

**POLITICS & INEQUALITY**  
**POLI 203/AMST 203**

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Dr. Lesley Lavery  
POLI 203/Spring 2013  
M/W/F 9:40-10:40am  
Carnegie 05

Office Hours:  
M: 10:45-11:45  
F: 8:20-9:20  
Leonard Center – Track  
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**Course Description**

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*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...*  
Thomas Jefferson  
*Declaration of Independence, 1776*

Americans, at least since the Founding era, have cherished the *ideal* of political equality. Unlike European nations, the United States did not inherit economic class distinctions from a feudal past. But time and again, American social reformers and mass movements have highlighted inconsistencies between the *value* of equality and the *actual practice* of democracy. Through the extension of rights to citizens who were previously excluded or treated as second-class citizens, such as women and African Americans, the polity has become more inclusive. Over the last three decades, however, American citizens have grown increasingly unequal in terms of income and wealth. Economic inequality is now greater than at any other point in American history except for the Gilded Age, and it continues to escalate. Far greater economic inequality exists in the United States today than in other western, industrialized nations. This new inequality began to emerge soon after the rights revolution had ended formal, legal discrimination. Tragically, economic divisions now reinforce many of the old divisions of race, ethnicity, and gender, undermining the promise of greater equality.

The central question posed by this course is the implications of such vast economic inequality for American democracy. Do these disparities between citizens curtail, limit, and perhaps threaten the functioning of genuinely representative governance? The readings and assignments in this course are designed to examine this question from several angles. We will explore what other social scientists, mostly economists and sociologists, know about contemporary inequality, particularly in terms of its causes, manifestation, and socio-economic effects. Then we will consider the concept of inequality in political theory and in American political thought. The remainder of the course will focus on the current relationship between economic inequality and each of three major aspects of the American political system: political voice, representation, and public policy.

**Textbook**

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Jacobs, Lawrence R., Skocpol, Theda. (2005). *Inequality in American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn*. Russell Sage Foundation: New York.

**All other readings will be posted to Moodle or available via Library E-Reserve. You must bring a copy of each reading to class every day.**

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**Course Requirements & Objectives**

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You are expected to come to class having read and thought about the assigned material. This class relies heavily on student participation. I will expect you to respond to the materials in class with questions, comments, revelations, and frustrations.

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|------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>1) Class Participation</b>      | <b>10%</b> |
| <b>2) My Lens Reflective Essay</b> | <b>10%</b> |
| <b>3) Critical Essays</b>          | <b>30%</b> |
| <b>4) Final Project</b>            | <b>50%</b> |

**Student Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Comment on the status of current inequality particularly in terms of its causes, manifestation and socio-economic effects
- Identify inconsistencies in American political theory/thought and practice
- Assess the relationship between economic inequality and political voice, representation, and public policy
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between economic inequality and democracy by illuminating the dynamics operating at the local level and considering them in relationship to national developments

**Student Evaluation**

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**Grading Scale:**

Grade	Range	Grade	Range
A	92-100	C	72-76.9
A-	90-91.9	C-	70-71.9
B+	87-89.9	D+	67-69.9
B	82-86.9	D	62-66.9
B-	80-81.9	D-	60-61.9
C+	77-79.9	F	Below 60

Students are encouraged to keep track of their progress in the course and consult with me in person should they have any questions or concerns about their performance.

Assignment	Due Date	Assignment	Due Date
<b>My Lens Reflective Essay</b>	<b>2/11/13</b>	<b>On-Site Visit Report</b>	<b>4/01/13</b>
<b>Socio-Economic Comparison</b>	<b>2/18/13</b>	<b>Critical Essay #2</b>	<b>4/08/13</b>
<b>Paper Topic</b>	<b>2/25/13</b>	<b>First Draft Final Paper</b>	<b>4/15/13</b>
<b>Critical Essay #1</b>	<b>3/11/13</b>	<b>Critical Essay #3</b>	<b>4/29/13</b>
<b>Paper Outline</b>	<b>3/25/12</b>	<b>Final Paper</b>	<b>5/06/13</b>

## **POLITICS & INEQUALITY**

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#### **PARTICIPATION (10%)**

I **strongly** value class participation. It is extremely important that students thoroughly read the assigned articles and chapters and come to class ready to discuss the readings. The participation grade is based on how engaged and reflective students are in class discussions. This translates into making comments, asking questions, and drawing linkages. Hence, the **quantity** and **quality** of students' participation is valued. Also crucial is that students consistently display a high level **respect** for one another in the course of these discussions. The participation grading scale ranges from 0 to 5:

- 0 = does not attend class
- 1 = attends class but *does not contribute* to the class discussion
- 2 = attends class but *contributes minimally* to the discussion
- 3 = attends class and *contributes* to the discussion at a surface level
- 4 = attends class and *contributes* to class discussion through numerous reflective questions and answers that display a thorough understanding of the reading material and topic(s) addressed in class.
- 5 = attends class and *contributes* to class discussion through numerous questions and answers that display a very thorough understanding of the reading material and topic(s) addressed in the class.

At the end of each class I will assign an additional participation point to the student who has contributed most meaningfully to that day's discussion.

***On occasion I may ask you to write a reflection on a particular reading or experience or post to a Moodle forum. These activities will count towards your grade for participation.*** If you have difficulty attending class regularly or arriving on time, you should NOT be enrolled in this course.

#### **MY LENS REFLECTIVE ESSAY (10%)**

On **February 11<sup>th</sup>** you will turn in a 5-8 page paper (10% of your final grade) reflecting on how your race/ethnic identify, class location, gender identity, occupation, education, religious/spiritual orientation, formative political and social events, and view of human nature contribute to your own interpretive perspective. The full assignment appears as an addendum to this syllabus.

#### **CRITICAL RESPONSE ESSAYS (30%)**

You will be responsible for three critical essays during the semester (each worth 10% of your final grade). In each critical essay you should try to (1) isolate an important concept, theme, question, or disagreement in the readings, (2) clarify its meaning and significance, (3) present a critical analytic perspective on it (you can supplement with outside materials). Each essay should be 3-5 double-spaced pages. Essays are due on 3/11, 4/8, and 4/29. The full assignment appears as an addendum to this syllabus.

#### **FINAL PAPER (50%)**

For details, see the syllabus addendum.

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**Other Important Information**

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**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please meet with the Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, who serves as the coordinator for services for students with disabilities. It is important to meet with her at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place to begin the semester successfully. The Associate Dean can be reached in the Office of Student Affairs, 119 Weyerhaeuser, by phone at 651-696-6220, or email [llandrem@macalester.edu](mailto:llandrem@macalester.edu).

**Respect for Diversity:**

In pursuit of the goal of academic excellence, I seek to develop and nurture diversity, believing that it strengthens classroom engagement, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. I do not condone discrimination against any member of the school's community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability status, health status, or veteran status. I welcome your ideas and suggestions about how to ensure the creation of such an inclusive learning community.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Standards of academic integrity are set forth in the Macalester College Student Handbook. Students are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with the College Honor System as violations will be taken very seriously. If you are uncertain on how to properly document/cite other work, please refer to <http://www.macalester.edu/library/research/general/citing.html>, or feel free to ask. *If you cheat or plagiarize on an assignment, you will receive a zero for that assignment with no possibility of making it up.*

**Late Work:**

Every day a paper is late, 5% is deducted from that paper's final score. I will not accept work that is more than one week overdue and final grades will be turned in on the last day of finals, thus you will not receive credit for any work turned in after that point in time.

**A Note on Email:**

I prefer to meet during office hours than respond via email. If you do email me, please account for a 24-hour grace period on weekdays and a 48-hour grace period on weekends for response time. If it is critical that I respond sooner, please note that in the subject line.

**Walking Office Hours:**

This semester I'm trying something new. I will hold walking office hours on the track in the Leonard Center. If you'd like to meet with me, come and join me. If you cannot meet with me during my scheduled office hours, require a private meeting, or need written feedback, please email to schedule an appointment.

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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**\*\*\*\*Reading assigned on a particular day should be completed BEFORE that class\*\*\*\***

There may be some reading substitutions based on schedule changes or the discovery of new and relevant material.

**Part I: ECONOMIC INEQUALITY: TRENDS, CAUSES, MANIFESTATIONS**

**Week 1: 1/28, 1/30, 2/1**

***M: Introduction***

Course & Assignment Overview

Film Excerpt: "People Like Us: Social Class in America"

Homework: Watch, Johnson, Jamie. 2003. *Born Rich*. Documentary. (approx. 67 min.)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xhuSxyHWRw>. Be prepared to discuss your reaction to the film in class.

***W: What is Your Lens? Discussion and Assignment Description***

Blanding, Michael. 2007. "Can We Talk?" *Ed. Magazine* (Fall).

[http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news\\_events/ed/2007/fall/features/race.html](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news_events/ed/2007/fall/features/race.html)

"Chapter 1: An Introduction: At the Root of Identity," pp. 1-15, in Steele, Claude M. 2011.

*Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*. W. W. Norton & Company.

***F: What Inequality? Trends, Data and Measurement***

Skype Guest: Indivar Dutta-Gupta, The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities

Arloc Sherman and Chad Stone, (2010). "Income Gaps Between Very Rich and Everyone Else More than Tripled in Last Three Decades, New Data Show," The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

Explore:

Congressional Budget Office, 2011. *Trends in the Distribution of Household Income between 1979 and 2007*. (Especially Appendices A, B and C) : <http://www.cbo.gov/publication/42729>

The United States Census Bureau: Poverty: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/>

Economic Policy Institute. 2011. "When Income Grows, Who Gains?" Interactive Graphic based on the data gathered by Emmanuel Sae:

<http://stateofworkingamerica.org/who-gains/#/?start=1972&end=2008>

**Week 2: 2/4, 2/6, 2/8**

***M: The Great Divergence***

Noah, Timothy. (2010). "The Great Divergence" *Slate*.

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Wilkinson, Will. 2010. "The Inequality Myth: Is Rising Inequality in America Exaggerated?" *The Economist*, September 17th. <http://www.economist.com/node/21010894>

**W: Winner-Take-All**

Hacker, Jacob S. and Pierson, Paul. (2010). "Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States." *Politics & Society* 38(2): 152-204.

Bartels, Larry. (2012). *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the Gilded Age*. Chapter 2

**F: Systems, Structures and Taxes**

Kevin Phillips, *Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich* (New York: Broadway, 2002), Chaps. 5, Sections 3 & 5.

Joel Slemrod and Jon Bakija, *Taxing Ourselves: A Citizen's Guide to the Debate Over Taxes* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008), Chapter 2.

**Week 3: 2/11, 2/13, 2/15    \*\*\*REFLECTIVE ESSAY DUE\*\*\***

**M: A Closer Look at Class**

Janny Scott and David Leonhardt, "Class in America: Shadowy Lines that Still Divide," [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/15/national/class/OVERVIEW-FINAL.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/15/national/class/OVERVIEW-FINAL.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000) Chap. 1.

Explore:

*New York Times*. 2005. "How Class Works." Interactive Graphic.

[http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/national/20050515\\_CLASS\\_GRAPHIC/index\\_01.html](http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/national/20050515_CLASS_GRAPHIC/index_01.html)

*New York Times*. Weddings/Celebrations:

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/fashion/weddings/index.html>

**W: A Closer Look at Class**

Katherine S. Newman and Victor Tan Chen (2007). *The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in America*. Boston: Beacon Press. Chapters 1 & 4.

David K. Shipler. (2004). *The Working Poor: Invisible in America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Chapter 1.

Teresa A. Sullivan, Elizabeth Warren, and Jay Lawrence Westbrook, *The Fragile Middle Class: Americans in Debt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), Chap. 1.

**F: Intersections of Class & Gender**

Barbara Ehrenreich, Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America (New York: Owl Books, 2002). Introduction and Chapter 3.

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Barbara Ehrenreich, "Nickel and Dimed (2011 Version)." *The Huffington Post*.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/barbara-ehrenreich/nickel-and-dimed-2011-ver\\_b\\_922330.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/barbara-ehrenreich/nickel-and-dimed-2011-ver_b_922330.html)

Jane L. Collins and Victoria Mayer, (2010). *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom in the Low-Wage Labor Market*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.  
Chapter 4

**Week 4: 2/18, 2/20, 2/22 \*\*\*INITIAL SOCIOECONOMIC COMPARISONS DUE\*\*\***

***M: Intersections of Class & Race***

Massey, Douglas S. (1990). "American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass." *American Journal of Sociology* 96(2): 329-357.

Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Introduction.

***W: Intersections of Class & Race***

Pew Research Center. 2011. "Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks, Hispanics." *Pew Social & Demographic Trends*. [www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/07/26/wealth-gaps-rise-to-record-highs-between-whites-blacks-hispanics/](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/07/26/wealth-gaps-rise-to-record-highs-between-whites-blacks-hispanics/)

In Class Film "Frontline: Two Nations of Black America"

***F: Does Inequality Matter?***

Christopher Jencks, "Does Inequality Matter?" *Daedalus* (winter 2002): pp. 49-65.

Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future* (New York: N.W. Norton and Company, 2012), Chapter 5, A Democracy in Peril.

Joseph E. Stiglitz (2013), "Inequality is Holding Back the Recovery" *The New York Times*, January 19<sup>th</sup>: <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/19/inequality-is-holding-back-the-recovery/?hp>

**Part II: ROOTS OF INEQUALITY IN AMERICA**

**Week 5: 2/25, 2/27, 2/29 \*\*\*PAPER TOPICS DUE\*\*\***

***M: How Political Theorists Think about American Inequality***

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1971)  
Chapters 2 & 5.

Robert J. Antonio (ed), *Marx and Modernity* (Malden, Oxford, Victoria, Berlin: Blackwell, 2003) pp. 113-119, 135-42, 157-165, 199-203.

***W: Inequality in American Political Thought***

Thomas Jefferson, "Declaration of Independence."

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James Madison, *Federalist #10*.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Declaration of Sentiments," Seneca Falls.

Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address."

Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream."

***F: Inequality in Constitutional Law***

*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896.

*Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, KS*, 1954.

*San Antonio v. Rodriguez*, 1973.

**Week 6: 3/4, 3/6, 3/8**

***M: Inequality in Constitutional Law***

Robert A. Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). Chapters 1, 2, and 5.

**American Political Development**

***W: Gendered Policies***

Suzanne Mettler, (1998). "Dividing Citizenship by Gender: The Implementation of Unemployment Insurance and Aid to Dependent Children, 1935-1950," *Studies in American Political Development* 12: 303-342.

***F: The Place of Race***

Joe Soss, Richard C. Fording and Sanford Schram, *Disciplining the Poor: Neoliberal Paternalism and the Persistent Power of Race* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), Chapters 4 & 5.

Richard M. Valelly, (1993). "Party, Coercion, and Inclusion: The Two Reconstructions of the South's Electoral Politics" *Politics & Society* 21(1): 37-67.

**III. INEQUALITIES IN POLITICAL VOICE**

**Week 7: 3/11, 3/13, 3/15 \*\*\*CRITICAL ESSAY 1 DUE\*\*\***

***M: Inequalities in Political Voice***

Jacobs & Skocpol Chapter 2

Verba, Sidney. "Would the Dream of Political Equality Turn out to Be a Nightmare?"

***W: Inequality in Participation***

Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen (1996). *Mobilization, Participation and Democracy in America*. Prentice Hall Inc., Pearson Education. Chapter 1.

Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, "Civic Participation and the Equality Problem," in *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, ed. Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999) pp. 427-59.



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***F: Inequality in Participation***

Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, “Who Participates? Economic Circumstances and Needs” in *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, “Who Participates? Race, Ethnicity and Gender” in *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

Homework: Find journal articles, statistics, or evidence in the popular press to make and support an argument about the state of the relationship between economics, gender and/or race and participation today.

**Week 8: SPRING BREAK**

**III: INEQUALITY IN REPRESENTATION**

**Week 9: 3/25, 3/27, 3/29 \*\*\*PAPER OUTLINES DUE\*\*\***

***M: Final Project Updates***

***W: Representation in Media & Public Opinion***

Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). Chapter 3

Nathan Glazer, “Why Don’t Americans Care about Income Inequality?” Wiener Inequality and Social Policy Seminar, Kennedy School, Harvard University, February 11, 2002. Available at: [www.ksg.harvard.edu/inequality/Seminar/Papers/Glazer.pdf](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/inequality/Seminar/Papers/Glazer.pdf)

Cooke, Kristina, David Rohde, and Ryan McNeill. 2012. “The Undeserving Poor,” *Thomson-Reuters*. [www.reuters.com/subjects/income-inequality/indiana](http://www.reuters.com/subjects/income-inequality/indiana)

***F: Representation in Organized Interests***

Kay L. Schlozman and John T. Tierney, *Organized Interests and American Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986) Chapter 4.

Ellen S. Miller and Micah L. Sifry, “Labor’s Loss,” *American Prospect*, August 14, 2000. Available at: [www.prospect.org/web/printfriendlyview.wv?id=5365/](http://www.prospect.org/web/printfriendlyview.wv?id=5365/).

Catherine M. Paden, *Civil Rights Advocacy on Behalf of the Poor* (Pennsylvania: University Pennsylvania Press, 2011) Chapter 7.

**Week 10: 4/1, 4/3, 4/5 \*\*\*ON-SITE VISIT REPORTS DUE\*\*\***

***M: Inequality in American Governance***

Jacobs & Skocpol Chapter 3

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***W: Economic Inequality & Political Representation***

Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2012). Chapter 8.

Larry M. Bartels, “Economic Inequality and Political Representation,” Paper delivered at Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, August 2002. Available at: [www.princeton.edu/~bartels/papers/](http://www.princeton.edu/~bartels/papers/).

***F: Race, Gender, & Political Representation***

Guinier, Lani, “The Representation of Minority Interests in Congress,” In *Classifying by Race*, Paul Peterson, ed. Princeton University Press, 1995, 21-49.

Michele L. Swers, “Are Women More Likely to Vote for Women’s Issue Bills than Their Male Colleagues?” *LSQ*, 23:435-48.

**IV: IMPLICATIONS OF INEQUALITY FOR PUBLIC POLICY & VICE VERSA**

**Week 11: 4/8, 4/10, 4/12 \*\*\*CRITICAL ESSAY 2 DUE\*\*\***

***M: Inequality and Public Policy***

Jacobs & Skocpol Chapter 4

***W: Education***

Jennifer L. Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick, *The American Dream and the Public Schools* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) Chaps. 1-3.

\*“Revising No Child Left Behind,” in *The CQ Researcher*

***F: Family Support***

Janet C. Gornick and Marcia K. Meyers, *Families That Work: Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment* (New York: Russell Sage 2003), selected chapters.

**Week 12: 4/15, 4/17, 4/19 \*\*\*\*\*FULL DRAFT OF FINAL PAPERS DUE\*\*\***

***M: In-Class Peer Feedback on Final Papers***

***W: Incarceration***

Joshua Guetzkow and Bruce Western, “The Political Consequences of Mass Imprisonment” in *Remaking America: Democracy and Public Policy in an Age of Inequality*, edited by Joe Soss, Jacob S. Hacker and Suzanne Mettler (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007).

\*“Downsizing Prisons,” in *The CQ Researcher*

***F: Social Security***

Andrea Campbell, *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Political Activism and the American Welfare State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

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\*“Rethinking Retirement,” in *The CQ Researcher*

**Week 13: 4/22, 4/24, 4/26**

**How Policy Reshapes Citizenship: Political Power, Preferences, and Efficacy**

***M: Policy Design***

Helen Ingram, “Poverty, Policy, and the Social Construction of Target Groups,” in *Remaking America: Democracy and Public Policy in an Age of Inequality* edited by Joe Soss, Jacob S. Hacker, and Suzanne Mettler (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007).

Joe Soss, “Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action,” *American Political Science Review* 93 (1999): 363-80.

**W: Policy Feedback**

Suzanne Mettler, “Bringing the State Back In to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback Effects of the G.I. Bill for World War II Veterans,” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 96, No. 2 (June 2002): 351-365.

***F: What to do about all of this Inequality***

Timothy Noah, *The Great Divergence: America’s Growing Inequality Crisis and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2012). Chapter 11.

**Course Evaluations**

**Week 14: 4/29, 5/1, 5/3 \*\*\*CRITICAL ESSAY 3 DUE\*\*\***

**Student Presentations**

**Week 15: 5/6 \*\*\*REVISED FINAL PAPERS DUE \*\*\***

**Student Presentations**

**FINAL: Saturday 5/11, 8-10 a.m.**

**Student Presentations**

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**My Lens Reflective Essay (10% of Final Grade)**

This assignment is designed to help you reflect on how your identity, background and surroundings relate to your analysis of poverty and inequality.

Write a 5-8 page reflective paper addressing the questions outlined below. This assignment will be graded on a five-point scale and will be assessed on the degree to which you discuss the required questions.

- 1) Reflect on how the following experiences have contributed to your own interpretive perspective. The list below is not exhaustive. Feel free to include any other formative/influential factors of your background and experience.
  - **Racial/Ethnic Identity:** Has racial and/or ethnic identity been important in your life? How so? Why? Why not? How has its relative importance or unimportance influenced how you understand and deal with poverty? How has your racial/ethnic identity impacted your life chances?
  - **Class Location:** How would you describe your family's class location? What is your definition of class that you used to assess your family's class location? Has your family's class location changed in the past few generations? What impact has your family's class location had on how you understand and deal with poverty? How has your class location impacted your life chances?
  - **Gender Identity:** How would you identify your gender? What experiences in your life do you feel have been influenced by gender? How do these past experiences influence your ongoing understanding of poverty and how you deal with it? How has this impacted your life chances?
  - **Sexual Orientation (optional):** How would you describe your sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual, straight, etc.)? What experiences related to your sexual orientation have impacted you (either positively or negatively)? Have you ever been part of an institution or social group that implicitly or explicitly (de)legitimized your sexual orientation? How has your sexual orientation impacted your life chances? (Please note that you are not required to disclose your sexual orientation).
  - **Occupation:** What kinds of occupations do your parents/guardians have? What occupations did they have while you were growing up? What barriers, if any, did they have in realizing occupational goals? What were their expectations around the kind of occupation you would have? What are your own expectations for yourself concerning occupation? What values are important in selecting an occupation?
  - **Level of formal education:** What level and type of education do your parents have (public/private, high school/college/professional degree)? What barriers to education, if any, did they face? How did their educational level influence your experiences growing up? How have their levels of education, and your own level of education, influenced both your understanding of poverty as well as your life chances?
  - **Religious/Spiritual Orientation:** Do you have a particular religious or spiritual orientation or not? How does this orientation influence your understanding of poverty and how you deal with it?

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- **Formative Political and Social Events:** What are some the formative political and social events in your life? How have they influenced your lens and how you think about poverty and inequality?
- **View of Human Nature:** Do you believe that people have essential characteristics (i.e., a set and unchangeable human nature)? If so, what are these? If not, briefly explain. As you think about this, what are the implications for social change?
- **Rural/Urban/Suburban:** What kind of community did you grow up in? How did this community impact your perspective on poverty and inequality and life chances?
- **Nationality:** What do you consider your nationality to be? What nation did you grow up in? How does your nationality impact your perspective on poverty as well as your own life chances?
- **Media Exposure:** What kinds of explanations of poverty do you think you have absorbed from the media? In other words, what have been messages about the poor or poverty that you have heard from the media?

2) Given your own experiences and understandings, and based on your answers to the questions above, why do you think the U.S. has the highest level of inequality of all advanced industrial countries, and a 16% rate of poverty (U.S. 2010 Census Bureau Update)?

3) How, specifically, did your experiences discussed in question #1 influence your answer to question #2 (i.e., your understanding of poverty or lack thereof)? In other words, how have your experiences influenced your understanding (lens) on poverty? If you don't see many connections, what does inform your current perspective on poverty?

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**Critical Response Essays (30%)**

You are responsible for three short critical essays addressing the reading and course materials. In these essays you should:

- 1) Focus in on an important concept, theme, question, or disagreement that arises in the readings;
- 2) Clarify both the meaning and the significance of that particular concept, question, or disagreement; and
- 3) Present a critical analytic perspective on it.

Your first essay should address the roots of inequality articles on trends, causes and manifestations of economic inequality. Your second essay should focus on inequality in voice and representation and the ways in which race or gender interact with class. The final essay should focus on implications for public policy – feel free to explore policy issues we haven't discussed in class. Essays are due on the following dates, but may be turned in any time in class before the dates below:

- Critical Essay #1: 3/11
- Critical Essay #2: 4/8
- Critical Essay #3: 4/29

Length: Each response essay will be worth 10% of your final grade and should be **3-5 double-spaced pages** each (I will not read beyond the 5<sup>th</sup> page).

Number of Readings: At a minimum each essay should refer to an issue, concept, question, or theme presented in 3 course readings (or documentaries, or reports, etc.). Readings do not have to be from the same day, though this is permissible acceptable. Note, however, that you are expected to write a *focused* response (i.e. do not try to demonstrate your grasp of all the readings in these very short essays).

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**FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT**

**Overview:** Quality of life in the United States varies dramatically from neighborhood to neighborhood. This means things like public safety, access to healthcare, the presence of grocery stores, and educational opportunities available may be world class in one neighborhood, and of the quality you would find in an impoverished country just a few blocks or miles away. Generally speaking, inter-neighborhood disparities have sharpened as economic inequality – and residential segregation (both racial and economic) – has grown over the last 30-40 years.

Your task is to acquaint yourself with the socio-economic features of two distinct neighborhoods that exist in the same general vicinity, typically in the same county or congressional district. You are then to conduct a political or civic analysis comparing the two places. The purpose of this assignment is to facilitate understanding of the relationship between economic inequality (and racial and gender inequality if they are also apparent) and democracy by investigating and describing the dynamics operating at the local level, and by considering them in the context of the national developments we discuss in class.

You may choose localities in the Twin Cities, or elsewhere in the United States (such as near where you are from or where you expect to work if upon graduation) as long as you will be able to spend some time there between now and late March. The research will proceed in a few steps. First, you will do two brief assignments to help acquaint you with the socio-economic well-being of the two neighborhoods and to compare them. Then, you will conduct civic/political analysis, and write a research paper.

**Objective:**

Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between economic inequality and democracy by explaining and critiquing dynamics operating at the local level and describing them in relation to national developments and contexts.

**Grade Break Down and Due Dates:**

<b>Part 1: Initial Socio-economic Comparison</b>	<b>(February 18<sup>th</sup>)</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Part 2: On-Site Visit to Each Neighborhood</b>	<b>(April 1<sup>st</sup>)</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Part 3: Research Paper</b>		<b>20%</b>
<b>-Topic Choice</b>	<b>(February 25<sup>th</sup>)</b>	
<b>-Outline</b>	<b>(March 25<sup>th</sup>)</b>	
<b>-Final</b>	<b>(Draft April 15<sup>th</sup>, Final May 6<sup>th</sup>)</b>	
<b>Part 4: Presentation</b>		<b>10%</b>

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**Part I: Initial Socio-economic Comparison (due in class on February 18):**

-Decide on the two neighborhoods you will compare. Choose one that is a fairly wealthy neighborhood, and one that is relatively impoverished. They must be proximate to one another, and there must be an observable economic disparity between them. This will take some exploration, and you might change your neighborhood slightly to focus on particular Census tracts after some initial investigation of the data.

-Use the Census web site's Fact-Finder (<http://factfinder2.census.gov>) to gather data. First, print out fact sheets for each neighborhood. The procedure for identifying fact sheets is detailed here: <https://ask.census.gov/faq.php?id=5000&faqId=1699>. You will want to print out a demographic profile as well as the various tables on social, economic, and housing traits, based on recent ACS estimates.

*Hints:* If you have places already in mind, it will be easier to navigate the Census site using addresses or zip codes to anchor your investigation. The maps feature of the Fact-Finder page (located under the Geographies tab) is also helpful; it allows you to click on particular locations and to obtain the various geo-codes associated with those places. Census Tracts are small, homogenous geographic areas and in most cases are going to be the best level of analysis for you to consider, though you might also consider zip codes (sometimes represented as 5 digit ZCTAs under the Geographies tab). It might also be helpful to use these reference maps to identify tract numbers and then look them up:

[https://www.census.gov/geo/www/maps/pl10\\_map\\_suite/tract.html](https://www.census.gov/geo/www/maps/pl10_map_suite/tract.html)

-Use the USDA's Food Desert Locator (<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-desert-locator.aspx>) to determine whether or not the tracts you have chosen fall under this classification.

-Print a map highlighting the neighborhoods you have selected. Use the Census Fact Finder, the Food Desert Locator, or Google Maps.

-Compare the two neighborhoods, and identify the 7-10 disparities (or similarities) that you find most striking.

-Write 1-2 pages describing your findings, your reflections upon them, and any questions they raise in your mind. Use this write-up as an opportunity to consider the direction in which you plan to take the final paper.

-Staple together and turn in: the printed fact sheets (with your focal indicators highlighted), the maps, and your written reflections.

*Note:* If your neighborhoods are too similar in median family income and/or in the percentage of adults who have college degrees, I will require you to replace one of them and replicate this comparison with a neighborhood that differs more substantially for the final project.



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**Part 2: On-Site Visits to Each Neighborhood (may be turned in any time through April 1<sup>st</sup>)**

-Go to each of the neighborhoods you have selected, and explore them. Keep your eyes and ears open in the manner of a social scientist. Bring paper and a pen to record observations in real time. It may also be useful to print and bring a map to record the routes you walk or drive and the locations of what you see. Focus on visible infrastructure, and write down as many details as possible. Take pictures (not of people – at least not without their permission – but rather of buildings, parks, potholes, restaurants, cobblestones, etc.).

Pay attention to:

- the type, age, and state of repair of the housing stock;
- the number, type and variety of businesses (make note of any unused buildings or abandoned homes)

Use your visit and public directories to investigate:

- primary modes of transportation and availability of public transportation;
- number and quality of local parks and recreational facilities in each area;

Visit a local grocery store in each area to assess availability, prices, and quality of products, being careful to note differences. Compare the quality of produce and cost for:

- lettuce, tomatoes, and at least one in-season fruit
- one brand and type of cereal, milk, and orange juice,
- bread, ground beef, chicken, baby food/formula, and diapers

*Note:* if you have chosen a neighborhood that qualifies as a food desert, try to identify where residents might be likely to purchase food

-Write up your findings in a 2-3 page report.

-Staple together and turn in: your report along with the list of price comparisons, your field notes, and any pictures that you believe are particularly illustrative (no more than 2-3, captioned).

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**Part 3. The Research Paper (February 25th, March 25th, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, May 6<sup>th</sup>)**

-Please choose from the topics below. You will report to me your choice of topic by **February 25th** I will use this information to place you in working groups when we discuss papers in class.

-On **March 25<sup>th</sup>** you will bring a paper outline to class. You should specify a primary argument in the outline. You should also specify how you will break the argument down into reasonable subsections and what type of evidence you will use to support the argument in each subsection. I will provide written feedback on these outlines and may invite you to office hours for additional conversation. You will have a few minutes of class time on the 25<sup>th</sup> to update your peers on the progress of your project.

-The final paper should be 12-15 pages (typed, double-spaced, with a title page, parenthetical citations, and a bibliography) in length. You will turn in your final paper via email and bring four copies to class on **April 15th**. Students will meet in small groups during class time that day to review one another's papers. I will then provide additional feedback as necessary. Final drafts of papers are due on **May 6<sup>th</sup>** by 9:30 am.

-You will want to draw on the data collected for the first two assignments in your research paper. You should also collect additional data and reports, and may conduct some interviews with public officials, civic leaders, or others if you wish. Be sure to draw on appropriate readings from class to put your findings in context. Use graphs and tables to summarize quantitative data.

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**Part 4. Final In-Class Research Presentation (April 29<sup>th</sup> - May 6<sup>th</sup>).**

Presentation length and style will vary depending on course enrollments. If the class is fairly evenly divided on their choice of topics, one class period will be reserved for each of the topics listed below. If the division is less even, presentations will be spread out accordingly. If enrollment in the course ends up below 20, we will not use the final exam period. If more than 20 students are enrolled in the course, all students will be required to show up during the final exam period to hear remaining student presentations.

An updated presentation schedule will be posted by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Student presentations should be no more than 10 minutes in length. Your presentation should parallel your final research paper. Speak directly to the “big questions” posed by each topic below and look for fun and creative ways to address your peers.

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**Topic 1: Political Participation and Representation:** While most Americans are willing to tolerate economic inequality, they generally support the principle of political equality, meaning that all citizens are equal before the law and have equal political rights. Evaluate the degree of political voice and the amount of political influence in each of your two neighborhoods. Do your findings suggest that political equality exists? Why or why not? Does it matter?

*Suggestions*

-Compare voter registration rates, partisanship, and turnout rates across localities for local, congressional, and presidential elections. To do this, you will need to visit the county board of elections. (This will require that you find out which wards are included in your neighborhoods. In some localities, this data will be available on the internet, but you may need to go in person to request it. Check out county websites to explore such possibilities.)

-Consider the extent to which each neighborhood is represented – both in descriptive and substantive terms – by their Member of Congress. (*This comparison will be especially interesting if your two neighborhoods are both in the same congressional district.*) Check out his/her voting record on several issues. To what extent does it seem response to needs in each area? Also, has the Member of Congress addressed particular needs in each area? You might call the local office or check out the web site of the MC to explore this.

-Learn what you can about politically active groups in each neighborhood. Who are they? What are their goals? To what extent do local public officials seem to pay attention to them, mobilize them, count on them for support, and address their needs?

-Attend a city council meeting or a meeting for the county board. Are your neighborhoods represented by different members? What kinds of issues are discussed, and how do they reflect the needs or preferences of the constituencies you observe?

-In your paper, be sure to discuss your findings as they relate to class readings and lectures (Schlozman, Rosenstone and Hansen, Bartels, etc.)

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**Topic 2. Educational Opportunity:** Historically, Americans have valued the role of education in providing equal opportunity to citizens, and support for government spending on education has increased with time. The modern economy bestows an ever-increasing income premium on the most highly educated people. How do your two neighborhoods compare in terms of granting equal access to education and equal quality of education? To the extent that educational outcomes are unequal between the two neighborhoods, do you attribute these disparities to educational policies, other policies, or other factors? What difference do disparities make for political equality? Explain.

*Suggestions*

-Identify the elementary, middle, and high schools in each neighborhood. Assess and compare the two in terms of test scores, graduation rates, per pupil spending, percentage of student body with special needs and qualifying for free or reduced price lunch aid, local tax base, amount of state & federal funding, and average teacher salary. Investigate the politics of each school district in recent years, probing the nature of the most pressing concerns and how they have been handled.

-In the course of your research, try to visit a school in each neighborhood. Call ahead to ask if you may have a tour or speak with a principal or vice principal. (*Note that administrators may not be able or willing to grant your request.*) Observe general up-keep of physical properties, as well as number and types of resources (i.e. size and “goodness” of library, number of computers, gym facilities, technology labs, etc.). How many schools are “failing” under No Child Left Behind? How long have they been in Improvement Status?

-Some limited demographic data on your selected schools can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>. Data and Analytics for Minnesota schools can be found here <<http://education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/Data.jsp>>. Similar report cards and statistics will be available for other states. Your initial Census fact sheets should also provide data on educational attainment.

-Learn about the school board that governs the school district (or districts if your neighborhoods are located in different districts). How are school board members chosen (at-large elections, sub-district elections, appointed)? How representative of your neighborhoods are the school board members? Attend a school board meeting. What issues are discussed?

-What kinds of issues or conflicts over schools have made the local paper? Search the archives, and if you are unable to find what you are looking for, consider contacting the local paper’s editor.

-In your paper, be sure to discuss your findings as they relate to course readings by Massey, Hochschild and Scovronick, Schlozman, CQ Researcher and any others you find relevant.

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**Topic 3. Assessing the Impact of the Rights Revolution:** Several decades have passed since the United States eradicated formal laws and overt practices which sanctioned discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity. Considering life in the two neighborhoods you have studied: do the promises of the “rights revolution”—greater racial equality and integration—seem to have been realized, or not? Explain. In the course of your essay, explore the extent to which integration, across lines of race and ethnicity, has grown or diminished over the last few decades. To what extent has each neighborhood witnessed economic growth or decline, and educational advancement or setbacks? To the extent that disparities exist, to what factors are they attributable? What does your analysis reveal about contemporary economic inequality, in terms of causes, depth, and possible solutions? How could government help facilitate better outcomes?

*Suggestions*

-This analysis may be particularly illuminating if you compare an urban and a suburban neighborhood.

-Use Census data to examine shifts in the racial/ethnic composition of each neighborhood over time, as well as shifts in average property values, home ownership rates, median income, employment rates and other SES measures. For most Census Tracts, you should be able to work backwards to find historical data. Do these changes reflect or buck the national trends in rising residential segregation? What has the trend been at the county level?

-Interview community leaders about causes and consequences of in-migration or out-migration (or the lack thereof) in the neighborhood over time, as well as the sources of economic well-being (or deterioration) over time.

-In your paper, be sure to discuss your findings as they relate to readings by Massey, Soss, Gilens, Sugrue, Hochschild and Scovronick, and any others you find relevant.

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**Topic 4. Civic Engagement:** Scholars suggest that active participation in civic organizations has several important effects for social, economic, and political life at the community level and beyond. Conduct an assessment of the “civic health” of each neighborhood, and compare and contrast them in terms of the degree and types of civic involvement. How might civic engagement in each place have been affected by economic trends, and to what extent does it ameliorate or exacerbate such effects? To what extent do civic groups in each locality seem to have some political influence or serve as means for mobilization by political leaders and candidates?

*Suggestions*

-Inventory existing groups in each place, and assess the extent to which civic involvement seems to be rising or declining (are their membership rates up or down?). What types of groups are most active and important in each neighborhood today? What are their primary goals, and what public issues do they focus on? What community services, if any, do they perform? Consider contacting an organization like the United Way to get information about the various active organizations.

-Think about public works and community projects. Are neighborhood improvement projects (like repaving roads, building and improving parks, cleaning up litter, etc.) carried out primarily by groups of local residents or advocacy groups?

-Interview some leaders of civic organizations. Ask them about their group’s purpose, activities, membership levels, and the rise or decline in memberships over time. Attend a church service in each neighborhood, if possible.

-Attend a city council meeting or a county board meeting. What kinds of groups are present and lobbying? Do they reflect the interests of the neighborhoods you are investigating?

-In your paper, be sure to discuss your findings as they relate to readings by Verba, Verba, Schlozman and Brady, Rosenstone & Hansen, and any others you find relevant.