Class and Inequality in American Politics

POL 345Y - Fall 2022
Harrison Hall 210
Tues & Thurs 2:50 pm – 4:10 pm

Instructor:	Dr. Kevin Reuning (ROY-ning)
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Course Website:	Canvas
Office:	Harrison Hall 222
Office Hours:	12 — 2pm Tues & Thurs
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

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 Quizzes (10 best quizzes)	25%
Activities/participation	15%
Policy Analysis Project	
Policy Introduction	5%
Policy Groups	15%
Policy Analysis	15%
Policy Final	25%

Weekly Quizzes

There will be short Canvas quizzes every week that will be graded on a 5 point scale. You will have 15 minutes to complete the quiz, and will often be given time in-class to complete them. The purpose here is not necessarily to judge what you have learned but to make sure you are engaged in the weeks readings and discussions. You will be given 13 quizzes throughout the semester and only your best 10 will be used for your final score (so if you

miss one or do poorly on a few it won't matter). **Quiz will need to be completed by Friday at midnight.**

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.**

Activities/Participation

Throughout the semester we will work on in-class activities. You will be graded in your participation in these activities. If you miss class you need to check the modules on canvas. I will post any activity we did there and you will be expected to submit it within a week of the class you missed. **Because you have a week to do this, there will be no extensions.**

Policy 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 September 6)

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 October 18)

The second assignment will be three 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. You will apply what we learned about groups to understand what you have found.

Policy Representation (Due November 15)

The third assignment will be three pages (double spaced). You will identify Congressional leaders who have an important role in shaping the policy you are interested. You will then look up their backgrounds and identify how it could shape their opinions/perception of your policy.

Final Memo (Due December 9)

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. The conclusion will touch on what you think will happen to the policy over the next 5 or 10 years. 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

    August 23

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

Inequality History and Measurement

    August 25

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

        – Pages 1 to 25 of Donovan, Sarah A., Joseph Dalaker, Marc Labonte, Paul D. Romero. 2021. "The U.S. Income Distribution: Trends and Issues." Congressional Research Service. R44705.

What is Class?

    August 30 & September 1

        Goal: Understand how economic class shapes an individual's life.

        Chapter 1 of Lee, Elizabeth M. 2016. *Class and Campus Life: Managing and Experiencing Inequality at an Elite College.* Cornell University Press.

    September 6 & 8

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

        – Suhay, E., Tenenbaum, M., and Bartola, A. 2022. *Explanations for Inequality and Partisan Polarization in the US, 1980–2020*. In The Forum. De Gruyter.

Inequality in Political Organizations

    September 13

        Goal: Introduce different types of political organizations

        NO IN-PERSON CLASS ON SEPTEMBER 15.

    September 20 & 22

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

        – Federalist # 10

        – 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

    September 27 & 29

        Goal: Understand the unique nature of labor unions and how they shape class politics

        – Frymer, P., and Grumbach, J. M. 2021. Labor unions and white racial politics. *American Journal of Political Science*, 65(1), 225-240.

    October 4 & 6

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

        – 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.

    October 11 & 13

        Goal: Understand the impact of groups on policy making.

        – Hertel-Fernandez, A. 2014. "Who passes business's "model bills"? Policy capacity and corporate influence in US state politics." *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3), 582-602.

        – Flavin, P. 2018. "Labor union strength and the equality of political representation." *British Journal of Political Science*, 48(4), 1075-1091.

Political Representation and Inequality

October 18 & 20

Policy Groups Paper due

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

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

October 25 & 27

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*

November 1 & 3

– Chapter 5 of *Representing the Advantaged*

– Chapter 6 of *Representing the Advantaged*

Public Policy for the Poor and the Rich

November 8 & 10

Goal: Identify fiscal policies 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.

November 15 & 17

Policy Representation Paper

Goal: Be able to explain how taxes impact income and wealth distributions and understand how our current tax system developed.

– Pages 107 - 133 of Brownlee, W. Elliot. 2004. *Federal Taxation in America.* Cambridge University Press.

November 22

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.

November 29 & December 1

American Factory

December 9

– **Final Policy Memo due on December 9th at midnight.**

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`