Course Overview

This course focuses on economic and political inequality in the U.S. Although some of the readings offer comparative evidence, the course emphasizes inequality in the U.S. In particular, we will discuss how mass incarceration, low-wage work, and community development contribute to or mitigate economic and political inequality.

This is a WID course, so you will be writing early and often. In addition, this course is a "policy-oriented" proseminar. Consequently, we will focus on policy-oriented writing, a genre that may be unfamiliar to you. Several class periods have been designated as writing workshops. Attending these workshops is critical to your success. Also, it is important to respect class deadlines. Late assignments will be penalized; a late assignment cannot receive a higher score than the lowest scored assignment that was submitted on time.

Course requirements

1. Four surprise quizzes on the required reading. Your top three count toward your final grade. Five% of the course grade for each, 15% of course grade in total.


3. A policy argument (8-10 pages in length), 25% of course grade. Draft (not graded) is due on 10/3. Final version is due on 10/24.

4. Peer review of classmate's policy argument (1-2 pages in length), including a mark-up of the draft, 5% of course grade (due 3/7). Peer review due on 10/17. Late peer reviews will be awarded a zero score.

5. A draft policy analysis, 15 page limit, 15% of course grade. Due on 11/21.

6. A (revised) final policy analysis, 15 page limit, 25% of course grade. Due on 12/12.

Due dates are also noted in the class outline. Written assignments should be submitted in printed form (double-spaced, standard 1" margins, twelve point font, and printed on one side of the paper only). Following this instruction is part of the evaluation of your work.
Note, citation, and reference format

Any note that is included in your written work should be presented as a footnote (displayed at the bottom of the page), not as an endnote. Footnotes are to be single-spaced with a 10 point font.

Use in-text citations with the following format (author'slastname publicationdate). For example: (Alexander 2012). If a quote is taken from the text, use: (author'slastname publicationdate, pagenumberorrange). For example: "We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it" (Alexander 2012, 2).

Bibliographical references should be listed at the end of the paper in alphabetical order according to the first author's last name.

Required texts

There are six required books. Other required reading will be available on the class Blackboard or in hyperlinks embedded in the syllabus. The required texts are:

- Robert Putnam, *Our Kids*
- Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*
- Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence*
- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*
- Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White*

Average minimum amount of independent, out-of-class, learning expected per week

In a 15 week semester, including exam week, students are expected to spend 2.0 hours of direct instruction and (on average) a minimum of 6 hours of independent learning or 8.0 hours per week in order to complete the course successfully. More intense effort is required when written assignments are due.

Learning objectives

- Students will learn facts about economic, social, and political inequality in the U.S.
- Students will learn how families, communities, and social institutions can contribute to or mitigate inequality.
- Students will learn how to construct a persuasive policy argument.
- Students will learn how to develop a coherent policy analysis.
Students will learn how local political mobilization is possible in the face of inequality.

Students will learn how mass incarceration has become the gateway to a new form of legalized discrimination that targets inner city minorities.

Students will understand the significance of community-based political development as a strategy to combat inequality.

**Course Outline**

1. **Introduction**: the "winner-take-all" economy (8/29).
   - Class procedures and requirements.
   - Introduction to curriculum.
   - Read Hacker and Pierson, the winner takes all economy, this reading is available in the Electronic Reserves section of the Blackboard.

2. **Recent data and trends**: U.S. income inequality (9/5).
   - CBO report in income inequality, on the Blackboard in Electronic Reserves.
   - Read Piketty and Saez, "Inequality in the long run," Electronic Reserves.
   - Read Stepan and Linz, "Comparative Inequality," Electronic Reserves.
   - Book review of Putnam assigned. Due on 9/19.

3. **Discussion**: Putnam's *Our Kids* (9/5 and 9/12).
   - Putnam, *Our Kids*, Chapters 1-3 (for 9/5)
   - Putnam, remainder (for 9/12)

4. **Writing workshop**: 9/19 will be a writing workshop on policy arguments.
   - Policy argument assigned: 8-10 pages in length. Propose and defend a policy to mitigate inequality.
o Optional statement of policy proposition: Submit electronically to stoker@gwu.edu on 9/23 by noon to receive feedback

o First draft is due for peer review on 10/3. Please respect class deadlines. Submit a printed version at the beginning of class. Peer review returned on 10/17. Late peer reviews will receive a zero score.

o Final version is due on 10/24. Please respect class deadlines. Please submit printed versions of your original draft, the peer review you received, and your final version at the beginning of class on 10/24.

  Read the example argument:

5. **Discussion: Inequality and Political Influence (9/26 to 10/17).**

- Read Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy* (for 9/26 and 10/3).
- Read Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence* (for 10/3 and 10/17).

6. **Writing workshop: 10/24 and 10/31 will be writing workshops on policy analysis.**

  Example of policy analysis:
  - Read "Nuclear waste" example, Electronic Reserves.

- Policy analysis assigned on 10/31.
  - Optional outline, submit electronically to stoker@gwu.edu by 11/4 at noon to receive feedback
  - Initial draft is due on 11/21. Drafts will be returned with written comments from the instructor on 11/28.
  - Final version is due on 12/12. Please submit your initial draft (with the instructor's comments) and your final version.
7. **Discussion: Inequality and the criminal justice system. (11/7 and 11/14)**
   - Read Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.
   - Read the Justice Department report on the Ferguson Police. Electronic Reserves.

   - Read Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White*.

9. **Discussion: Is urban social unionism a political solution? (11/28 and 12/5)**
   
   A. The urban environment (for 11/28)
      - Read Stoker, Stone, and Horak, "Contending with Structural Inequality." Electronic Reserves.
      - Read Saito, "How Low-Income Residents can benefit from Urban Development." Electronic Reserves.
      - Read Muilenburg and Singh, "The Modern Living Wage Movement." Electronic Reserves.
   
   B. Unions as key participants (for 12/5)
      - Read Peter Fairbrother, "Social Movement Unionism." Electronic Reserves.
      - Read Waldinger et al., "Helots No More." Electronic Reserves.

Final papers are due on December 12 at noon. Please submit a printed version of your final draft and the marked-up version of your initial draft. If you submit a large self-addressed envelope with your paper, I will mail your paper to you during the holiday break.