Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the academic literature and debates on the relationship between domestic politics, income redistribution by the state, and economic inequality, both in advanced industrial countries and in the developing world. Throughout the course, we will focus on the following themes: a) political institutions and poverty, b) partisanship, political beliefs and redistribution, c) political factors affecting long-run evolution of income inequality, d) clientelism and social welfare policy, e) the relation between ethnic divisions and public goods provision, and f) the effects of income inequality on political outcomes.

Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites. No math knowledge beyond a high school level math is assumed. Simple game theory and statistics will be introduced if necessary during the lectures to help students better understand the reading material. Students are not required to understand the mathematical aspects of the papers, but they are required to know and understand the logic of the arguments and to be able to explain and discuss it in words.

Grading Policy and Requirements

Grades will be based on participation (30%), in-class midterm (30%), and an in-class final exam (40%).

Participation - 30%

Students are required to attend all class meetings. Missing more than 2 meetings without a doctor’s note will result in a lower participation grade. Students are required to notify the instructor by e-mail if they intend to miss a class, and to provide a formal note from a doctor covering the days on which the student was absent. Students are expected to read the required material before coming to class, and be prepared to discuss it.

Midterm - 30%

There will be an in-class midterm on March 7 that will cover all the material from the beginning of the semester through March 5. The midterm questions will be either multiple choice or will require short answers.
Final Exam - 40%
The final exam will follow the same format as the midterm.

There will be no make-up exams, unless a student cannot attend the exam on the original date due to a medical or a family emergency. A doctor’s note covering the original exam date will be required to schedule a make-up exam.

Cheating and Plagiarism
Cheating and plagiarism during the midterm and the final exam will not be tolerated. For definitions of cheating, plagiarism, and the severe consequences of such behavior please review the Washington University policy online at

http://wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html

SCHEDULE
Week 1: January 18 - Introduction and course logistics

PART I

Week 2a: January 23 - Arguments For and Against Inequality
  • Documentary: Free to Choose. Episode 5: Created Equal.

Week 2b: January 25 - Overview of Topics

Week 3a: January 30 - Income Inequality in the Long-Run

Week 3b: February 1 - Evolution of the Welfare State in Historical Perspective
PART II

Week 4a: February 6 - US: The New Gilded Age I


Week 4b: February 8 - US: The New Gilded Age II


Week 5a: February 13 - Comparing US to Europe I


Week 5b: February 15 - Comparing US to Europe II


Week 6a: February 20 - India and China


Week 6b: February 22 - Developing Countries: Effect of Democracy


Week 7a: February 27 - Developing Countries: Clientelism


PART III

Week 7b: February 29 - Inequality and Redistribution


Week 8a: March 5 - Beliefs and Redistribution I


Week 8b: March 7

• In-class midterm.

Week 9: March 12 & March 14 - Spring break

• No class.

Week 10a: March 19 - Beliefs and Redistribution II


Week 10b: March 21 - Religion


Week 11a: March 26 - Race and Ethnicity


Week 11b: March 28 - Race and Ethnicity II


PART IV

Week 12a: April 2 - Inequality and Polarization


Week 12b: April 4 - Inequality and Polarization II


Week 13a: April 9 - Inequality and Institutions


Week 13b: April 11 - Inequality and Institutions II


Week 14a: April 16 - Inequality and Violence I


Week 14b: April 18 - Inequality and Violence II


Week 15: April 23 & April 25 - Wrap-up: What did we learn?