

PSCI 3211: The Politics of Economic Inequality in the United States

MWF 11-11:50 KTCH 1B71

Instructor Dr. Janet Donovan

Office Ketchum 219

Office hours Mon & Weds 12-1

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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, 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:

Paper 1:	25 points
Paper 2:	25 points
Final Paper:	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.
- Jacobs, Lawrence R., Skocpol, Theda. (2005). *Inequality in American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn*. Russell Sage Foundation: New York.
- Martin Gilens. *Affluence and influence: Economic inequality and political power in America*. Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Sen, Amartya. 1992. *Inequality Reexamined* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

Electronic readings (in addition to required texts) on D2L:

- 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. .
- Schlozman, Kay Lehmann, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, "Civic Participation and the Equality Problem," in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999) pp. 427-59.
- Stepan, Alfred and Juan J Linz. *Comparative perspectives on inequality and the quality of democracy in the United States*. *Perspectives on Politics*, 9(04):841–856, 2011.
- Pew Research Center. 2011. "Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks, Hispanics." *Pew Social & Demographic Trends*. www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/07/26/wealthgaps-rise-to-record-highs-between-whites-blacks-hispanics/P

Additional readings will be added to D2L and to the electronic syllabus

Course requirements:

Papers: Students are required to write three 6-8 page, double-spaced, papers over the course of the semester. Students will be given a question in class and will have three days to write a paper 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 papers must include a bibliography (not included in the page total). The question assigned for papers 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 papers are due on D2L. Each paper is valued at 25% of the course grade, and each paper is required to be completed to receive a passing grade in the class. Late papers 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 papers 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 D2L site for the course regularly, and for completing any assignments on D2L 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, including computers and mobile phones, are prohibited in class. The use of these devices causes serious disruption in class and affects the learning of other students. Computers, phones and other devices must be turned off and put away during class. Students may appeal this policy on an individual basis by coming to office hours and providing sufficient reason why an exception to the policy is necessary. Exceptions to this policy are at the instructor's discretion.

Honor code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. In this course, students will receive a 0 on any assignment in which the honor code is violated. In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode>

Students with disabilities: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>.

Religious observances: Students with religious observances that conflict with course requirements will be accommodated whenever possible. In order to ensure such accommodation, students must notify the instructor within the first 2 weeks of the course to allow time to make such arrangements. For more information on the University policy, please see http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Discrimination and harassment: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, pregnancy, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation, or political philosophy should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>

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

Week 1: 8/28-9/1

Mon 8/28: Introduction to the course

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

Weds 8/30: Brainstorming about inequality

Fri 9/1: Inequality and democratic theory in comparative perspective

Readings: Sen, chapters 1-4

Week 2: 9/4-9/8

Mon 9/4: LABOR DAY, NO CLASS

Weds 9/6: Inequality and democratic theory in comparative perspective (cont.)

Readings: Sen, chapter 5-8

Fri 9/8: Inequality and democratic theory in comparative perspective (cont.)

Readings: Sen, chapter 9, Stepan & Linz reading on D2L

Week 3: 9/11-9/15

Mon 9/11: Inequality and democratic theory: The US Constitution

Readings: Dahl, chapters 1-4

Weds 9/13: Inequality and democratic theory: The US Constitution

Readings: Dahl, chapters 5-8

Fri 9/15: Activity: Thinking about the role of inequality in American democracy

More information TBA, valued at 2 points

First paper topic distributed

Week 4: 9/18-9/22

Mon 9/18: No class meeting, paper one due by 8pm on D2L

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 9/20: Examining the numbers and brainstorming what we know about economic inequality

Readings: Pew Research Center reading on D2L, additional readings may be assigned

Fri 9/22: Race and economic inequality

Readings: Massey reading on D2L, additional readings may be assigned

Week 5: 9/25-9/29

Mon 9/25: Race and economic inequality (cont.)

Readings: TBA on D2L

Weds 9/27: Gender and economic inequality

Readings: Iverson & Rosenbluth, chapters 1-2

Fri 9/29: Gender and economic inequality (cont.)

Readings: Iverson & Rosenbluth, chapters 3-4

Week 6: 10/2-10/6

Mon 10/2: Gender & economic inequality (cont.)

Readings: Iverson & Rosenbluth, chapters 5-7

Weds 10/4: Intergenerational poverty and public policy

Readings: Duncan, forwards, preface and chapter 1

Fri 10/6: Intergenerational poverty and public policy (cont.)

Readings: Duncan, chapter 2

Week 7: 10/9-10/13

Mon 10/9: Intergenerational poverty and public policy (cont.)

Readings: Duncan, chapter 3

Weds 10/11: Intergenerational poverty and public policy (cont.)

Readings: Duncan, chapter 4

Fri 10/13: Activity: Identifying public policies that contribute to inequality

More information TBA, valued at 2 points

Second paper topic distributed

Week 8: 10/16-10/20

Mon 10/16: No class meeting, paper two due by 8pm on D2L

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

Weds 10/18: Inequality and democracy

Readings: Lawrence & Skocpol, chapters 1

Friday 10/20: Inequality and democracy (cont.)

Readings: Lawrence & Skocpol, chapter 2

Week 9: 10/23-10/27

Mon 10/23: Inequality and democracy (cont.)

Readings: Lawrence & Skocpol, chapter 3

Weds 10/25: Inequality and democracy (cont.)

Readings: Lawrence & Skocpol, chapter 4

Fri 10/27: Inequality and democracy (cont.)

Readings: Lawrence & Skocpol, chapter 5

Week 10: 10/30-11/3

Mon 10/30: Inequality and civic participation

Readings: Schlozman, et al, on D2L

Weds 11/1: Wealth and political organization

Readings: Hacker & Pierson on D2L

Fri 11/3: Activity on D2L: Finding & sharing sources about current issues related to inequality in the US

More information TBA, valued at 2 points

(no class meeting)

Week 11: 11/6-11/10

Mon 11/6: Activity on D2L: Finding & sharing sources about current issues related to inequality in the US

More information TBA, valued at 2 points

(no class meeting)

Weds 11/8: Economic inequality & political power

Readings: Gilens, chapters 1-2

Fri 11/10: Economic inequality & political power

Readings: Gilens, chapters 3-4

Week 12: 11/13-11/17

Mon 11/13: Economic inequality & political power

Readings: Gilens, chapters 5-6

Weds 11/15: Economic inequality & political power

Readings: Gilens, chapters 7-8

Fri 11/17: Drawing conclusions: what do we know and what don't we know about inequality?

Fall break and Thanksgiving, no class meetings 11/20-11/24

Week 13: 11/27-12/1

Section 4: How are political and economic inequality important in politics today? What policy solutions should be considered?

Mon 11/27: In class activity: What questions do we still have about political & economic inequality?

More information TBA, valued at 2 points

Weds 11/29: Current issues with inequality

Readings TBA

Fri 12/1: Current issues with inequality

Readings TBA

Week 14: 12/4-12/8

Mon 12/4: Examining policy solutions

Readings TBA

Weds 12/6: Examining policy solutions

Readings TBA

Fri 12/8: Examining policy solutions

Readings TBA

Final paper topic distributed

Week 15: 12/11-12/15

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

Readings TBA

Weds 12/13: Drawing conclusions and the future of inequality in the US

Readings TBA

Fri: Course conclusion

Final paper due by 7pm on Tuesday, December 19 on D2L