

PSCI 3211: The Politics of Economic Inequality in the United States
MWF 10-10:50 MUEN E432

Instructor Dr. Janet Donovan
Office Ketchum 219
Office hours Mon. 11:30-1:30
janet.donavan@colorado.edu

TA: Owen Fite
Office hours Tuesday 10am-noon, Ketchum 234
owen.fite@colorado.edu

This syllabus is subject to amendment. Students will be notified if amendments are made.

Course description: In this class, we will examine the politics of economic inequality from a variety of angles and perspectives. First, we will read and discuss ideas about whether and when economic inequality is something of concern in a representative democracy. Second, we will seek to understand the level of economic inequality in the United States. We explore disparities in economic well-being by race, ethnicity and gender; issues of intergenerational poverty and economic mobility; and how public policies contribute to and/or alleviate economic inequality. Third, we examine the relationship between economic inequality and political inequality, looking at how economic disparities affect campaigns and elections, national governance, and the public policies that are adopted by the national government. Finally, we spend some time looking at economic and political inequality in the current context, with events that are happening or have happened recently.

We explore these issues through course readings, lectures, class discussions, online activities, and take-home essay exams. The readings in this class are broad in their scope and often complex. It is very important for students to both complete the readings on time and to come to class and participate.

Course objectives:

- 1) Examine whether and when economic inequality is a problem in U.S. democracy.
- 2) Learn about the extent of economic inequality, and disparities in economic status by race, ethnicity, gender, and social class.
- 3) Explore how public policies can either exacerbate or alleviate economic inequality.
- 4) Evaluate whether and how economic inequality translates into political inequality in the U.S. system.
- 5) Evaluate critically the information presented in class through discussions, class activities and papers.

Grading:

Take home exam 1:	25 points
Take home exam 2:	25 points
Final take home exam:	25 points
Attend & Participate:	15 points
<u>Class Activities:</u>	<u>10 Points</u>
Total	100 points

Scale:

93-100	A
90-92	A-
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B-
78-79	C+
73-77	C
70-72	C-
63-69	D
60-62	D-
< 59	F

Required Texts:

- Dahl, Robert A. 2001. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Duncan, Cynthia M. 2015. *Worlds Apart: Poverty and Politics in Rural America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gilens, Martin. *Affluence and influence: Economic inequality and political power in America*. Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Iverson, Torben and Frances Rosenbluth. (2011). "Women, Work and Politics: The Political Economy of Gender Inequality." New Haven: Yale.
- Jacobs, Lawrence R., Skocpol, Theda. (2005). *Inequality in American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn*. Russell Sage Foundation: New York.
- Sen, Amartya. 1992. *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

Electronic readings (in addition to required texts) on Canvas:

- Hacker, Jacob S. and Pierson, Paul. (2010). "Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States." *Politics & Society* 38(2): 152-204.
- Massey, Douglas S. (1990). "American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass." *American Journal of Sociology* 96(2): 329-357.

Additional readings will be added to Canvas and to the electronic syllabus

Course requirements:

Take home exams: Students are required to write three 6-8 page, double-spaced, take home exams over the course of the semester. Students will be given a question in class and will have several days to write an exam answering that question, using the readings from the course and any additional readings the student would like to bring in. Sources must be properly cited and exams must include a bibliography (not included in the page total). The question assigned for exams 1 and 2 will be given out three days before the day the paper is due, and we will not have a course meeting on the due date. The question assigned on the final paper will be distributed during week 14 of the semester and is due during (or before) the end of our scheduled final exam time. All exams are due on Canvas. Each exam is valued at 25% of the course grade, and each exam is required to be completed to receive a passing grade in the class. Late exams will be penalized at 1 point per day. Extensions will be given only in cases of documented medical or family emergencies, and must be provided in advance if at all possible. More information on the exams will be provided later in the semester.

Activities: We will have several in-class and/or online activities over the course of the semester focused on applying the ideas from the course to current events that are occurring. More specific details will be given on each activity closer to the time they occur. Please see the course schedule for the activity dates. Activities are valued at a total of 10 points. Make-ups on activities will only be granted in cases of documented medical or family emergencies.

Attendance & Participation: This class relies on prepared students engaging in discussions on the material to be successful. Therefore, attendance and participation are valued at 15 points of the total grade, or 1 point per week of the semester. Students may miss two classes without excuse or penalty. Any absences beyond that require documentation and are excused at the discretion of the instructor.

Course policies:

Course communications: Email is the official mode of communication for the University of Colorado at Boulder. Students are required to regularly check their @colorado.edu email (at least every 48 hours)

for updates regarding the course. Students are responsible for receiving any messages sent by the instructor to the class email list, or individually to the student. Students are responsible for ensuring that any email sent by the student to the instructor is received. In addition, students are responsible for checking the Canvas site for the course regularly, and for completing any assignments on Canvas on time.

Contacting the Instructor: Please feel free to contact me with questions about the course. The best ways to reach me are to come by office hours, or to email. You may also call my office phone, but that is a less efficient means of reaching me. I always answer email within 48 hours, so if you do not receive a reply, that means I did not get your email and you should try to contact me again. When addressing me, please address me in person or in email as Janet, Dr. Donovan or Professor Donovan.

Course Etiquette: Students are expected to come to class on time and stay the entire time. If it is necessary to come late or leave early, please let me know in advance. If your schedule does not permit you to be on time and in class on a regular basis, please take another course. Students are expected to be respectful of each other and of the instructor; lively debate is encouraged, but personal attacks are prohibited. These guidelines should be obvious, and they will help to make the course a more enjoyable experience for all. For more information on University requirements regarding classroom behavior please see <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code.

Electronic Devices: Electronic devices may be used in class for class purposes only. Phones must be put away during class. The use of electronic devices for non-class purposes causes serious disruption in class and affects the learning of other students. Students found using electronic devices for non-class purposes may be prohibited from using them in the future. If device use becomes a problem, devices may be prohibited from class. Students are not permitted to record audio or video within the classroom or during office hours for any reason.

SYLLABUS STATEMENTS

ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

HONOR CODE

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND/OR RELATED RETALIATION

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct intimate partner abuse (including dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, students must notify the instructor within the first two weeks of class if a religious observance requires missing a scheduled exam, due date, or activity. To receive an excused absence, please notify the instructor at least one week in advance.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

An accessible, online link to the university policies is available here:

<https://www.colorado.edu/academicaffairs/policies-customs-guidelines/required-syllabus-statements>

Reading schedule (all readings are to be completed before class on the date assigned):

Week 1: August 26-30

Mon: Introduction to the course, syllabus

Section 1: What is inequality? What roles does inequality play in a democracy?

Weds: Brainstorming about inequality activity

Fri: Inequality and democratic theory in comparative perspective, group activity in class

Readings: Sen, chapters 1-4

Week 2: September 2-6

Mon: LABOR DAY, NO CLASS

Weds: Inequality and democratic theory in comparative perspective (cont.)

Readings: Sen, chapter 5-8

Fri: Inequality and democratic theory in comparative perspective (cont.)

Readings: Sen, chapter 9

Week 3: September 9-13

Mon: Inequality and democratic theory: The US Constitution

Readings: Dahl, chapters 1-4; First paper topic distributed

Weds: Inequality and democratic theory: The US Constitution

Readings: Dahl, chapters 5-8

Fri: Activity: Thinking about the role of inequality in American democracy

More information TBA, valued at 2 points

Week 4: September 16-20

Mon: No class meeting, midterm exam one due by 8pm on Canvas

Section 2: How much economic inequality is there in the United States? What roles do governmental policies play in creating and alleviating economic inequality?

Weds: Examining the numbers and brainstorming what we know about economic inequality

Fri: Race and economic inequality

Readings: Massey reading on Canvas, additional readings may be assigned

Week 5: September 23-27

Mon: Race and economic inequality (cont.)

Readings: TBA on Canvas

Weds: Gender and economic inequality

Readings: Iverson & Rosenbluth, chapters 1-2

Fri: Gender and economic inequality (cont.)

Readings: Iverson & Rosenbluth, chapters 3-4

Week 6: September 30-October 4

Mon: Gender & economic inequality (cont.)

Readings: Iverson & Rosenbluth, chapters 5-7

Weds: Intergenerational poverty and public policy

Readings: Duncan, forwards, preface and chapter 1

Fri: Intergenerational poverty and public policy (cont.)

Readings: Duncan, chapter 2

Week 7: October 7-11

Mon: Intergenerational poverty and public policy (cont.)

Readings: Duncan, chapter 3; Second paper topic distributed

Weds: Intergenerational poverty and public policy (cont.)

Readings: Duncan, chapter 4

Fri: Activity: Identifying public policies that contribute to inequality

More information TBA, valued at 2 points

Week 8: October 14-18

Mon: No class meeting, paper two due by 8pm on Canvas

Section 3: What are the relationships between economic and political equality/inequality?

Weds: Inequality and democracy

Readings: Jacobs & Skocpol, chapters 1

Friday: Inequality and democracy (cont.)

Readings: Jacobs & Skocpol, chapter 2

Week 9: October 21-25

Mon: Inequality and democracy (cont.)

Readings: Jacobs & Skocpol, chapter 3

Weds: Inequality and democracy (cont.)

Readings: Jacobs & Skocpol, chapter 4

Fri: Inequality and democracy (cont.)

Readings: Jacobs & Skocpol, chapter 5

Week 10: October 28-November 1

Mon: Inequality and civic participation

Readings: Needs attention

Weds: Wealth and political organization

Readings: Needs attention

Fri: Activity on Canvas: Finding & sharing sources about current issues related to inequality in the US

More information TBA, valued at 2 points

(no class meeting)

Week 11: November 4-8

Mon: in-class activity: Finding & sharing sources about current issues related to inequality in the US

More information TBA, valued at 2 points

Weds: Economic inequality & political power

Readings: Gilens, chapters 1-2

Fri: Economic inequality & political power

Readings: Gilens, chapters 3-4

Week 12: November 11-15

Mon: Economic inequality & political power

Readings: Gilens, chapters 5-6

Weds: Economic inequality & political power

Readings: Gilens, chapters 7-8

Fri: Drawing conclusions: what do we know and what don't we know about inequality?

Week 13: November 18-22Section 4: How are political and economic inequality important in politics today? What policy solutions should be considered?

Mon: In class activity: What questions do we still have about political & economic inequality?

More information TBA, valued at 2 points

Weds: Current issues with inequality

Readings TBA

Fri: Current issues with inequality

Readings TBA

Fall break and Thanksgiving, no class meetings 11/25-11/29

Week 14: December 2-6

Mon: Examining policy solutions

Readings TBA

Weds: Examining policy solutions

Readings TBA

Fri: Examining policy solutions

Readings TBA; Final paper topic distributed

Week 15: December 10-12

Mon 12/11: Drawing conclusions and the future of inequality in the US

Readings TBA

Weds 12/13: Course conclusions

Fri: No class, reading day

Final exam due by 7pm on Sunday, December 15 by 10pm on Canvas