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 (20%), in-class midterm (30%), and an in-class final exam (50%).

Participation - 20%

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 October 18th that will cover all the material from the beginning of the semester through October 16th. The midterm questions will be either multiple choice or will require short answers.
Final Exam - 50%
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 1a: August 28 - Introduction and course logistics

Week 1b: August 30 - No classes
  • Due to American Political Science Association (APSA) Conference in New Orleans.

PART I

Week 2a: September 4 - Arguments For and Against Inequality
  • Documentary: Free to Choose. Episode 5: Created Equal.

Week 2b: September 6 - Overview of Topics

Week 3a: September 11 - Income Inequality in the Long-Run
Week 3b: September 13 - Evolution of the Welfare State in Historical Perspective


PART II

Week 4a: September 18 - US: The New Gilded Age I


Week 4b: September 20 - US: The New Gilded Age II


Week 5a: September 25 - Comparing US to Europe I


Week 5b: September 27 - Comparing US to Europe II


Week 6a: - October 2 - India and China


Week 6b: October 4 - Developing Countries: Effect of Democracy


Week 7a: October 9 - Developing Countries: Clientelism


PART III

Week 7b: October 11 - Inequality and Redistribution


Week 8a: October 16 - Government Partisanship, Organized Interests, and Redistribution


Week 8b: October 18

- In-class midterm.

Week 9a: October 23 - Beliefs and Redistribution I


Week 9b: October 25 - Beliefs and Redistribution II

Week 10a: October 30 - Religion


Week 10b: November 1 - Race and Ethnicity I


Week 11a: November 6 - Race and Ethnicity II


PART IV

Week 11b: November 8 - Inequality and Polarization I


Week 12a: November 13 - Inequality and Polarization II


Week 12b: November 15 - Inequality and Institutions I


Week 13a: November 20 - Inequality and Institutions II


### Week 13b: November 22 - Thanksgiving break

• No class.

### Week 14a: November 27 - Inequality and Violence I


### Week 14b: November 29 - Inequality and Violence II


### Week 15: December 4 & December 6 - Wrap-up: What did we learn?