



Econ 2500 / Poli Sci 2500:
The United States of Inequality: Political and Economic Challenges and Remedies
3 Credit Hours
Prerequisites: None
Fulfills One IE (Intellectual Exploration) General Education Requirement

Fall 2021
Tu Th 12:25 – 1:45, IVC

Instructors:

Juliet Carlisle, Political Science juliet.carlisle@utah.edu phone: N/A office: office hours: W 11-1 (by appt)	Thomas Maloney, Economics maloney@economics.utah.edu Phone: 801-581-7704 Office GC 4100 Office Hours: M 9-10, Th 2-3 (on Zoom)
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Course Description

Since the end of the post-war “Golden Age of Capitalism” (1945 to 1975), the US economy has been characterized by rising levels of inequality. This inequality is most often measured in terms of increasing gaps between the top and bottom of the income and wealth distributions, along with a decline in the middle class, but it is manifest in other, related dimensions as well, including growing disparities in health and exposure to environmental hazards. In addition, growing inequalities in economic resources feed into growing inequalities in political power, and differential political power can be used to solidify differential access to economic resources. Rising inequality provides the context shaping the development of solutions to many other economic and social challenges of our time, including access to health care, racial and ethnic divisions and the rise of race-based nationalism, persistent gender inequalities, the stresses created by immigration, and the need to develop sustainable climate and energy policy. This class will draw on the expertise of the faculty in the economics and political science departments to examine the long-run development of economic inequality, its measurement, its connection to political power and to other societal divides, and potential remedies.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Describe the extent of inequality in the US in its many dimensions - income, wealth, health, environmental quality, political power – and in terms of its impact on diverse communities (by race/ethnicity, gender, immigrant status)
- Interpret these forms of inequality through frameworks of ethics and justice
- Identify the historical and contemporary forces shaping these patterns of inequality

- Evaluate policies that might remedy these forms of inequality and their detrimental impacts

Teaching and Learning Methods

The course will be organized around topical modules led by a faculty experts from the Departments of Economics and Political Science. The lead instructors (Carlisle and Maloney) will help students to connect these pieces of the puzzle and will also supervise assignments and assessment.

University Policies

Please see the links on the “Syllabus” page in Canvas for updated information on university policy regarding disability accommodations, safety on campus, sexual misconduct, dropping or withdrawing from class, and academic dishonesty. You will also find links to resources relating to veterans’ support, LGBT support, English as a second language, and personal wellness.

Assignments

Pre-topic surveys and post-topic quizzes: Nine times during the semester you will respond to a brief survey about the upcoming week’s topic, and also to a brief quiz at the end of the week checking your knowledge of key concepts. Your three lowest scores (of the 18 total scores - 9 surveys plus 9 quizzes) will drop. Together, these surveys and quizzes will count for 10% of your semester grade.

Exams: There will be two required mid-term exams. Each exam will be a combination of multiple choice/short answer questions and essay questions. The mid-terms are each worth 15% of your semester grade. There will also be an optional, extra credit final exam worth up to 5% of your grade.

Core Assignment: Individual “Op-Ed,” and Group “Advisors Council,” White Paper and Policy Pitch (presentation): The core assignment of the class will provide you with an opportunity to evaluate the forms of inequality we are studying and to make an argument about which type of inequality is of greatest concern.

- You will start by writing a short “Op Ed” essay indicating your informed opinion.
- You will then be formed into “Advisors Council” groups. These groups will play the role of advisors to a political candidate in a contested district and will choose one dimension of inequality for that candidate to campaign on.
- The group will write a “white paper” examining why the issue you have chosen is the right one to address with policy, and also providing suggestions for such a policy.
- Finally, your group will develop a brief video “policy pitch” for the argument you make in your white paper.

More details are available in Canvas, and we will discuss these requirements and answer any questions in class.

All together, the “core assignment” is worth 50% of your grade: The individual “Op-Ed” is worth 15%; your “Advisors Council” work is worth 15% (including participation in 2 in-class meetings), your group “White Paper” is worth 10%, and your Policy Pitch is worth 10%.

Class Participation: We will have two group discussions to review for the mid-terms. Participation in these discussions is worth 5% (in total). You will also fill out an introductory informational survey at the beginning of the term, worth 5%.

Assignments and Weighting

Pre-Topic Surveys and Post-Topic Quizzes	10% (Total)
Mid-term 1	15%
Mid-term 2	15%
Optional (extra credit) Final	5%
Core Project:	
Individual Op-Ed	15%
Advisor’s Council Work	15%
Group White Paper	10%
Group “Policy Pitch”	10%
Mid-Term Review Discussions	5%
Informational Survey	5%

Grading Policy (Evaluation Methods & Criteria)

Canvas is where student scores will be warehoused for all components of the course. It is advisable that students learn to calculate their own grades according the weighting detailed above. At the end of the semester, we will export the entire gradebook to Excel and, using the appropriate weightings, will calculate course grades. These grades will become your official course grade and will be what we report to the registrar. Examinations will be open-book in format, and will cover lectures, reading, and any films. The TA will work to get assignments graded within one (1) week of submission but please understand that sometimes there are delays. Late submissions go to the bottom of the grading pile and will often take longer than one (1) week to grade. Late assignments will be penalized one grade interval for each day late. An assignment is considered one day late if turned in during the first 24 hours after the due date, two-days late if turned in during the second 24 hours, and so on. Assignments will not be accepted more than one-week (exactly 168 hours) late. Any assignments more than one-week late will receive a grade of zero (not just E). Quizzes, exams and in-class work CANNOT be completed late.

Grade Scale: Each grade letter counts as a “grade interval” for the purposes of this syllabus and for grade penalties.

Grade	Percent
A+	97-100
A	94-96
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	<60

Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic/Discussion</u>
<i>Aug. 24-26:</i>	Course Introduction and Syllabus/Schedule Review; Definitions and Preliminary Material
<i>Aug. 31 – Sept. 2:</i>	Inequality in the Economy: Guest Lecturer – Professor Rudiger von Arnim (Economics)
<i>Sept. 7 - 9:</i>	Inequality and Political Representation: Guest Lecturer – Professor James Curry (Political Science)
<i>Sept. 14:</i>	Inequality in the Legal Context: Guest Lecturer – Professor Michael Dichio (Political Science)
<i>Sept. 16:</i>	Ethics, Justice, and Inequality: Guest Lecturer – Brent Steele (Political Science)
<i>Sept. 21:</i>	<i>Group Activity - Review for First Mid-Term</i>
<i>Sept. 23:</i>	<i>Mid-Term 1</i>

Sept. 28-30: Racial Inequality in the Long Run: Guest Lecturer – Edmond Fong (Political Science)

Oct. 5-7 Immigration and Inequality: Lecturer – Thomas Maloney (Economics)

FALL BREAK OCTOBER 11-15

Oct. 19 - 21 Gender and Inequality: Lecturer – Juliet Carlisle (Political Science)

Oct 26: Catching up, and linking and comparing general inequality, group inequalities, and ethics
Op-Ed Assignment Due

October 28: ***Group Activity – Review for Second Mid-Term***

Nov. 2: ***Guest Lecturer TBD***

Nov. 4: ***Mid-Term 2***

Nov. 9: Inequality in Health Care Access: Guest Lecturer – Philip Singer (Political Science)

Nov. 11: ***Group Activity: Advisors Council***

Nov. 16-18: Disparities in Environmental Quality: Lecturer – Juliet Carlisle (Political Science)

Nov. 23: Education as a Force for Equality and for Inequality: Guest Lecturer – Marshall Steinbaum (Economics)

November 25: Thanksgiving Holiday

Nov. 30: Catching up, and linking and comparing inequalities in health, environmental exposure, and education

Dec. 2: ***Group Activity: Working on “white paper” and “policy pitch”***

Dec. 7: ***“Policy Pitch” presentations and discussion***

Dec. 9: ***Group Activity: Review for Final***

Dec. 13: ***Optional Final Exam***

Note: This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that we may modify it with reasonable notice to you. We may also modify the Course Schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements.