

POLS 6317 Inequality and Redistribution

Mondays 9:00AM-Noon

University of Houston

Department of Political Science

Room PGH 310

Spring 2024

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. This seminar also offers a venue for professionalization. Throughout the semester, students will learn about the

process of developing academic research, presenting research at academic conferences, and the peer review publication process.

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 summarize 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. Cavaille Charlotte. 2023. *Fair Enough? Support for Redistribution in the Age of Inequality*. Cambridge University Press.
9. 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 before each class meeting.
3. Weekly Research Abstract. Each student must submit a one-page research abstract based on each week's readings. Research abstracts are due by **Saturday at noon on Canvas** before 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 before the Monday class 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 include a data analysis section 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 obtain feedback on each section. All the following writing assignments are due **at noon on Canvas**.
 - February 14: Section 1, Introduction due.
 - March 13: Section 2, Literature and Theory due.
 - April 17: Section 3, Research design and preliminary data analysis due.
 - May 7: Final paper due.
5. Poster Presentation. Each student is required to develop a poster presentation based on the research paper. 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. The poster session is tentatively scheduled on Thursday, May 2. More scheduling details will be announced later in the semester.

Grading

1. Participation, 10%
2. Weekly research abstract, 20%.
3. Term paper, 60%
 - Section 1 Introduction: 10%
 - Section 2 Literature and Theory: 10%
 - Section 3 Research design and preliminary analysis: 15%
 - Full draft: 25%
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)

Mental Health and Wellness Resources

The University of Houston has a number of resources to support students' mental health and overall wellness, including CoogsCARE and the UH Go App. UH Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers 24/7 mental health support for all students, addressing various concerns like stress, college adjustment and sadness. CAPS provides individual and couples counseling, group therapy, workshops and connections to other support services on and off-campus. For assistance visit uh.edu/caps, call 713-743-5454, or visit a Let's Talk location in-person or virtually. Let's Talk are daily, informal confidential consultations with CAPS therapists where no appointment or paperwork is needed. The Student Health Center offers a Psychiatry Clinic for enrolled UH students. Call 713-743-5149 during clinic hours, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. to schedule an appointment. The A.D. Bruce Religion Center offers spiritual support and a variety of programs centered on well-being.

Need Support Now? If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call CAPS crisis support 24/7 at 713-743-5454, or the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988, or chat 988lifeline.org.

Academic Honesty Policy

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. High ethical standards are critical to the integrity of any institution and bear directly on the ultimate value of conferred degrees. All UH community members are expected to contribute to an atmosphere of the highest possible ethical standards. Maintaining such an atmosphere requires that any instances of academic dishonesty be recognized and addressed. The UH Academic Honesty Policy is designed to handle those instances with fairness to all parties involved: the students, the instructors, and the University itself. All students and faculty of the University of Houston are responsible for being familiar with this policy. 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.

Title IX/Sexual Misconduct

Per the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and state law and must report incidents of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, intimate partner violence, or stalking) about which they become aware to the Title IX office. Please know there are places on campus where you can make a report in confidence. You can find more information about resources on the Title IX website at <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/title-ix-sexual-misconduct/resources/>.

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 a 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 allowed 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.

Reasonable Academic Adjustments and Auxiliary Aids

The University of Houston is committed to providing an academic environment and educational programs that are accessible for its students. Any student with a disability who is experiencing barriers to learning, assessment, or participation is encouraged to contact the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center (Dart Center) to learn more about academic accommodations and support that may be available to them. Students seeking academic accommodations will need to register with the Dart Center as soon as possible to ensure the timely implementation of approved accommodations. Please contact the Dart Center by visiting the website: <https://uh.edu/accessibility/> calling (713) 743-5400, or emailing jdcenter@Central.UH.EDU.

Recording of Class

Students may not record all or part of the class, livestream all or part of the class, or make/distribute screen captures, without the 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 Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center. 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 the instructor’s recordings for their own studying and notetaking. 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.

UH Email

Please check and use your Cougarnet email for communications related to this course. Faculty use the Cougarnet email to respond to course-related inquiries such as grade queries or progress reports for reasons of FERPA. To access your Cougarnet email, login to your Microsoft 365 account with your Cougarnet credentials. Visit University Information Technology (UIT) for instructions on how to connect your Cougarnet e-mail on a mobile device.

Syllabus Changes

The following weekly class calendar may be subject to modifications. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through email.

Late Assignment Submission

Late work will be penalized by one letter grade for each day after the deadline. For example, an A-paper turned in one day late will become a B-paper. Late work will only be accepted without a grade penalty if the student has university-accepted excuses.

Course Calendar

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

Week 1 (January 22) Course overview, no readings.

- Review and discuss the syllabus.
- Research Workshop: Journals and Conferences in Political Science and Public Policy

Week 2 (January 29) 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

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

Week 3 (February 5): Measuring Inequality

Data on Income 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.

Data on Gender-Based Income Inequality

- 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.

Comparative Data on Gender Egalitarianism

- Woo, Byung-Deuk, Lindsey A. Goldberg, and Frederick Solt. 2023. "Public Gender Egalitarianism: A Dataset of Dynamic Comparative Public Opinion toward Egalitarian Gender Roles in the Public Sphere. *British Journal of Political Science*, 53(2):766-775.
- Exploring datasets: WID, SWIID, and PGE.
- Research Workshop: Elements of a Literature Review

Week 4 (February 12): Measuring Redistribution and Welfare Generosity

- Bergh, Andreas. 2005. "On the Counterfactual Problem of Welfare State Research: How Can We Measure Redistribution." *European Sociological Review*, 21(4): 345-357.
- 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.
- Scruggs, Lyle. 2013. "Measuring and Validating Social Program Replacement Rates. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 20 (9): 1267-1284.
- Otto, Adeline, Alzbeta Bartova, and Wim Van Lancker. 2021. "Measuring the Generosity of Parental Leave Policies." *Social Inclusion*, 9(2).

Week 5 (February 19): 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:
 - Discussing research paper drafts: Introduction section.
 - Develop a Valid and Viable Research Design

Week 6 (February 26): Political Institution, Inequality, and Redistribution: Cross-Country Comparison

- 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.
- 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.
- Scheve, Kenneth and David Stasavage. 2009. “Institutions, Partisanship, and Inequality in the Long Run.” *World Politics*, 61(2):215-253.
- 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 4): 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 11): Spring Break.

Week 9 (March 18): 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 REP 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.

The Norms Approach

- Cavaille (2023), Chapters 1-3.

Research Workshop: Discussing research paper drafts: Theory Section

Other 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 Preference.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 54(4): 855-870.

PART III. Contemporary Issues in Inequality and Welfare Politics Research

Week 10 (March 25): 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 1): 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 8): 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 15): 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.
- 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 22): 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.
- 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.
- Hopkins, Daniel J., and Kalind Parish. 2019. “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. 2022. “The Pathways of Policy Feedback: How Health Reform Influences Political Efficacy and Participation.” *Policy Studies Journal*, 50(3): 483-506.
- Mettler, Suzanne, Laurence Jacobs, and Ling Zhu. 2023. “Policy Threat, Partisanship, and the Case of the Affordable Care Act.” *American Political Science Review*, 117(1): 2956-310.

PART IV: Wrap-Up and Research Presentation

Week 15 (April 29): Last class, workshop student research papers.

May 2: Department of Political Science graduate student poster session

Final paper due on May 7 by noon on Canvas.