

The Politics of Inequality

Honors College Seminar
50:525:119/153:01
Spring 2018
11:10am – 12:30pm Tuesday/Thursday
Rm. CS-202
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3pm and by appointment
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Course Overview

Did growing inequality in America lead to Trump's 2016 presidential victory? Will growing inequality in China eventually lead to political revolution? Questions about the impact of inequality on politics become increasingly important as the distance between the haves and have-nots multiplies. But, what do we mean by inequality, how do we measure it, and what are the actual empirical trends in income inequality across the globe? In this course we tackle these questions, carefully examining the causes of inequality in the modern world and the political consequences of current trends. Though we will cover the United States in some depth, we will also seek to understand the global and local implications of inequality for politics around the world. We will explore race, gender, globalization, and educational opportunities as chief variables in the persistence of inequality, but we will also ask about who stands to win and lose from the status quo. Perhaps most importantly, if we can agree that the consequences of inequality are critical to the future of democracy and human development, we will think about how we as a global society can move forward to promote greater equality and more just political outcomes. Though we may not be able to answer all of these big questions, the course presents a survey of literature on the politics of inequality to induce critical thought and reflection on the path forward.

There are no required books to purchase for this course. All readings will be available through Sakai under the "Resources" tab or linked through the syllabus.

Course Policies

Disabilities: Please advise me as soon as possible of any disability that may affect your performance in this course. I will make all necessary accommodations so that your learning, writing, and testing needs may be appropriately met. You are required by the University to provide documentation of the disability to the Student Life Office, Rutgers Learning Center, or Graduate School Dean.

Late Papers: Late papers will be marked down one grade for every day they are tardy. Extensions will be granted only in extreme cases.

Academic Integrity: All students of Rutgers-Camden are required to adhere to the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Violations of the Policy include cheating, fabrication,

plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity. Should you have any questions regarding behavior that may be defined as a violation of the University's Policy, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me. Please see the following link for further information:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to describe and identify current trends in inequality worldwide.
2. Students will be able to identify key challenges to democracy stemming from growing inequality.
3. Students will be able to assess key debates in politics across the world.
4. Students will write reflection papers to demonstrate comprehension and critical thinking.
5. Students will participate in a local community engagement project or attend public government meetings to understand how inequality effects politics.

Assignments:

Requirement	Due date	Percentage of Final Grade
Participation in class discussions	On-going	20%
Paper 1 – personal reflection	January 30	10%
Paper 2 – current event	February 27	10%
Paper 3 – course reading	April 17	10%
Local Politics Presentation	April 3, 5 or 11	15%
Midterm Exam	March 6	15%
Final Exam	May 8	20%

Participation

Participation grades will be based on involvement in class discussions. Please note that there is not a written attendance policy for this course. Clearly you cannot participate in class, however, if you are not present. Your participation grade depends on your preparation for the class and the quality of your contribution to discussions. The following provides general guidelines for my expectations for each grade range:

A's = speaks often in class, asks thoughtful questions, clearly engaged, always prepared

B's = occasionally contributes to class discussion, not clear that the student has done all of the readings, may appear attentive in class

C's = only participates in class discussions a few times during the semester, does not appear to be prepared, does not exhibit interest in the material

D's = rarely attends class, seems not to be prepared or engaged in the material, does not ask questions or provide comments

F's = never attends class

Reflection papers

Each student will complete 3 reflection papers. These papers should be about 2-3 pages, double-spaced, on the following topics:

Paper 1 – Personal Reflection: Discuss how you have experienced inequality in your own life. How has this shaped your political opinions and participation?

Paper 2 – Current Events: Provide a summary of one or more article/podcast/news report etc. regarding inequality and politics. In what ways do you agree or disagree with the piece? What questions do you still have?

Paper 3 – Course Reading: Respond to one assigned reading. Summarize the piece and provide a critique of the article's strengths and weaknesses.

Exams

This course will have both a midterm and final exam. Both exams will consist of take-home essay questions that will be submitted through Sakai. Further information will be provided in class.

Local Politics Assignment

Students are required to participate in one community service project or government meeting (in person or virtually), as listed below, for which they will present a summary and impressions of the experience to the class.

1. Better Together – the Office of Civic Engagement at Rutgers-Camden has received a grant to work with two neighborhoods in Camden to undertake a participatory budgeting exercise in which local residents will decide how funding will be used in their communities. The kick-off for the event is January 15th, the MLK Day of Service, but further events will be held throughout the winter/spring. Dates and details will be provided in class.

2. Attending a Camden County Town Hall Meeting

3. Attending a Camden City Council Meeting (2nd Tuesdays of the month, 5pm)

4. Analysis of U.S. congressional hearings, available online (January – April 2018)

5. Another project or meeting of the student's choice per approval by the professor.

Schedule

Week 1: Defining Inequality and Global Trends

Tuesday, January 16 – overview of the course

Thursday, January 18 – Trends

inequality - Brookings (2014) Not All Cities are Created Unequal

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/all-cities-are-not-created-unequal/>

Subnational inequality - Economic Policy Institute, ["The Increasingly Unequal States of America"](#)

Cassidy, John (2014). ["Piketty's Inequality Story in Six Charts."](#) The New Yorker
March 26, 2014

Branko Milanovic – [Why Should We Care about Inequality?](#)

Week 2: What are the causes of inequality in the US?

Tuesday, January 23: in Class, watch Chomsky "Requiem for the American Dream"

Urban Institute (2017) [Nine Charts](#)

Cato Institute report (2016): [Five Myths of Inequality in America](#)

The Equality of Opportunity Project, [Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility](#)

Joseph Stiglitz, [Of the 1%, By the 1%, For the 1%](#)

Bonica, Adam (2016). ["Avenues of Influence: On the Political Expenditures of Corporations and Their Directors and Executives."](#)

Thursday, January 25: Why hasn't democracy saved the US from rising inequality?

Bonica, Adam, Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal (2013). "Why Hasn't Democracy Slowed Rising Inequality?" Journal of Economic Perspectives 27(3):103-24. (SAKAI)

Salon, [The Death of Working-Class Politics](#)

Week 3: The Causes of Inequality: Global

Tuesday, January 30 – 1st Paper DUE to Sakai by 5pm

In class - Watch "[Talking Global Inequality](#)" with Paul Krugman, Branko Milanovic and Janet Gornick

Martin Ravallion, Inequality and Globalization: A Review Essay (SAKAI)

Thursday, February 1

Knight, John, The World Bank Research Observer, [Inequality in China: An Overview](#)

Nancy Bidsall, Center for Global Development, "[Middle Class: Winners or Losers in a Globalized World?](#)"

Week 4: The political effects of inequality

Tuesday, February 6 - US

In Class, watch [Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page on The Daily Show](#)

Schlozman et al. "Inequalities of Political Voice" (SAKAI)

Politico, [Inequality at the Polls](#)

Thursday, February 8 – Political effects of inequality in developing countries

Max Fisher and Amanda Taub, NY Times, "[The Social Contract is Broken: Inequality Becomes Deadly in Mexico](#)"

Ulfelder, [It's Harder Than It Looks to Link Inequality with Global Turmoil](#)

Hutchison and Xu. Trust in China? The impact of development, inequality, and openness on political trust across China's provinces, 2001–2012. (SAKAI)

Week 5: Elections – to what extent does inequality explain the results of the 2016 US elections?

Tuesday, February 13

Emily Ekins, "[The Five Types of Trump Voters](#)" or listen to this [interview with the author](#)

Hochschild, Arlie Russell, "[I Spent 5 Years with Some of Trump's Biggest Fans: Here's What They Won't Tell You.](#)"

Thursday, February 15: In Class, watch "Waking the Sleeping Giant" film

Ta-Nehisi Coates (2017) [The First White President](#)

Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, "Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse" (SAKAI – note that the article begins on pg. 16 of the PDF)

Week 6: Elections – to what extent does inequality explain recent democratic trends in Latin America?

Tuesday, February 20

Robert Kaufman, book review, "The Political Effects of Inequality in Latin America" (SAKAI)

Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, "Cross-Currents in Latin America" (SAKAI)

Thursday, February 22

Daniel Zovatto, [Latin America's Super-Election Cycle is Wide Open](#)

Week 7: Protest – Occupy Wall Street

Tuesday, February 27 – Paper #2 Due to Sakai by 5pm

Nathan Schneider, ["From Occupy Wall Street to Occupy Everywhere"](#)

Jenny Pickerill and John Krinsky, "Why Does Occupy Matter?" (SAKAI)

Thursday, March 1

Anonymous, "Occupy—The End of the Affair" (SAKAI)

Michael Levitin, ["The Triumph of Occupy Wall Street"](#)

Interview with Micah White, ["Stop Protesting. Run for Office"](#)

Week 8: Protest – the Arab Spring

Tuesday, March 6 – MIDTERM at home

Thursday, March 8

Zina Nimeh, ["Economic growth and inequality in the Middle East: an Explanation for the Arab Spring?"](#)

Tarek Masoud, Has the Door Closed on Arab Democracy? (SAKAI)

Spring Break: March 10-18

Week 9: Provision of Benefits and Services: US

Tuesday, March 20 – the politics of unequal distribution of goods

Jessica Trounstein, “Segregation and Inequality in Public Goods.” (SAKAI)

Listen to: This American Life, [“The Problem We All Live With – Parts 1 and 2”](#)

Thursday, March 22 – the political effect of receiving public benefits

Sarah K. Bruch, Myra Marx Ferree, and Joe Soss, “From Policy to Polity: Democracy, Paternalism, and the Incorporation of Disadvantaged Citizens” (SAKAI)

Week 10: Provision of Benefits and Services: Developing nations

Tuesday, March 27 – clientelism

Adam Auerbach, “Clients and Communities: The Political Economy of Party Network Organization and Development in India’s Urban Slums,” (SAKAI)

Thursday, March 29 – the political effect of receiving benefits

Layton, Donaghy, and Renno, “Does Welfare Provision Promote Democratic State Legitimacy? Evidence from Brazil’s Bolsa Familia Program” (SAKAI)

Week 11: Solutions - Local level participation

Tuesday, April 3 – Student presentations

Thursday, April 5 – No class

Week 12: Solutions – developing inclusive institutions

Tuesday, April 10 – politics and inclusion – Student Presentations

Menocal (2017) Political Settlements and the Politics of Transformation: Where Do ‘Inclusive Institutions’ Come From? (SAKAI)

Thursday, April 12 – participatory institutions – Student Presentations

Brian Wampler, “When Does Participatory Democracy Deepen the Quality of Democracy: Lessons from Brazil” (SAKAI)

Selected chapter, TBD, Kromer, *Fixing Broken Cities*

Watch: [Intro to Participatory budgeting in NYC](#)

Week 13: Solutions Continued

Tuesday, April 17: Campaign finance laws in the US – Paper #3 Due

Heritage Foundation, [“Amending the First Amendment: How the Campaign Finance Amendment Will Silence Free Speech”](#)

Brian Schaffner and Ray LaRaja, [“Want to reform campaign finance and reduce corruption? Here’s how.”](#)

Thursday, April 19: The Power of Social Media

Shelly Ghai Bajaj, “The Use of Twitter during the 2014 Indian General Elections” (SAKAI)

Lance Bennett, “The Personalization of Politics: Political Identity, Social Media, and Changing Patterns of Participation” (SAKAI)

Week 14: Solutions Continued

Tuesday, April 24 – Compulsory Voting

Waleed Aly, [“Voting Should be Mandatory”](#)

[“Beyond Turnout: The Consequences of Compulsory Voting”](#)

Thursday, April 26 - Review

Final Exam – take home essay due to Sakai on May 8th by 3pm