

## **POLS 6317 Inequality and Redistribution**

Mondays 1:00-4:00 PM  
University of Houston  
Department of Political Science  
In-Person Sessions: Room PGH 405

Spring 2022

### **Instructor**

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### **Teaching Assistants**

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### **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 as 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 central question probed in this course is what are the political causes and consequences of the substantial inequality in the American democracy. To answer this broad question, we will survey (1) how income inequality and other forms of inequality are studied and measured in the literature, (2) what are the political causes of inequality, and (3) how inequality affects political participation, preference formation, and policy responsiveness of the government. 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 political science. 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.
  - Exploring new ideas and identifying important research questions;
  - Identify literature and summarizing literature;
  - Identifying key points in research articles;
  - Developing hypotheses;
  - Choosing research design;
  - Defining independent variable(s) and dependent variable(s);
  - Writing a (publishable) research article.

### **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. Mettler, Suzanne. 2014. *Degrees of Inequality: How the Politics of Higher Education Sabotaged the American Dream*.
7. Soss, Joe, Jacob Hacker, and Suzanne Mettler. 2007. *Remaking America: Democracy and Public Policy In an Age of Inequality*. Russell Sage Foundation.
8. 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 **Saturday 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 prior to the Zoom session and will be discussed in class.
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 American Political Science Association Style Manual. The research paper assignment is divided into several segments to allow students to 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 14 (optional): Section 1, Introduction due.
  - March 14 (optional): Section 2, Literature and Theory due.
  - April 18 (optional): Section 3, Research design and preliminary data analysis due.
  - May 10 (required): 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.

## Grading

1. Participation, 10%
2. Weekly research abstract, 20%.
3. Term paper, 60%
4. 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)

### **Late Submission**

Late work will only be accepted without penalty if students have university-accepted excuses. Unexcused late submission will be penalized by one letter grade per day. For example, an A-paper turned in one day late will become a B-paper.

### **Academic Integrity**

As commonly defined, presenting the words or works 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 constitutes academic dishonesty, you should contact me prior to submitting the assignment and/or check the UH Academic Honesty Policy from the university website: [http://www.uh.edu/provost/policies/honesty/\\_documents-honesty/academic-honesty-policy.pdf](http://www.uh.edu/provost/policies/honesty/_documents-honesty/academic-honesty-policy.pdf). Students are expected to adhere to the UH Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating or plagiarism in course assignments, exams, and the final paper will lead to a grade of F.

### **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](http://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](http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html)), a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus.

### **Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids**

The University of Houston complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for disabled students. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, UH strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an academic

adjustments/auxiliary aid, please contact the Justin Dart Jr. Student Accessibility Center (formerly the Justin Dart, Jr. Center for Students with DisABILITIES).

### **Face Covering Policy**

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the University strongly encourages everyone (vaccinated or not) to wear face coverings indoors on campus including classrooms for both faculty and students.

### **Presence in Class**

Your presence in class each session means that you:

- Are NOT exhibiting any Coronavirus Symptoms that makes you think that you may have COVID-19;
- Have NOT tested positive or been diagnosed for COVID-19;
- Have NOT knowingly been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or suspected/presumed COVID-19

If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms that are not clearly related to a pre-existing medical condition, do not come to class. Please see Student Protocols for what to do if you experience symptoms and Potential Exposure to Coronavirus for what to do if you have potentially been exposed to COVID-19. Consult the (Graduate Excused Absence Policy) for information regarding excused absences due to medical reasons.

### **COVID-19 Information**

Students are encouraged to visit the University's COVID-19 website for important information including on-campus testing, vaccines, diagnosis and symptom protocols, campus cleaning and safety practices, report forms, and positive cases on campus. Please check the website throughout the semester for updates.

### **Vaccinations**

Data suggests that vaccination remains the best intervention for reliable protection against COVID-19. Students are asked to familiarize themselves with pertinent vaccine information, consult with their health care provider. The University strongly encourages all students, faculty and staff to be vaccinated.

### **Excused Absence Policy**

Regular class attendance, participation, and engagement in coursework are important contributors to student success. Absences may be excused as provided in the University of Houston Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy and Graduate Excused Absence Policy for reasons including: medical illness of student or close relative, death of a close family member, legal or government proceeding that a student is obligated to attend, recognized professional and educational activities where the student is presenting, and University-sponsored activity or athletic

competition. Under these policies, students with excused absences will be provided with an opportunity to make up any quiz, exam or other work that contributes to the course grade or a satisfactory alternative. Please read the full policy for details regarding reasons for excused absences, the approval process, and extended absences. Additional policies address absences related to military service, religious holy days, pregnancy and related conditions, and disability.

### **Recording of Class**

Students may not record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Center for Students with DisABILITIES. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor's recordings for their own studying and note-taking. Instructor's recordings are not authorized to be shared with anyone without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

### **Resources for Online Learning**

The University of Houston is committed to student success and provides information to optimize the online learning experience through our Power-On website. Please visit this website for a comprehensive set of resources, tools, and tips including: obtaining access to the internet, AccessUH, and Blackboard; requesting a laptop through the Laptop Loaner Program; using your smartphone as a webcam; and downloading Microsoft Office 365 at no cost. For questions or assistance contact UHOnline@uh.edu.

### **UH Email**

Email communications related to this course will be sent to your Exchange email account which each University of Houston student receives. The Exchange mail server can be accessed via Outlook, which provides a single location for organizing and managing day-to-day information, from email and calendars to contacts and task lists. Exchange email accounts can be accessed by logging into Office 365 with your Cougarnet credentials or through Access UH. Additional assistance can be found at the UH Get Help page.

### **Course Calendar**

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

Week 1 (January 24) Zoom Session: Course overview, no readings.

- Review and discuss the syllabus.
- Research Workshop: Journals and Conferences in Political Science and Public Policy
- Zoom ID: 7919619091/Passcode: 021987

Week 2 (January 31) Zoom Session: Inequality and Democracy: What Are the Big Questions?

- Jacobs and Skocpol 2005, the entire book.
- Soss, Hacker, and Mettler 2007. Chapter 1 (Understanding the Policy-Centered Approach)
- Soss, Hacker, and Mettler 2007. Chapters 4 and 6 (The Policy Feedback Framework)
- Soss, Hacker, and Mettler, 2007. Chapters 5 and 8 (Public Policy and Racial Inequality).
- Research Workshop: Writing a Good Conference Proposal
- Zoom ID: 7919619091/Passcode: 021987

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

Week 3 (February 7): 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.
- Solt, Frederick. 2020. "Measuring Income Inequality Across Countries and Overtime: The Standardized World Income Inequality Database." *Social Science Quarterly*, 101(3): 1183-1199.
- Troutstine, Jessica. 2015. "Segregation and Inequality in Public Goods." *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(3): 709-725.
- Newman, 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.
- Research Workshop: Elements of a Literature Review
- Exploring datasets: WID, SWIID.

Week 4 (February 14): 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 5 (February 21): Political Institutions and Inequality: The American Context

- Bartels 2008, Chapters 1-4.

- 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.
- Research Workshop: Develop a Valid and Viable Research Design

Week 6 (February 28): Political Institution, Inequality, and Redistribution: Cross-Country Comparison

- Scheve, Kenneth and David Stasavage. 2009. “Institutions, Partisanship, and Inequality in the Long Run.” *World Politics*, 61(2):215-253.
- 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.
- Lupu, Noam and Jonas Pontusson. 2012. “The Structure of Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution.” *American Political Science Review*, 105(2):316-336.
- 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.
- 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. (Optional)
- 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. (Optional)

Week 7 (March 7): Public Policy as the Determinants of Inequality in the U.S. Context

- Bartels 2008, Chapter 5 and onward.
- Mettler 2014, the entire book.
- Research Workshop: More on Research Design: Matching Methods with Theory

Week 8 (March 14): Spring Break.

Week 9 (March 21): Welfare State Preferences: Different Theoretical Approaches

*The Risk Approach*

- 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.



- 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.

#### *The Public Opinion Approach*

- Gilens 2000, chapters 1-4.
- 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.

#### *Recommended Readings*

- Iversen, Torben and David Soskice. 2001. “An Asset Theory of Social Policy Preferences.” *American Political Science Review*, 95(4): 875-893.
- Margalit, Yotam. 2013. “Explaining Social Policy Preferences: Evidence from the Great Recession.” *American Political Science Review*, 107(1): 81-103.
- 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.
- Compton, Mallory and Christine Lipsmeyer. 2019. “Everybody Hurts Sometimes: How Personal and Collective Insecurities Shape Policy Preferences.” *Journal of Politics*, 81(2): 539-551.
- 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.

### **PART III. Contemporary Issues in Inequality and Welfare Politics Research**

#### Week 10 (March 28): 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.

#### Week 11 (April 4 ): Inequality and Polarization

- Stewart, Alexander J., Nolan McCarty, and Joanna J. Brayson. 2020. “Polarization Under Rising Inequality and Economic Decline.” *Science Advances*: 6(50), online first.
- Winkler, Hernan. 2019. “The Effect of Income Inequality on Political Polarization: Evidence from European Regions, 2002-2014.” *Economics & Politics*, 31(2): 137-162.

- Garand, James. 2010. "Income Inequality, Party Polarization, and Roll-Call Voting in the U.S. Senate." *The Journal of Politics*, 72(4): 1109-1128.
- Research Workshop: Presenting Your Research at A Conference

Week 12 (April 11): Inequality and Representation in the U.S. Context

- 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.

Week 13 (April 18): 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. 2018. "Policy Agendas and Economic Inequality in American Politics." *Political Studies*, 66(4): 922-939.
- 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.
- Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M., Suzanne De Boef and Tse-min Lin. 2004. "The Dynamics of the Partisan Gender Gap." *American Political Science Review*, 98(3): 515-528.
- Alesina, Alberto, Rafael Di Tella, and Robert MacCulloch. 2004. "Inequality and Happiness: Are Europeans and Americans Different?" *Journal of Public Economics* 88: 2009-2042. (Optional)
- Inglehart, Ronald, Pippa Norris, and Christian Welzel. 2002. "Gender Equality and Democracy." *Comparative Sociology*, 1(3-4): 235-264. (Optional)
- Research Workshop: The Peer Review Process for Academic Publication

Week 14 (April 25 ): How Does Public Policy Make a Difference: The Policy Feedback Approach

- Campbell, Andrea L. 2012. "Policy Makes Mass Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 15:333-351.
- Hopkins, Daniel J. and Kalind Parish. 2013. "The Medicaid Expansion and Attitudes toward the Affordable Care Act: Testing for a Policy Feedback on Mass Opinion." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 83(1): 123-134.
- Jacobs, Laurence, Suzanne Mettler, and Ling Zhu. 2021. "The Pathways of Policy Feedback: How Health Reform Influences Political Efficacy and Participation." *Policy Studies Journal*, forthcoming.

- Lerman, Amy E., Meredith L. Sadin, and Samuel Trachtman. 2017. “ Policy Uptake as Political Behavior: Evidence from the Affordable Care Act.” *American Political Science Review*, 111(4): 755-770.
- Clinton, Joshua D. and Michael W. Sances. 2018. “ The Politics of Policy: The Initial Mass Political Effects of Medicaid Expansion in the States.” *American Political Science Review*, 112(1): 167-185.

#### **PART IV: Wrap-Up and Research Presentation**

Week 15 (May 2): Student presentations.

Final paper due on May 10 by noon on Blackboard.