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Office Hours: Monday 1-3

## **PO 505. Inequality and American Politics.**

**Spring 2015, Wednesdays 9:00 AM-12:00 PM**

This course examines the role of income inequality in shaping American politics and policy. Combining research from history, political science, economics, and public policy scholars, we will consider a range of important topics. The first portion of the class explores how income inequality shapes political voice; we investigate how rising inequality shapes political participation and preferences. The next section of the course examines obstacles to addressing income inequality, including Americans' attitudes towards redistribution, racial threat, political institutions, and political parties. We conclude with several policy case studies incorporating all of these themes.

In addition to completing the readings for each week, students will be expected to participate actively and to complete an in-class midterm and a final research paper.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Participation**

Regular attendance at seminar and active and informed participation are central to your and your classmates' learning. Students are required to do the reading and participate actively in class.

In addition, most classes will feature an in-class, group activity (e.g, a debate). Participation in these activities will count towards each student's participation grade

#### **4-5 Page Paper**

The first assignment for this course will be a 4-5 page (double-spaced 12 pt font, with 1-inch margins) paper due to me by e-mail ([kleinst@bu.edu](mailto:kleinst@bu.edu)) on February 25 at 9 AM. Students will complete an original analysis of public opinion data, with two primary goals. First, they will explore how well income explains public opinion on the policy issues of their choice. Second, they will explore whether public opinion on their chosen issue has become more polarized. We will discuss more how to assess these two aspects of the assignment in class.

## **Midterm Exam**

There will be a closed-book/note in-class midterm exam. It is designed to test both your understanding of basic course themes and your ability to put course ideas together in interesting ways. The exam will take place on April 8.

## **15-20 Page Research Paper**

The main assignment for the course is a major research project that will culminate in a 15-20 page paper constituting a large portion of your final grade. Students can work in pairs, with the expectation that the quality of the work and ambition of the project will reflect the work of two, rather than one. Student groups will select a topic from the course and use social science research methods to explore that issue. The scope of topics that students can study is broad, ranging from local issues in the city of Boston to national congressional gridlock. Students are welcome to use a variety of methods, including observational analysis, interviews, quantitative analysis, and/or archival research.

To ensure that students complete the paper in a timely fashion, a final paper proposal (2-3 pages) will be due to the instructor by e-mail (kleinst@bu.edu) on April 8 at 9 AM. This proposal will summarize the student's: (1) topic; (2) planned sources, and; (3) preliminary findings. The final paper is due on Monday, May 4 at 9 AM.

- Participation 15%
- Midterm Exam: 30%
- Short Paper: 20%
- Final Paper: 35%

## **Grades for Written Work and Exams**

For written work, the A range will comprise only work which features strikingly original thinking and/or argumentation, expressed in clear, cogent, error-free writing. Only students that go well beyond class materials and discussions (in thought, not extra research) will be considered for an A grade. Papers and examinations in the B range exhibit mastery of the course materials and discussions, expressed in clear, cogent, error-free writing. Papers and examinations in the C range exhibit inadequate understanding of the course materials and discussions and/or deficient, error-plagued writing. Papers and examinations in the D range exhibit wholly inadequate understanding of the course materials combined with deficient, error-plagued writing. Hopefully the D range and worse will not be an issue. Pluses, minuses, or flat grades within any of these ranges reflect the instructors' judgment of the merits of the paper or examination relative to other papers in the same range. All late assignments will be reduced 1/3 of a grade for every day they are late. Students may appeal

grades they feel they received in error but we reserve the right to increase or decrease their grade upon reconsideration.

## **Other Practical Matters**

*Email:* The most efficient way to reach me is via email. No promises, but I will try to respond quickly. If you write and don't hear back in 24 hours, please write again.

### **January 21. Why should we care about income inequality?**

\*Christopher Jencks. "Does Inequality Matter?" *Daedalus* (Winter 2002): 49-65.

\*Martin Feldstein, "Reducing Poverty, Not Inequality." *The Public Interest*, no. 137 (Fall 1999): 33-41.

## **Inequality and Political Voice**

### **January 28. Opinion Polarization. Introduction to ANES and GSS Data**

\*McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*, Chapter 3

Larry Bartels. 2010. *Unequal Democracy*, Chapter 3

Andrew Gelman. 2008. *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State*. Pp. 8-24, 58-94

### **February 11. Political Participation**

Verba, Scholzman, and Brady, *Voice and Inequality: Civic Voluntarism in the United States*, Chapter 12

Faller, Julie, Noah Nathan, and Ariel White. 2015. "What Do I need to Vote? Bureaucratic Discretion and Discrimination by Local Election Officials." *American Political Science Review*

Adam J. Berinsky. 2005. "The Perverse Consequences of Electoral Reform in the United States." *American Politics Research*.

Barry C. Burden, David T. Canon, Kenneth Mayer, and Donald P. Moynihan. 2014. "Election Laws, Mobilization, and Turnout: The Unanticipated Consequences of Election Reform." *American Journal of Political Science*.

### **February 18. Money and Politics**

Stephen Ansolabehere, John M. De Figueredo, and James M. Snyder. 2003. "Why is There So Little Money in US Politics?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17(1): 105-30.

Dino P. Christenson and Corwin D. Smidt. 2014. "Following the Money: Super PACs and the 2012 Presidential Nomination." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*.

Ryan T. Moore, Eleanor Neff Powell, and Andrew Reeves. 2013. "Driving Support: workers, PACs, and congressional support of the auto industry." *Business and Politics*

Matt Bai. "How Much has Citizens United Changed the Political Game?" *New York Times*. July 17, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/22/magazine/how-much-has-citizens-united-changed-the-political-game.html?pagewanted=all>

Peter Whoriskey. "With executive pay, rich pull away from rest of America." *Washington Post*. June 18, 2011. [http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-06-18/business/35234600\\_1\\_income-gap-personal-income-capital-gains](http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-06-18/business/35234600_1_income-gap-personal-income-capital-gains)

### **February 25. Responsiveness. Short paper due.**

Martin Gilens. 2005. "Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness." *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

Larry Bartels. 2008. *Unequal Democracy*. Chapter 9.

Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence*, Chapter 7.

Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*, Chapter 5

### **Obstacles to Addressing Income Inequality**

#### **March 7. Do Americans Support Redistribution and Care About Income Inequality?**

Larry Bartels. 2008. *Unequal Democracy*, Chapters 6, 7.

Jennifer Hochschild, *What's Fair? Americans' Beliefs About Distributive Justice*. Chapters 3, 9

#### **March 18. Race and Attitudes Towards Redistribution and Inequality**

Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, Chapter 4

Alberto Alesina, Edward Glaeser, and Bruce Sacerdote. 2001. "Why Doesn't the United States Have a European-Style Welfare State?" *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*. [http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/alesina/files/423\\_0332-alesina11.pdf](http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/alesina/files/423_0332-alesina11.pdf)

Daniel J. Hopkins. 2009. "The Diversity Discount: When Increasing Ethnic and Racial Diversity Prevents Tax Increases." *Journal of Politics*.

Ira Katzelson, *When Affirmative Action was White*, Chapter 5

### **March 25. Institutional Obstacles to Policy Change**

Andrea Campbell, *How Policies Make Citizens*, Chapter 4.

Paul Pierson. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review*

Jacob Hacker. 2004. "Privatizing Risk without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States." *American Political Science Review*.

Peter Enns et al. 2014. "Conditional Status Quo Bias and Top Income Shares: How U.S. Political Institutions Have Benefited the Rich." *The Journal of Politics*

### **April 1. Political Parties and Income Inequality**

Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, Chapters 2 and 4

Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*, Chapter 2

### **April 8. Midterm Exam. Paper Proposal Due.**

### **Policy Case Studies**

### **April 15. Incarceration**

Vesla M. Weaver and Amy Lerman. 2010. "Political Consequences of the Carceral State." *American Political Science Review*.

Todd Clear, *Imprisoning Communities*, Chapter 6

Bruce Western. "Reentry: Reversing Mass Imprisonment." July/August 2008. *Boston Review*. <http://www.bostonreview.net/bruce-western-reentry-reversing-mass-imprisonment>

Peter Enns. 2014. "The Public's Increasing Punitiveness and Its Influence on Mass Incarceration in the United States" *The American Journal of Political Science*. 58(4): 857-872.

### **April 22. No classes. BU Monday.**

### **April 29. Family Policy**

Sara McLanahan. 2004. "Diverging Destinies: How Are Children Faring Under the Second Demographic Transition." *Demography* 41: 607-627

Kathryn Edin and Maria Kerfalas. 2005. *Promises I can Keep*, Chapters 2, 3, 6