

Class and Inequality in American Politics

POL 345Y - Spring 2021
Harrison Hall 204
Thurs 8:30 am – 9:50 am

Instructor: Dr. Kevin Reuning (ROY-ning)
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Course Website: Canvas
Office: Harrison Hall 222
Office Hours: 1 - 3pm Mon & Tues
Schedule appointments:
<https://calendly.com/reuning>

Course Description

After decades of growing economic inequality, inequality has become central to American politics. The surprise election of Donald Trump is often explained as the result of a growing disconnect between elites and working class white voters. While the mobilization of the Occupy Wall Street movement less than a decade ago shows that voter anger at inequality is not limited to one political ideology. In this class we will explore how economic inequality shapes the political space and why policies directed at economic inequality often fail. We will also explore how economic inequality intersects with other types of inequality.

Student Learning Objectives

1. Students will be able to define economic inequality and explain how it relates to political inequality.
2. Students will demonstrate evidence-based reasoning by writing a paper on a particular political issue and how economic inequality impacts that issue.
3. Student will critically assess the methodologies used to study economic inequality and its impact and recognize the limitations of those methodologies.
4. Students will be able to explain how economic inequality impacts the contemporary American politics environment.
5. Students will be able to explain the role of inequality in a modern democracy and evaluate the normative implications.

Required Books

Butler, Daniel M. 2014. *Representing the advantaged: How politicians reinforce inequality*. Cambridge University Press.

Course Policies

Hybrid/Online Plan

I will be posting weekly videos and a short canvas activity on Mondays. You will be expected to watch these videos and complete the activity before coming to class on Thursday. On Thursday the class will be divided in half, with half of the class attending from 8:30 to 9:05, and the second set attending from 9:15 to 9:50. During this time period there will be a short lecture, and then we will have in-class work and discussions.

Respect

This course will discuss and tackle issues where opinions can differ, and where opinions can be strongly held. We will do so with respect for all members of the class, in a way that everyone feels welcome to share and discuss. It is also important to remember that this is a *political science* class, not a discussion of politics. We will be discussing how economic inequality impacts political life, including our own. I do not expect anyone to be detached from the subject matter, as these are important subjects, but I do expect everyone to remain focused on the goals of the class: understanding how economic inequality shapes politics.

Preparation

This is a 300 level courses and so you will be expected to do the readings for the day prior to coming to class. In addition, given the nature of the course, I expect you to be aware of current events. Class discussion will include translating what we have been discussing in class to current events. As such, you will be better prepared to participate if you are aware of what is happening.

If it becomes clear that students are not doing the readings in preparation for class we will begin doing reading quizzes.

Technology

In the class you are expected to be focused on what is going on within the class. Laptops will be required on some days. On those days that laptops are not required you may bring one to take notes, etc. If the laptop becomes a distraction to those around you we will look at reevaluating this policy.

Email Policy

I will check email between 8am and 6pm, and will try to always respond to any contact within 24 hours. Although I do not expect formality in email communications, I do expect you to respect that emails are not a costless act.

Grade Distribution and Assignments

Item	Percentage
Weekly Activities and Attendance	30%
Policy Analysis Project	
Policy Introduction	15%
Policy Groups	15%
Policy Analysis	15%
Policy Final	25%

Weekly Activities and Attendance

There will be short Canvas activities every week that will be graded on a 5 point scale based on completion. You will get full credit if you make a full attempt at answering all questions. You will not get full credit if you have copied and pasted answers from the slides, readings the internet, or each other. These assignments will be due by Thursday at 11:40am.

In addition to the activities there will be weekly in-person meetings on Thursday. You will be expected to attend your assigned in-person class time and will also receive 5 points for that. If for whatever reason you do not attend them you must email me that week with at least 1 question you have about that week's content. This will serve as a check in. If you consistently miss them then we will figure out an alternative system. You will have two weeks from the missed class to email me, after that you cannot receive credit.

If, for whatever reason, you cannot attend class for 2 or more weeks in a row you will be expected to contact me to work out a schedule. If you do not contact me within the first 2 weeks you miss class, you will not be able to receive any credit on the assignments you missed.

Policy Analysis Project

As part of this class you will decide on a policy that you find interesting and investigate if this policy intersects with economic inequality in particular ways. The policy you pick should be something relatively specific such as 'red flag laws' or 'Medicare for All' not a general policy area. We will discuss some potential options in class. Based on this you will write the following:

Policy Introduction (Due March 4)

The first assignment will be a two page (double spaced) description of the policy. You will describe what the policy is and the recent history of attempts to enact the policy. You will also give one paragraph providing arguments for the policy and one paragraph of arguments against the policy.

Policy Groups (Due April 1)

The second assignment will be two pages (double spaced) and will describe what groups are most influential in working to shape this policy. You should include groups on multiple sides of the issue and discuss who the groups are, what positions they have taken, and who they represent.

Policy Analysis (Due April 22)

The third assignment will be three pages (double spaced). You will apply what we have learned in class to the groups that are involved in your policy to predict what you expect for policy changes over the next few years. This should indicate if you think certain policies will be enacted and why.

Final Memo (Due May 11)

As you turn in each section I will provide feedback on it and a grade. At the end of the semester you will put together each portion into a single document making any edits that you think are necessary and providing an introduction and conclusion. Along with the final document you will include a single page explaining what changes you made based on my feedback.

Extra Credit

I will provide several extra credit opportunities throughout the semester and will announce them in class and on Canvas.

Late work policy

In order to receive a deadline extension you should contact me more than 24 hours before the deadline. If an assignment is turned in late without an extension but within 24 hours of the due date, your grade will decrease by 5 percentage points (a 95% would become a 90%). For every additional 24 hours after this it loses another 5%.

Letter Grade Distribution

>= 93.00	A	73.00 - 76.99	C
90.00 - 92.99	A-	70.00 - 72.99	C-
87.00 - 89.99	B+	67.00 - 69.99	D+
83.00 - 86.99	B	63.00 - 67.99	D
80.00 - 82.99	B-	60.00 - 62.99	D-
77.00 - 79.99	C+	<59.99	F

Academic Integrity

Miami University is a scholarly community whose members believe that excellence in education is grounded in qualities of character as well as of intellect. We respect the dignity of other persons, the rights and property of others, and the right of others to hold and express disparate beliefs. We believe in honesty, integrity, and the importance of moral conduct. We defend the freedom of inquiry that is the heart of learning and combine that freedom with the exercise of judgment and the acceptance of personal responsibility.

Miami demands the highest standards of professional conduct from its students, faculty, and staff. As a community of scholars, our fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge. Integrity in research and creative activities and in academic study is based on sound disciplinary practices and expectations, as well as a commitment to the values of honesty and integrity.

Any student caught committing academic dishonesty will, at a minimum, receive a 0 for the assignment at hand. For more information on academic dishonesty and potential punishments visit <http://MiamiOH.edu/integrity>.

Disability Services

If you are a student with a physical, learning, medical and/or psychiatric disability and feel that you may need a reasonable accommodation to fulfill the essential functions of the course that are listed in this syllabus, you are encouraged to contact the Office of Student Disability Services at 529-1541 (V/TTY), located in the Shriver Center, Room 304.

Course Outline

Introduction to Political Science

January 28

Goal: Is calling a political science a science just a funny joke?

Inequality History and Measurement

February 4

Goal: Understand how economic inequality is measured and how it has increased overtime.

– Cassidy, John. 2013. "American Inequality in Six Charts." *The New Yorker*.

Public Policy And Poverty

February 11

Goal: Identify public that target poverty and how the United State's policies differ from other countries.

- Daguerre, Anne. 2008. "The second phase of US welfare reform, 2000–2006: blaming the poor again?" *Social Policy & Administration* 42(4): 362-378.

February 18

Goal: Understand how federalism and inequality interact and the role of states in shaping inequality.

- Kelly, Nathan J., and Christopher Witko. 2012. "Federalism and American inequality." *The Journal of Politics* 74(2): 414-426.
- In-class work day on the policy project.

Inequality in Organizations

February 25

Goal: Understand pluralism and its expectations for the political process.

- Federalist # 10

March 4

Goal: Understand what interest groups are and how pluralism fails to explain the current status of interest groups.

- **Policy introductions due at midnight**
- Schlozman, Kay Lehman Philip Edward Jones, Hye Young You, Traci Burch, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady. 2014. "Louder Chorus — Same Accent: The Representation of Interests in Pressure Politics, 1991-2011." Brookings Report

March 11

- **March 9th Wellness Day**
- In-class work day on policy groups.

March 18

Goal: Understand the impact of interest groups on policy making.

- Selections from *Lobbying and policy change: who wins, who loses, and why* by Frank R. Baumgartner, Jeffrey M. Berry, Marie Hojnacki, Beth L. Leech and David C. Kimball.

March 25

Goal: Apply intersectional theories to how interest groups represent their members.

- **Policy groups memo due at midnight**
- **No In-Person Class on March 25**
- Strolovitch, Dara Z. 2006. "Do interest groups represent the disadvantaged? Advocacy at the intersections of race, class, and gender." *The Journal of Politics* 68(4):894-910.

April 1

Goal: Understand how political parties are incentivized to represent certain economic groups or others.

- **Policy groups memo due at midnight**
- Rigby, Elizabeth, and Gerald C. Wright. 2013. "Political parties and representation of the poor in the American states." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(3):552-565.

Public Opinion and Inequality

April 8

Goal: Know how preferences towards inequality policies vary across different groups and theories for why it differs.

- Pew. 2014. "Most See Inequality Growing, but Partisans Differ over Solutions"
- Page, Benjamin I., Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright. 2013. "Democracy and the policy preferences of wealthy Americans." *Perspectives on Politics* 11(1):51-73.

April 15

Goal: Explain how definitions of who is 'poor' shape our understanding of the politics of economic inequality.

- Ogorzalek, Thomas, Spencer Piston, and Luisa Godínez Puig. 2020. "Nationally Poor, Locally Rich: Income and Local Context in the 2016 Presidential Election." *Electoral Studies* 67

Political Representation

April 22

Goal: Explain how elected officials view of groups can shape the policy they create.

- **Policy analysis memo due at midnight**
- Schneider, Anne, and Helen Ingram. 1993. "Social construction of target populations: Implications for politics and policy." *American Political Science Review* 87(2) 334-347.

April 29

Goal: Describe how elected officials represent different economic classes and how experiments can be used to understand politics

- Chapter 2 of *Representing the Advantaged*
- Chapter 4 of *Representing the Advantaged*

May 6

- Chapter 5 of *Representing the Advantaged*
- Chapter 6 of *Representing the Advantaged*

May 11

- **Final Policy Memo due on May 11th at midnight.**
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Additional Resources

- Howe Writing Center: <http://miamioh.edu/hcwe>
- Students also may occasionally have personal issues that arise in the course of pursuing higher education or that may interfere with their academic performance. If you find yourself facing problems affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to call Student Counseling Service (513-529-4634). For emergencies outside of business hours, the Community and Counseling and Crisis Center (844-427-4747) has a 24-hour hotline.
- Students come to Miami from a variety of economic backgrounds. If you are having financial trouble I urge you to make use of the services available through Miami Cares Resources: <https://www.miamioh.edu/emss/offices/student-success-center/miami-cares/index.html>