

# Politics of Inequality and Poverty

POSC 338 – Spring 2018  
(T & Th 10:10 - 11:55 am)  
Weitz 136

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**Office Hours:** Mon. 1 - 3pm & Fri. 10am - Noon and by appt.

## Course Description

Inequality has risen in many countries around the globe and is becoming an increasingly divisive political issue. Motivated in large measure by concerns of economic inequality, movements such as Occupy Wall Street, and the protests of the Arab Spring have tested governments around the world. Debates over inequality and the appropriate role for the government in mitigating inequality through the redistribution of income have proven to be among the most contentious in democratic politics. In this course, we will examine in detail how economic inequality shapes politics around the world.

Over the course of the term, we will explore the interactions between economic inequality and politics in two general ways. First, we will explore the different sources of inequality, as well as policy recommendations to combat inequality. Second, we will examine how economic inequality affects the political process, especially in the quality of democratic institutions. Can the democratic ideal of political equality survive in a context of increasing economic inequality?

## Course Requirements and Expectations

Classroom discussion and participation will be a critical component of our classes. To facilitate insightful and interesting discussions, you are required to complete the assigned readings *before* each class and contribute to class discussions. Generally the reading load will be around 150 to 200 pages per week. In addition to the readings which will be made available electronically on Moodle and Dropbox, there are two required texts for purchase: Anthony Atkinson's book *Inequality: What can be done?*, and Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage's *Taxing the Rich*. I also encourage you to pay attention to current events related to the issue of inequality, which we will also discuss in class.

# Grading

Your grade will be based on the following:

Class Participation and Attendance	10%
Covert Ideologue in 4 class sessions	20% (5% Each)
Leading Class Discussions	20% (10% Each)
Course Research Project	50 %
Proposal (Due Apr. 10)	5%
Theory and Research Design Paper (Due Apr. 17)	5%
Analysis Paper (Due Apr. 26)	5%
Draft Paper (for peer review) (May 8)	5%
Peer Review of Draft Papers (May 15)	5%
Class Presentation (May 24 & May 29 in class)	5%
Final Paper (May 22)	20%
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<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Class Preparation, Attendance and Participation - 10%

Attendance and participation is required. You are expected to have completed the readings for the day.

Please come to class with a discussion question or comment based on the readings for the day. This can be a request for clarification on something that didn't make sense, a criticism, or some other thoughts that you think would be interesting to discuss. We will take a minute at the start of class to go over some of these comments as a class and discuss them. I will begin by asking for volunteers with questions/comments for the day, and will keep track when you have contributed at the start of class. You will be expected to contribute a question/comment at least 4 times over the term. You should NOT ask a question/comment at the start of class when you are leading that class discussion. Half of this grade (5%) will come the questions/comments at the start of class, and half (5%) will come from your general participation and attendance in class.

## Covert Ideologue - 20%

In four class sessions (beginning on Apr. 3), you will be assigned an ideological identity which will be kept secret from all of your peers. I will assign these identities randomly – you will only know your own identity and none of your peers. In the course of the class session, you will put forth points supporting your assigned ideological view point (even if they may be at odds with your personal perspectives). Ideally you should do so without revealing that you have been assigned an identity, although it may be that people figure you out.

Prior to a class where you have an assigned identity, you should email me a short memo (email is fine – you don't need to write a document) with some bullet point arguments you

intend to make in class. Your email memo is due at 11:59pm on the day PRIOR to the class (ie. if you have the class on May 10, please email me by 11:59pm on May 9). Email memo and class performance each will count for half of this grade.

If you have concerns about your identity or want to talk over some of your strategies prior to the start of class, please meet with me in advance of class.

### **Leading Two Class Discussions - 20%**

With one or two other students, you will coordinate and lead discussion of two class topics for the classes beginning on April 5. Please refer to the separate handout for guidelines on the class discussions. Each session that you lead will contribute 10% to this grade.

### **Original Research Paper - 50%**

Over the course of the semester, you will work on an original research paper in which you discuss and examine some topic relating politics with economic inequality. The final paper will be between 15 and 20 double spaced pages (not including references).

#### **Research Proposal - 5%**

Prepare a research question that is of interest to you and formulate a hypothesis that can potentially answer the question. Your proposal will be 2 or 3 double spaced pages, and will outline what your proposed research is, and how you intend to carry it out.

#### **Theory and Research Design Paper - 5%**

In this paper of around 4 to 6 pages, you will explore the literature around your research topic, and outline your plans to answer your research questions.

#### **Analysis Paper - 5%**

The analysis paper will be a sketch of the empirical findings of your independent research. This will become the results section of your final paper.

#### **Rough Draft for Peer Review - 5%**

Prepare a rough draft that matches the basic guidelines of the final paper. This will be graded on a pass/fail basis, and there will be NO EXCEPTIONS for late rough drafts.

### **Peer Review of Rough Drafts- 5%**

Prepare a one or two page memo review of the rough draft for one of your peers, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of their paper project, as well as suggestions on how to improve it.

### **Class Presentation- 5%**

In one of the final classes, you will present your research project to your peers.

### **Final Paper- 20%**

The final paper should be a polished, finished project - perhaps something that you would feel comfortable submitting to an undergraduate research journal.

## **Course Policies**

### **Grading Policies**

I will assign grades using the following scale : A (93.33), A- (90), B+ (86.67), B (83.33), B- (80), C+ (76.67), C (73.33), C- (70), D+ (66.67), D(63.33) D- (60) F (Below 60). I do not round your final grade up or down (so if you receive a 93.327, you will receive an A- for a final grade).

Here are several important details regarding my policy on course grades

1. I will not receive grade complaints if more than two weeks have passed after the assignment has been returned. Before I review your grade you must first:
  - Wait 24 hours.
  - Schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your grade.
  - Submit a formal appeal in writing (email is sufficient—but be clear that it is the appeal in the subject heading) that clearly identifies content in the assignment and the reasons why you think your grade should be changed. These appeals should refer to specific things in the assignment, and not to vague reasons like “I worked really hard.”

The second grade, whether higher or lower, will become your grade on the assignment.

2. Late assignments are not tolerated. Your grade will be lowered 5 points for each day it is late (the exception is for the reading questions/comments, which will not be accepted if late). That is if the assignment is due on Wednesday and you complete it on Thursday, the highest grade you can make is 95. If you complete it on Friday, the highest grade possible will be a 90. And so forth.

3. The **ONLY** acceptable (not penalized) excuses for not completing an assignment on time are family emergencies or illnesses. However, in these cases, I will arrange to give you extra time **ONLY** if you communicate with me **BEFORE** the assignment is due and you provide **DOCUMENTATION** of the circumstance.

## **Electronics in Class Policy**

You are welcome to bring digital equipment (laptop, ebook reader, etc.) to class. However, I expect you to be responsible in your use of electronic equipment: please avoid visiting social networking sites, or otherwise browsing the internet on sites unrelated to the course. I would also recommend you read through the discussion (including comments), *Computers in the Classroom*, to think about the possible pros and cons of using computers in a classroom setting. Individuals who abuse this privilege will be asked to turn off their computer. Please turn off all cell phones during class. If I notice that the use of an electronic device is distracting you in class, your participation grade will suffer.

## **Academic Honesty**

You are expected to abide by fundamental standards of academic honesty. A discussion of plagiarism can be found at: <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/>. All work is expected to be your own. Cheating, plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without properly citing them), and all forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be strictly handled according to university policy. If you are uncertain, cite your sources!

## **Disability-Related Accommodations**

It is the policy of Carleton College to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible (during the 1st week of the semester), so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at <http://apps.carleton.edu/disabilityservices/>.

## **Course Schedule**

Readings should be completed prior to class. I reserve the right to make changes to the course schedule. I will alert you to any changes made in class, via email, and I will post the updated syllabus on Moodle.

## **PART I: Introduction, Concepts and Measurement**

### **Mar. 27: Introduction**

- Introduction to the Course

### **Mar. 29: Measuring Inequality**

- Atkinson, Chapter 1, pgs. 9-44.

### **Apr. 3: Trends in Inequality – Within Countries**

- Atkinson, Chapter 2, pgs. 45-82.
- Andrea Brandolini and Timothy Smeeding. Inequality patterns in Western democracies: Cross-country differences and changes over time. In Pablo Beramendi and Christopher, editors, *Democracy, Inequality, and Representation: A Comparative Perspective*, pages 25–62. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 2008

## **PART II: Economics of Inequality**

### **Apr. 5: Technological Change, Employment and Pay**

- Atkinson, Chapters 3-5, pgs. 82-154.

### **Apr. 10: Capital Accumulation**

- Lawrence Summers. The inequality puzzle. *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, 33:65–73, 2014
- Atkinson, Chapters 6, pgs. 155-178.

### **Apr. 12: The Welfare State**

- Atkinson, Chapters 7-8, pgs. 179-236.

### **Apr. 17: Can it be done?**

- Atkinson Chapters 9-11, pgs. 243-299.

### **Apr. 19: Varieties of Capitalism**

- Peter A. Hall and David Soskice. An introduction to varieties of capitalism. In Peter A. Hall and David Soskice, editors, *Varieties of Capitalism: The institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*, pages 1–68. Oxford University Press, 2001

## **Part III: Inequality and Politics**

### **Apr. 24: Redistribution and Democratic Processes**

- Scheve/Stasavage, Part 1 (Chapters 1 and 2, pgs. 3-49).

### **Apr. 26: Income and Representation**

Martin Gilens. *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*. Princeton University Press, 2012, Chapters 3-4, pgs. 70-123.

### **May 1: Views on Inequality: Identity and Relative Deprivation**

- A. Alesina and E.L. Glaeser. *Fighting poverty in the US and Europe: A world of difference*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2004: Chapter 6, pgs. 133–182.
- Brian D Cramer and Robert R Kaufman. Views of economic inequality in Latin America. *Comparative Political Studies*, pages 1206–1237, 2010

### **May 3: Progressive Taxation**

- Scheve and Stasavage, Part 2 (Chapters 3-5, pgs. 53-132)

### **May 8: Progressive Taxation continued**

- Scheve and Stasavage, Part 3 (Chapters 6-9, pgs. 135-218)

### **May 10: Turnout**

- Christopher J. Anderson and Pablo Beramendi. Income, inequality, and electoral participation. In Christopher J. Anderson and Pablo Beramendi, editors, *Democracy, Inequality, and Representation: A Comparative Perspective*, pages 278–311. Russell Sage Foundation, 2008
- Michael Bratton. Poor people and democratic citizenship in Africa. In Anirudh Krishna, editor, *Poverty, Participation, and Democracy: A Global Perspective*, pages 28–64. Cambridge University Press, 2008

### **May 15: Politics and Redistribution in Developing Countries**

- Nicolas Van de Walle. The institutional origins of inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12:307–327, 2009
- David Doyle. Remittances and social spending. *American Political Science Review*, 109(4):785–802, 2015

**May 17: Transitions to Democracy**

- Ben Ansell and David Samuels. Inequality and democratization: A contractarian approach. *Comparative Political Studies*, 43(12):1543–1574, 2010
- Robert R. Kaufman. The political effects of inequality in Latin America: Some inconvenient facts. *Comparative Politics*, 41(3):359–379, 2009

**May 22: Political Polarization**

- Nolan M. McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. *Polarized America: The dance of ideology and unequal riches*. MIT Press, 2006, Chapters 1 & 2, pgs. 1–70. (Available as a library E-book).

**May 24: Student Presentations**

**May 29: Student Presentations**