

## **POLS 393: Problems of Representation: Inequality and the American Representative System**

Professor Witko

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9:45-10:45, Wednesday 5:15-6:30, by appt.

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**Course Description:** Why is America the most unequal affluent country on Earth? Is it conservative public opinion, US political institutions, weak labor unions or corporate dominance of the campaign finance system? How has the growing inequality in America compared with trends in other affluent countries? Is America still “exceptional,” or have common economic and political changes similarly affected other affluent nations? Does the “Occupy Wall Street” movement represent a major shift in American politics? Or will business continue as usual? We will consider each of these questions in the course.

**Course Objectives:** At the end of the course you should be familiar with: 1) the basic institutions of the American representative process; 2) theories about how the distribution of wealth influences the representative process; 3) policies and political arrangements that are thought to influence the distribution of wealth, and; 4) how American inequality compares to other affluent nations and the political and economic factors that explain some of the similarities and differences. You will also have opportunities to improve your critical thinking, argumentation and writing skills with class readings, discussions and assignments.

**Prerequisites:** None.

### **Required Texts and Readings:**

Electronic Sources: Unless otherwise noted all other readings are available through the Pius Library website. In addition, you should read a major national newspaper on a regular basis because we will begin each class with a discussion of recent happenings in Congress and the state legislatures.

Readings denoted by a \* must be obtained from me.

### **Grading:**

For each of the above assignments you will be given a letter grade, corresponding with a number from 0 (F) to 4 (A). These grades will be averaged using the percentages above to calculate your final course grade:

#### Grading Scale

A	93-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	60-70
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76	F	below 60
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72		

### **Methods of Evaluation and Grading (% of Final Grade)**

-Exams – Midterm (30%) and a final exam (30%).

-Term Paper (25%) - This will be a 10-15 page double-spaced paper that can take a variety of forms depending on your particular interests. I will distribute a hand-out with more detailed instructions early in the semester and you should consult with me soon to develop a topic.

-Attendance and Participation (15%) - Attendance and participation are required. While some classes may be primarily lecture, much of the class will involve discussing the readings and current legislative issues. Therefore, student participation is crucial. Each recorded absence beyond three will result in a letter grade reduction in your participation and attendance grade. Perfect attendance does not ensure a good grade, active and intelligent participation with good attendance does.

### **Academic Integrity**

*Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to me and will be investigated and adjudicated according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts & Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University. (See <http://www.slu.edu.colleges/AS/academichonesty.html>)*

### **Academic Support Statement**

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at [314-977-8885](tel:314-977-8885) or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter

**Course Outline: These are the major topics we will cover and some of the readings we will most likely use. The details will be determined later.**

## **Part 1. The Current State of Inequality in America**

### **Topic 1. Inequality in Comparative Perspective: Why is America so Unequal?**

Readings (more to come):

Stepan and Linz. 2011. "Comparative Perspectives on Inequality and the Quality of Democracy in the United States." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(4): 841-55.

OECD Report on Increasing Economic Inequality

Foner, Eric. "Why no Socialism in America?"

Marx and Lipset – Why is there no labor Party in America?

Hirano and Snyder – The Democratic Party and Left Parties

Quadagno, Jill. "Why the US Does Not Have Universal Healthcare?"

"World Top Incomes Database"

## **Topic 2. Inequality in Historical Perspective**

### Readings (More to Come):

Saez, Emmanuel. 2010. "Striking it Richer." <http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~saez/saez-UStopincomes-2008.pdf>

Kelly et al. "The Rise of the 1%."

9/23: Inequality as a Problem of Representation

Madison, James – Federalist # 10 (just google it)

Read: APSA Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy – "American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality" <http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/taskforcereport.pdf>

## **Part II. Representation and Inequality**

### **Topic 1: What the American Public Thinks About Inequality**

#### Readings (More to come)

<http://marketplace.publicradio.org/display/web/2010/02/08/pm-wealth-q/>

Bartels, Larry M. 2005. "Homer Gets a Tax Cut" (p. 15-19 only required)  
<http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/bartels.pdf>

Kelly, Nathan J. and Peter K. Enns. 2010? "Inequality and the Dynamics of Public Opinion:

The Self-reinforcing Link Between Economic Inequality and Mass Preferences."

*American Journal of Political Science*

### **Topic 2: Inequality and the Executive Branch**

#### Readings (More to Come)

Greenwald, Glenn. 2009. "Larry Summers, Tim Geithner and Wall Street's Ownership of Government."

[http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/glenn\\_greenwald/2009/04/04/summers](http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/glenn_greenwald/2009/04/04/summers)

Bartels, Larry. "The President and Inequality"

Hibbs, Douglas A. 1977. "Political Parties and Macroeconomic Policy." *The American Political Science Review* 71(4): 1467-87.

### **Topic 3: Inequality and Representation in the Congress**

#### Readings (More to Come):

Wright, John R. 2000. "Interest Groups, Congressional Reform and Party Government in the United States." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 25(2): 217-235.

Bartels, Larry M. 2005. "Economic Inequality and Political Representation."

Gilens, Martin.

### **Topic 4: Inequality and the American System**

#### Readings (More to Come):

Kelly, Nathan J. and Christopher Witko. "2012. Federalism and American Inequality."

Winters, Jeffrey A. and Benjamin Page. 2009. "Oligarchy in the United States."

*Perspectives on Politics* 7(4): 731-753.

## **Part III. Policies and Inequality: How Government Policy Increases Inequality**

### **Topic 1. Market Conditioning: How Government Affects Wages and Income**

#### Readings (More to Come):

Hacker et al. "Public Policy and Inequality." P. 2-4, and 9-16 (I will distribute).

Johnson, Simon. 2009. "The Quiet Coup." *The Atlantic Monthly* (google it)

Collingsworth, Todd, J. William Goold and Pharis J. Harvey. 1994. "Time for a Global New Deal." *Foreign Affairs* 73(1): 8-13.

Mosher, James S. 2007. "U.S. Wage Inequality, Technological Change, and Decline in Union Power." *Politics and Society* 35(2): 255-64.

Cowen, Tyler. "Why is Income Inequality in America so Pronounced? Consider Education." <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/17/business/17scene.html>

Krugman, Paul. 2006. "Graduates Versus Oligarchs." *The New York Times*

### **Topic 2. Redistribution**

#### Readings (More to Come):

Midgley, James. 1992. "Society, Social Policy and the Ideology of Reaganism." *Journal of*

*Sociology and Social Welfare*

[http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/jrlsasw19&div=5&g\\_sent=1&collection=journals](http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/jrlsasw19&div=5&g_sent=1&collection=journals)

Salamon, Lester M. 1993. "The Marketization of Welfare: Changing Non-profit and For-profit Roles in the American Welfare State." *The Social Science Review* 67(1): 16-39.

Hacker et al. p. 5-9, 21-22, 41-50.

Highest Marginal Tax Rates Chart:

<http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxfacts/displayafact.cfm?Docid=213>

Dubay, Peter. "The Economic Case Against the Death Tax."

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/07/the-economic-case-against-the-death-tax>

Sanders, Bernie. 2010. "No to Oligarchy." <http://www.thenation.com/article/37889/no-oligarchy>

Hacker et al. p. 18-21, 34-40.

**Part IV. US Policies Compared with Other Affluent Nations: Why Inequality is Lower (But Often Increasing) in Other Countries**

Readings (To Be Announced):

**Part V. Occupy Wall Street and the Future of Inequality in America**

Readings (To Be Announced):