Economic Inequality and American Democracy

Fall 2017
Location: Monday 9:00-11:30, 4430 W. Posvar Hall
Professor: Dr. Laura Bucci (lcb52@pitt.edu)
Office: W. Posvar Hall
Office Hours: Monday 1-3, Wednesday 10-12, or by appointment

In a political system where nearly every adult may vote, but where knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other resources are unequally distributed, who actually governs?"—Robert Dahl

The flaw in pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper class accent —E.E. Schattschneider

1 Course Description

The candidacies of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump emphasized that the American economy was not working for the average American. The policies meant to alleviate this problem were wildly different, but the underlying truth remains the same. Individuals are less financially secure today; gaps in income and wealth are as large as they were during the Gilded Age; economic productivity has risen dramatically with no growth to real wages for the bottom 80% of income earners; it is unclear how often representatives listen to non-rich constituents, if they do at all. While inequality has grown in other western democracies, the United States is growing more unequal the most rapidly. Shortly after the "rights revolution" of the late 1960s, many of the formal and legal categories of discrimination were worn down, but are now replaced by economic divisions that reinforce power differences by race, ethnicity, and gender, undermining promises of greater equality. In this course we will study a growing literature on the consequences of economic inequality for representative democracy. Can representative government survive, in a meaningful way, when there is such disparity between citizens?

We will examine this question by looking at three major aspects of the American political system: political voice, governance, and public policy. First, we will look at the implications of inequality on those processes and mechanisms by which citizens can have their voices heard. We will consider citizens participation in political activities, interest groups, political parties (at the mass level), social movements, and civic associations. Second, we will examine the implications of inequality for the allocation of power in the governing process; how this allocation influences the agenda of political parties at the elite level and the allocation of tasks of governance between the national and sub-national government through federalism. Third, we will examine the relationship between public policy and inequality by considering the extent to which U.S. policy ameliorates or exacerbates inequality, in both historical and comparative perspective; the extent to which growing inequality undercut the promises of the "rights revolution" and how some policies have elevated the political participation of affected citizens.

2 Assignments

Most of the work for seminars will be preparing for discussion. All seminar participants are expected to do the readings and come to class prepared to speak. **Five** times during the semester you will be expected to write a **1-2 page reading response** on that week's readings. Responses will be due 24 hours prior to class and are to be submitted to myself and your classmates. In the responses students should think about the connection between articles, gaps these articles address, critiques of that literature or the articles themselves, what the articles do well, and questions that they (or someone else) might answer in future work. Please read the responses of others before coming to class.

The other main assignment will be your **research paper**. The purpose of this assignment is to develop writing that can be revised and sent to an academic journal as soon as possible. As such, students are allowed to coauthor, use this paper in conjunction with another course (pending approval

by myself and the other faculty member), or add the new dimension of economic inequality to a previously written paper. Papers that are coauthored or revisions should reflect this effort in their quality. The paper should be used to progress your academic work and further a research agenda of interest to you. Papers should be an empirical analysis of some aspect of economic inequality and politics. **Short statements of your intended topic will be due in the fifth week, and more detailed discussion of your research question, theories and design in the eighth week.**

Grade Components

- Participation: 35%
- Response Memos (5 X 5% each): 25%
- Research Paper: 40%

*Books

Unequal Democracy by Larry Bartels
Winner Take All Politics by Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson
Affluence and Influence by Martin Gilens
Coming Up Short: Working-class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty by Jennifer M. Silva

3 Course Schedule and Assignments

8/28 Introduction

- Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, "American Democracy in an Age of Inequality" http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/taskforcereport.pdf

9/4- No Class- Labor Day

9/11- Inequality on the Rise

- Review Task Force
- Response to Task Force, Frances Fox Piven PS 2006
- Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy* - Chapter 1
- Peter Gottschalk, "Inequality, Income Growth, and Mobility: The Basic Fact" Journal of Economic Perspectives, Vol. 11, #2, Spring 1997, 21-40
- Christopher Jencks, "Does Inequality Matter?" Daedelus (Winter 2002): 49-65.

9/18 Is Inequality a Problem?

- Adam J. Berinsky, "Silent Voices: Social Welfare Policy Opinions and Political Equality in America." American Journal of Political Science 46 (2002): 276-287
- Bartels, Unequal Democracy, Chap 5.
- Benjamin I. Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americas Policy Preferences (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) Chaps. 3-4
- Lawrence Jacobs and Benjamin Page, "No Class War". Chap 1 of Benjamin I. Page and Lawrence R. Jacobs, *Class War? What American Really Think about Economic Inequality.*
- McCall, Leslie, and Lane Kenworthy. 2009. "Americans' Social Policy Preferences in the Era of Rising Inequality." Perspectives on Politics 7 (03): 459-484.

9/25 Inequality in Comparative Perspective

- "Inequality, labor market segmentation, and preferences for redistribution" Iverson and Alt- AJPS 2017
- Stepan, A. and Juan Linz. 2011. "Comparative Perspectives on Inequality and the Quality of Democracy in the United States." *Perspectives on Politics,* 9(4), 841-856
- Kathy Thelen. 2014. *Varieties of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity.* Conclusion
- Huber, E., & Stephens, J. D. (2014). "Income inequality and redistribution in post-industrial democracies: demographic, economic and political determinants". *Socio-Economic Review*, 12(2), 245-267.
- Kenworthy, Lane. 2006. *Egalitarian Capitalism* Chapter 7

10/2 Policy Preferences

Statement of Intended Topic Due Today

- Bartels, Chaps 3, 6, 7.
- Bartels, "Whats the Matter with Whats the Matter with Kansas?" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 2006, 1: 201226.
- Leslie McCall, *The Undeserving Rich*, Chapters 4-5
- Page, Bartels, Seawright. 2013. "Democracy and the policy preferences of wealthy Americans" *Perspectives on Politics*

10/9 Race and Racism

- Einstein and Glick. Forthcoming. "Does Race Affect Access to Government Services?: An Experiment Exploring Street-Level Bureaucrats and Access to Public Housing" *AJPS*
- Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare*, Ch 4
- Joe Soss, Richard Fording, Sanford Schram. 2008. "The Color of Devolution: Race, Federalism, and the Politics of Social Control" *AJPS*
- Kathy Cramer. 2012. "Putting Inequality in its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Politics of Perspective" *APSR*
- Richard Rothstein. 2017. *The Color of Law*, Chapter 10

10/16- Political Voice

- Martin, Paul S. 2003. "Voting's Rewards: Voter Turnout, Attentive Publics, and Congressional Allocation of Federal Money." *American Journal of Political Science* 47 (1): 110-127.
- Griffin, John D., and Brian Newman. 2005. "Are Voters Better Represented?" *The Journal of Politics* 67 (4): 1206-1227.
- Franko, W., Nathan Kelly, Christopher Witko. 2016. P "Class Bias in Voter Turnout, Representation, and Income Inequality" *Perspectives on Politics.* http://web.utk.edu/ nkelly/papers/inequality/PoPrevi

Supplementary: Steven Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America (New York: Macmillan, 1993), Chap 5

10/23- Representation

Research Question, Theory, Design due today

- Elizabeth Rigby and Gerald Wright, "Political Parties and Representation of the Poor in the American States" *AJPS*
- Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence* Chapters 1-4
- Nicholas Carnes. (2012). "Does the numerical underrepresentation of the working class in Congress matter?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 37(1), 5-34.

Supplementary: Erikson, R. S. (2015). Income inequality and policy responsiveness. Annual Review of Political Science, 18, 11-29. (Provides a great overview)

10/30 Federal Policy Making

Research Question, Theory, Design due today

- Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson. 2011. *Winner Take All Politics* , All

Supplementary: McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America*

11/6- Federalism

- Franko, W. W. (2017). "Understanding Public Perceptions of Growing Economic Inequality." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*
- Zhu, L., & Clark, J. H. (2015). ""Rights without Access" The Political Context of Inequality in Health Care Coverage in the US States." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 15(2), 239-262.
- Kelly, N. J., & Witko, C. (2012). Federalism and American Inequality. Journal of Politics, 74(2).
- Bucci, Laura C. Forthcoming. "Organized Labor's Check on Rising Inequality in the American States" *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*

Supplementary: The Big Sort, Bill Bishop

11/13- Social Welfare Policy

- Hacker, Jacob S. 2004. "Privatizing Risk without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States." *The American Political Science Review* 98 (2): 243-260.
- Joseph Soss et al., "Setting the Terms of Relief: Explaining State Policy Choices in the Devolution Revolution" *American Journal of Political Science*, 45 (2001) 378-95.
- Schram, S. F. (2005). "Contextualizing Racial Disparities in American Welfare Reform: Toward a New Poverty Research." Perspectives on Politics 3(2): 253-268.
- Joseph Soss, 1999. Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action. The American Political Science Review 93 (2): 363-380.

Supplementary: Howard, Christopher. 2003. Is the American Welfare State Unusually Small? PS: Political Science and Politics 36 (3): 411-416.

11/20 Economic and Tax Policy

- Faricy, C. (2011). "The politics of social policy in America: The causes and effects of indirect versus direct social spending." *The Journal of Politics*, 73(1), 74-83.
- Strolovitch, D. Z. (2013). "Of Mancessions and Hecoveries: Race, gender, and the political construction of economic crises and recoveries." *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(1), 167-176.
- Hertel-Fernandez, A. (2014). "Who passes businesss "model bills"? Policy capacity and corporate influence in US state politics." *Perspectives on Politic*s, 12(3), 582-602. Supplementary:

Supplemenraty: Suzanne Mettler, *The Submerged State*

11/27 Precarity and Movements Against It

- Silva, J. M. 2013. *Coming Up Short: Working-class Adulthood in an Age of Uncertainty.* Oxford University Press.
- Galvin, D. J. (2016). "Deterring Wage Theft: Alt-Labor, State Politics, and the Policy Determinants of Minimum Wage Compliance." *Perspectives on Politics*, 14(2), 324-350.

12/11- Final Paper Presentations

Final Papers due via email, 12/12, 8pm