational persistence in income ranks." *PNAS* www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1814688116.
- Chetty, R. et al. 2017. "The fading American dream: Trends in absolute income mobility since 1940." *Science* 356 (6336), 398-406
- Chetty R, Hendren N, Kline P, Saez E. 2014. "Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the U.S." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129(4): 1553–1623.
- Collingwood C, Lajevardi N, Oskooii KAR. 2018. "A Change of Heart? Why Individual-Level Public Opinion Shifted Against Trump's 'Muslim Ban'." *Political Behavior* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-017-9439-z>.
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- Cramer K, Toff B. 2018. "The Fact of Experience: Rethinking Political Knowledge and Civic Competence." *Perspectives on Politics*. 15(3): 754-770.
- Crespo A, Ferreira FHG. 2011. "Inequality of Opportunity in Latin America: Economic Well-Being, Education, and Health." Chp. 2 in *The Great Gap: Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution in Latin America*, ed., Blofield M.
- Cruces G, Perez-Truglia R, Tetaz M. 2012. "Biased perceptions of income distribution and preferences for redistribution: Evidence from a survey experiment." *Journal of Public Economics* 98:100-112.

- Dietze, P., L. McCall, M. Craig, and J. A. Richeson. "Rising Inequality and the Perception of Economic Opportunity: A Comparison across Racial/Ethnic, Gender, and Income Groups."
- de Leon, C. 2017. "Black from White: How the Rights of White and Black Workers Became 'Labor' and 'Civil' Rights After the Civil War." *Labor Studies Journal* 42(1): 10-26.
- DeLuca S, Clampet-Lundquist S, Edin K. 2016. *Coming of Age in the Other America*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Dietze P, McCall L, Craig M, Richeson J. 2020. "Rising inequality and perceptions of economic advantage: a comparison across racial/ethnic, gender, and income groups." Working paper.
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- Gidron N, Hall PA. 2017. "The Politics of Social Status: Economic and Cultural Roots of the Populist Right." *British Journal of Sociology* 68(S1): S57-S84.
- Gilens M, Thal A. 2018. Doing Well and Doing Good? How Concern for Others Shapes Policy Preferences and Partisanship among Affluent Americans. *Public Opin. Q.* 82(2):209-30.
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- Green J, McElwee S. 2019. The Differential Effects of Economic Conditions and Racial Attitudes in the Election of Donald Trump. *Perspect. Polit.* 17(2):358-79.

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- Hooker J. 2016. "Black Lives Matter and the Paradoxes of U.S. Black Politics: From Democratic Sacrifice to Democratic Repair." *Political Theory* 44(4): 448-469.
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