This course examines the politics of distribution and redistribution of resources in the developed democracies with an emphasis on the European experience. It covers a variety of questions. Why do some countries redistribute more than others? Why have Americans tolerated rising levels of inequality in recent decades? Why do they work longer hours compared to Europeans? How do the institutions determining redistribution develop? How do they fare in the face of such challenges as the movement from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, technological change, and globalization? What explains inequalities in health across social groups? To what extent are the sources of inequality ‘social’ rather than ‘political’ or ‘economic’? The course surveys a range of perspectives on these issues, concentrating on contemporary debates with a view to identifying promising topics for future research and promising approaches to them.

The course is suitable for all doctoral students in the Department of Government. Upper year undergraduates or graduate students in other fields will be admitted with the permission of the instructor if space allows. Auditors are welcome if space allows but they must do all the work for the course and participate actively in discussion. Enrollment will be restricted.

Requirements

1. Since the class proceeds largely by discussion, all participants are expected to do the required reading carefully and to join in active discussion.

2. There are two ways to fulfill the writing requirement for the course and participants may choose one or the other. The first is to write a seminar paper (approximately 35-40 pages for graduate students and 15-20 pages for undergraduates) due on May 15th. A two page outline for the paper is due March 15th. The paper can be a traditional seminar paper or it a literature review. The second option is to write four response papers of 4-5 pages each to the reading for the course due the day before that reading is discussed in class.
Readings and Course Outline

1. (Jan 29) Introduction

This session will introduce the course.

Background Reading


2. (Feb 5) Varieties of Capitalism as Institutions of Inequality

This week we consider arguments that there are durable varieties of capitalism and ask what their implications are for the understanding of inequality.

Required Reading


Background Reading


3. (Feb 12) Welfare States as Institutions of Equality?

This week we examine government efforts to offset inequality by exploring variations in welfare states and efforts to explain their historical development.
**Required Reading**


**Background Reading**


**4. (Feb 19) The Institutions of Stratification: Sociological Perspectives**

This week we explore the dimensions of inequality to which sociology has devoted a great deal of attention: intergenerational mobility and its determinants and the construction of status inequalities.

**Required Reading**


**Background Reading**


***   Note: There will be no class on February 26th   ***

**5. (Mar 5) The Electoral Politics of Redistribution**

This week we explore various efforts to explain cross-national variation in the level of redistribution in terms of electoral politics and its institutional setting.

**Required Reading**


**Background Reading**


Jonas Pontusson, “The Politics of Inequality and Partisan Polarization in OECD Countries.”


6. (Mar 12) Preferences over Inequality and their Sources

This week we explore cross-national variation in citizens’ attitudes to inequality and redistribution as well as competing efforts to explain them.

Required Reading


Background Reading


Alberto Alesina and Edward Glaeser, "Why Doesn't the US have a European-Style Welfare System" Brookings Papers on Economic Activity (Spring 2001):

This week we examine the challenges facing contemporary welfare including new social risks and debates about how welfare states can respond to them.

**Required Reading**


**Background Reading**


8. (Apr 2) Understanding Adjustment in Varieties of Capitalism

This week we examine how best to explain and understand how the institutions of the political economy change over time.
**Required Reading**


**Background Reading**


9. (Apr 9) Why Do Americans Tolerate High and Rising Levels of Inequality?

This week we ask why levels of inequality are higher in American than in many European countries, what political effects follow from rising inequality, and why electoral pressure has not reduced the rapid increase in inequality in recent decades.

**Required Reading**


**Background Reading**

Martin Gilens, "Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness: Who Gets What They Want from Government?"

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**10. (Apr 16) Explaining Cross-National Inequalities in Work and Leisure**

This week we explore alternative explanations for why people in some countries, such as the United States, work much longer hours and enjoy less leisure than people in many other European countries.

**Required Reading**


**Background Reading**


11. (Apr 23) Explaining Inequalities in Population Health

This week we explore the factors that lie behind another set of inequalities, namely the inequalities in health outcomes found across income groups and social classes.

**Required Reading**


Richard Carpiano, Bruce G. Link and Jo C. Phelan, “Social Inequality and Health: Future Directions for the Fundamental Cause Explanation,” in Annette Lareau and Dalton Conley, eds. *Social Class: How Does it Work?*. NY: Russell Sage Foundation 2008:


**Background Reading**


12. (Apr 30) The Changing Roadmap: Other Forms of Inequality and New Approaches to It

This week we examine some analyses suggesting that the basic forms of inequality and governments’ modalities for coping with them are changing. Do the latter tackle well the former?

**Required Reading**


Background Reading