

POLS 6395 American Politics & Policy: Inequality and Redistribution
Section: 17080

Mondays 1:00–4:00 PM, PGH 405
University of Houston
Department of Political Science
Spring 2019

Instructor

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Office Hours: M 10:00am-1:00pm, or by appointment.

Course Description

This is a research seminar on the topic of inequality and redistribution. It is designed to give students an opportunity to conduct original research broadly related to inequality and redistribution. The focus of the seminar is on social inequality and redistributive (welfare) policies that address inequality in the American context. Students who are willing to focus their research on other advanced democracies or non-democracies might well apply relevant theoretical frameworks in these country contexts. We will focus on questions related to inequality with respect to political and policy outcomes—income, health care, economic insecurity, political participation and political representation. The literature in this field is extensive; as a result, most of the class time will be devoted to reading important and/or the most recent literature in this area. In addition, time will be spent on discussing how to gather relevant research data and interacting with others on the research projects. Emphasis will be placed on contemporary topics on inequality and redistribution to help students identify core research questions and develop their own research in this area.

Learning Objectives

1. To become familiar with the existing literature on inequality and redistributive social policy.
2. To become familiar with the concepts and tools that scholars use to analyze various forms of inequality and welfare policies.
3. To learn the skills of writing a research paper in political science.

Required Books and Additional Readings

1. Bartels, Larry M. 2008. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Russell Sage Foundation.

2. Franko, William and Christopher Witko. 2018. *The New Economic Populism: How States Respond to Economic Inequality*. Oxford University Press.
3. Gilens, Martin. 2000. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. The University of Chicago Press.
4. Gilens, Martin. 2012. *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*. Princeton University Press.
5. Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Theda Skocpol. 2005. *Inequality and American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn*, Russell Sage Foundation.
6. Kelly, Nathan J. 2011. *The Politics of Income Inequality in the United States*. Cambridge University Press.
7. Mettler, Suzanne. 2014. *Degrees of Inequality: How the Politics of Higher Education Sabotaged the American Dream*.
8. Swank, Duane. 2002. *Global Capital, Political Institutions, and Policy Change in Developed Welfare States*, Cambridge University Press.
9. Soss, Joe, Jacob Hacker, and Suzanne Mettler. 2007. *Remaking America: Democracy and Public Policy In an Age of Inequality*. Russell Sage Foundation.
10. There are additional weekly readings listed by weekly topics.

Course Requirements

1. Class attendance and regular participation in class discussion.
2. Read the assigned readings prior to each class meeting.
3. Weekly Research Abstract. Each student is required to submit a one-page research abstract based on each week's readings. Research abstracts are due by **Friday at noon on Blackboard Learn** prior to each Monday when the class meets. In the research abstract, students should address the following questions: (1) what could be a relevant research question motivated by the assigned readings in that particular week? (2) how would you develop a theoretical framework to address that research question? (3) what kind of empirical data may be used to test the key hypothesis? (4) what might be a proper conference section to submit the research abstract? All the weekly research abstracts will be distributed to the class and will be discussed in each seminar meeting.
4. Term Paper. Students are required to choose a research topic that is related to inequality, redistribution, and/or social welfare policy. Based on the chosen research topic, students will develop a research paper throughout the semester. The research paper should explicitly address one research question, review the recent and most relevant literature, and contain an analytical component using empirical data to address the research question. All papers should follow the APSA style. The research paper assignment is divided into several segments to allow students develop their projects step by step throughout the semester, and to obtain feedback on each section. All the following writing assignments are due **at noon on Blackboard Learn**.

- February 15: Section 1, 2-page introduction due.
 - March 15: Section 2, 5-page literature review due.
 - April 15: Section 3, 8-page research design and data analysis due.
 - May 6: Final paper due.
5. Poster Presentation. Students are required to develop a poster presentation based on their research papers. At the end of the semester, students will participate in the Department of Political Science's spring poster presentation session to showcase their research projects. More details about the poster session will be announced later.

Attendance and Late Policy

1. Attendance. Absence from the class will only be accepted in extenuating circumstances with a university-accepted excuse. If you know in advance that you cannot attend the class, please inform me before the scheduled class-meeting.
2. Late Policy. Late work will be penalized by one letter grade per day. For example, an A-paper turned in one day late will become a B-paper. Late work will only be accepted without penalty if students have university-accepted excuses. No late submission will be accepted 72 hours passing the deadline.

Grading

1. Participation, 10%
2. Weekly research abstract, 20%.
3. Term paper, 60%
4. Poster presentation, 10%
5. Final Grades

A	=	100-95 (Excellent)
A-	=	94-90
B+	=	89-87 (Good)
B	=	86-84
B-	=	83-80 (Poor)
C+	=	79-77
C	=	76-74
C-	=	73-70
D+	=	69-67
D	=	66-64
D-	=	63-60
F	=	59-0 (Failing)

Academic Integrity

As commonly defined, presenting the words or ideas of others' as your own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues, without which research cannot be safely communicated. Plagiarism is also a violation of the UH Academic Honesty Policy. If you are uncertain of what constitute academic dishonesty, you should contact me

prior to submitting the assignment. You should also read the UH Academic Honesty Policy from the university website: www.uh.edu/provost/policies/uhhonestypolicy.html. Students are expected to adhere to the UH Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating or plagiarism in course assignments and the final paper will lead to a grade of F.

Americans with Disability Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you need special accommodations and assistance due to a disability, please contact the Center for Students with DisABILITIES (CSD Building 568, Room 110) and the Learning Support Services (LSS, 321 Social Work Building), or call 713-743-5411 to make appropriate arrangements.

University of Houston CAPS Statement

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to college, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS (www.uh.edu/caps) by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the “Let’s Talk” program (www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html), a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus.

Course Calendar

PART I. Introduction: Inequality, Welfare Policy and the Politics of Redistribution

Week 1 (January 14): Course overview, no readings.

- Review and discuss the syllabus.
- Short professionalization session: Where to present your work on inequality and redistribution? Political Science and Public Policy conferences.

Week 2 (January 21): Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday.

Week 3 (January 28): Inequality and Democracy: What Are the Big Questions?

- Jacobs and Skocpol 2005, the entire book.
- Soss, Hacker, and Mettler 2007. Ch.1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 13.
- Short professionalization session: Writing a successful conference proposal (and some perspectives from a conference program chair).

PART II. Determinants of Inequality and Welfare Generosity: Different Approaches

Week 4 (February 4): Measuring Inequality

- Piketty, Thomas and Emmanuel Saez. 2003. "Income Inequality in the United States, 1913-1998." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118(1): 1-39.
- Ravallion, Martin. 2015. "The Luxembourg Income Study." *The Journal of Economic Inequality*, 13(4): 527-547.
- Lupu, Noam and Jonas Pontusson. 2012. "The Structure of Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution." *American Political Science Review*, 105(2):316-336.
- Troutstine, Jessica. 2015. "Segregation and Inequality in Public Goods." *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(3): 709-725.
- Bewman, Benjamin J. 2015. "Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Local Gender-Based Income Inequality and Women's Belief in the American Dream." *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(4): 1006-1025.
- Short professionalization session: How to conduct an effective literature review.

Week 5 (February 11): Measuring Redistribution and Welfare Generosity

- Bamba, Clare. 2006. "Research Note: De-commodification and the Worlds of Welfare Revised." *European Journal of Social Policy*, 16(1): 73-80.
- Scruggs, Lyle. 2007. "Welfare State Generosity across Space and Time." In Jochen Clasen and Nico Sigel, eds. *Investigating Welfare State Change: the "Dependent Variable Problem" in Comparative Analysis*. Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd. [Recommended]
- Pallage, Stéphane, Lyle Scruggs, and Christian Zimmermann. 2013. "Measuring Unemployment Insurance Generosity." *Political Analysis*, 21(4): 524-549.
- Scruggs, Lyle. 2013. "Measuring and Validating Social Program Replacement Rates." *Journal of European Public Policy*. 20 (9): 1267-1284.

Week 6 (February 18): Political Institutions and Inequality: The American Context

- Bartels 2008, Chapters 1-4.
- Kelly, 2009, Chapters 1-5 (skim through Kelly's chapters).
- Enns, Peter K., Nathan J. Kelly, Jana Morgan, Thomas Volscho, and Christopher Witko. 2014. "Conditional Status Quo Bias and Top Income Shares: How U.S. Political Institutions Have Benefited the Rich." *Journal of Politics*, 76(2): 289-303.
- Kelly, Nathan J. 2005. "Political Choice, Public Policy, and Distributional Outcomes." *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(4):865-880.
- Kelly, Nathan J. and Christopher Witko. 2012. "Federalism and American Inequality." *The Journal of Politics*, 74(2):414-426.

Week 7 (February 25): More on Public Policy and Inequality in the U.S. Context

- Bartels 2008, Chapter 5 and onward.
- Mettler 2014, the entire book.
- Short professionalization session: How to develop a research design (or, what need to be included in a research design).

Week 8 (March 4): Political Institution, Inequality, and Redistribution: Cross-Country Comparison

- Iversen, Torben and David Soskice. 2006. "Electoral Institutions and the Politics of Coalitions: Why Some Democracies Redistribute More Than Others." *American Political Science Review*, 100(2):165-181.
- Allan, James P. and Lyle Scruggs. 2004. "Political Partisanship and Welfare State Reform in Advanced Industrial Societies." *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(3): 496-512.
- Scheve, Kenneth and David Stasavage. 2009. "Institutions, Partisanship, and Inequality in the Long Run." *World Politics*, 61(2):215-253.
- Huber, Evelyne, Francois Nielsen, Jenny Pribble, and John D. Stephens. 2006. "Politics and Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean." *American Sociological Review* 71(6): 943-963.
- Morgan, Jana and Nathan J. Kelly. 2013. "Market Inequality and Redistribution in Latin America and the Caribbean." *The Journal of Politics*, 75(3):672-685.
- Iversen, Torben and Frances Rosenbluth. 2006. "The Political Economy of Gender: Explaining Cross-National Variation in the Gender Division of Labor and the Gender Voting Gap." *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(1): 1-19.

Week 9 (March 11): Spring Break.

Week 10 (March 18): Welfare State Preferences: The Comparative Political Economy Approach

- Meltzer, Allan H. and Scott. F. Richard. 1981. "A Rational Theory of the Size of Government." *Journal of Political Economy*, 89 (5): 914-927. (Skim through this article).
- Moene, Karl Ove, and Michael Wallerstein. 2001. "Inequality, Social Insurance, and Redistribution." *American Political Science Review*, 95 (4): 859-874.
- Iversen, Torben and David Soskice. 2001. "An Asset Theory of Social Policy Preferences." *American Political Science Review*, 95(4): 875-893.
- Rhem, Philipp, Jacob Hacker and Mark Schlesinger. 2012. "Insecure Alliances: Risk, Inequality, and Support for the Welfare State." *American Political Science Review*, 106(2):386-406.
- Zhu, Ling and Christine Lipsmeyer. 2015. "Policy Feedback and Economic Risk: The Influence of Privatization on Social Policy Preferences." *European Journal of Public Policy*, 22(10):1481-1511.
- Rueda, David and Daniel Stegmueller. 2016. "The Externalities of Inequality: Fear of Crime and Preferences for Redistribution in Western Europe." *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(2): 472-489.
- Compton, Mallory and Christine Lipsmeyer. 2018. "Everybody Hurts Sometimes: How Personal and Collective Insecurities Shape Policy Preferences." *Journal of Politics*, online first.

Week 11 (March 25): Welfare State Preferences: The Public Opinion Approach

- Gilens 2000, the entire book.
- Kelly, Nathan and Peter K. Enns. 2010. "Inequality and the Dynamics of Public Opinion: The Self-Reinforcing Link Between Economic Inequality and Mass preferences." *American Journal of Political Science*, 54(4): 855-870.
- Garand, James C., Ping Xu, and Belinda C. Davis. 2017. "Immigration Attitudes and Support for the Welfare State in the American Mass Public." *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(1): 146-162.
- Margalit, Yotam. 2013. "Explaining Social Policy Preferences: Evidence from the Great Recession." *American Political Science Review*, 107(1): 81-103.

PART III. Contemporary Issues in Inequality and Welfare Politics Research

Week 12 (April 1): American States, Inequality, and Social Policy

- Hero, Rodney E. and Robert R. Preuhs. 2007. "Immigration and the Evolving American Welfare State: Examining Policies in the U.S. States." *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(3): 498-517.
- Hatch, Megan E. and Elizabeth Rigby. 2015. "Laboratories of (In)equality? Redistributive Policy and Income Inequality in the American States." *Policy Studies Journal*, 43 (2): 163-187.
- William and Witko 2018, the entire book.
- Short professionalization session: Matching methods with theory and substance.

Week 13 (April 8): Globalization, Inequality, and Redistribution

- Clayton, Richard and Jonas Pontusson. 1998. "Welfare-State Retrenchment Revisited: Entitlement Cuts, Public Sector Restructuring, and Inegalitarian Trends in Advanced Capitalist Societies." *World Politics*, 51(1):67-98.
- Iversen, Torben and Thomas R. Cusack. 2000. "The Causes of Welfare State Expansion: Deindustrialization or Globalization." *World Politics*: 52(3):313-394.
- Rudra, Nita. 2002. "Globalization and the Decline of the Welfare State in Less-Developed Countries." *International Organization*, 56(2): 411-445.
- Lipsmeyer, Christine and Ling Zhu. 2011. "Immigration, Globalization, and Unemployment Benefits in Developed EU States." *American Journal of Political Science*, 55(3): 647-664.
- Swank 2002, chapters 1-4.

Week 14 (April 15): Inequality and Representation in the U.S. Context

- Garand, James. 2010. "Income Inequality, Party Polarization, and Roll-Call Voting in the U.S. Senate." *The Journal of Politics*, 72(4): 1109-1128.
- Rigby, Elizabeth and Gerald C. Wright. 2013. "Political Parties and Representation of the Poor in the American States." *American Journal of Political Science*, 57(3):552-565.

- Rehm, Philipp. 2011. “Risk Inequality and the Polarized American Electorate.” *British Journal of Political Science* 41(2):363-387.
- Gilens 2012, entire book.
- Carnes, Nicholas and Noam Lupu. 2016. “Do Voters Dislike Working Class Candidates? Voter Biases and the Descriptive Underrepresentation of the Working Class.” *American Political Science Review*, 110(4): 832-844.
- Short professionalization session: Presenting your research at a professional conference.

Week 15 (April 22): Inequality and Its Consequences in a Comparative Perspective

- Soroka, Stuart N. and Christopher Wlezien. 2008. “On the Limits to Inequality in Representation.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41(2):319-327.
- Epp, Derek A. “Policy Agendas and Economic Inequality in American Politics.” *Political Studies*, 66(4): 922-939.
- Beramendi, Pablo and Christopher J. Anderson. 2008. *Democracy, Inequality, and Representation in Comparative Perspective*. Russell Sage Foundation. Ch. 9, 10, and 12.
- Lance, Bram and Herman G. Van de Werfhorst. 2012. “Income Inequality and Participation: A Comparison of 24 European Countries.” *Social Science Research*, 41(5): 1166-1178.
- Alesina, Alberto, Rafael Di Tella, and Robert MacCulloch. 2004. “Inequality and Happiness: Are Europeans and Americans different?” *Journal of Public Economics* 88: 2009-2042.

Week 16 (April 29): How Does Public Policy Make a Difference: The Policy Feedback Literature

- Campbell, Andrea L. 2012. “Policy Makes Mass Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science*. 15:333-351.
- Soss, Joe and Sanford F. Schram. 2007. “A Public Transformed? Welfare Reform as Policy Feedback.” *The American Political Science Review*, 101(1): 111-127.
- Zhu, Ling and Ping Xu. 2015. “The Politics of Welfare Exclusion: Immigration and Disparity in Medicaid Coverage.” *Policy Studies Journal* 43(4): 456-483.
- Hopkins, Daniel J. and Kalind Parish. 2018. “The Medicaid Expansion and Attitudes toward the Affordable Care Act: Testing for a Policy Feedback on Mass Opinion.” *Political Behavior*. 40(3): 681-709.
- Gusmano, Michael K., Mark Schlesinger and Tracy Thomas. 2002. “Policy Feedback and Public Opinion: The Role of Employer Responsibility in Social Policy.” *Journal of Health Care Politics, Policy, and Law*. 27(1): 731-772.

PART IV: Wrap-Up and Research Presentation

Week 17 (May 6-10): Poster Presentation (Time and Location TBA)

Final paper due on May 6 by noon on Blackboard.

Caveat

The aforementioned weekly schedule and assignments in this course may be subject to change.