

POL-GA 3500: Inequality

Spring 2020

Tuesdays 4:00-5:50pm EST

Instructor Information

Professor

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Email

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Office Hours

F 10 am - 12 pm
or by appointment

Meeting Room

Link/Sign-up

Office hours can be on Zoom or in person (19 W. 4th, Office 415). Please indicate your preference on the sign-up.

Course Motivation

We live an era of rising levels of economic inequality (at least in the United States) and increasing visibility of some social inequalities globally. Diverse literatures in political science examine the causes, manifestations, or outcomes of such inequalities. However, political scientists too often avoid or dance around the study of inequality, even when our work is directly relevant. In light of current policy debates, this arguably represents a missed opportunity. Indeed, the study of inequality is better developed in other social sciences (i.e., economics and sociology). This course seeks to bring together a variety of recent work on inequality from political science and other social sciences to: (1) organize existing literatures around the theme of inequality; and (2) develop new research agendas in political science related to the study of inequality.

In so doing, we will examine a number of “big” questions. For example, how do we define political inequality? Are political and economic inequality distinct? How do we measure inequality? When do political institutions reduce or exacerbate inequality in outcomes? To what extent do perceptions of inequality matter for redistribution preferences? Under what conditions does inequality generate conflict or instability?

Expectations

This is an advanced course that engages with current research in political science and economics. I assume some familiarity with statistical methods and formal models.

Reading and participation (25%):

You are expected to read all required readings and come to class prepared to critically engage with the readings in class discussion every week. Not all readings explicitly discuss “inequality,” though all have implications for the study of inequality. You may want to consider these implications when reading and preparing for class discussion.

Reproduction and Extension of an Article (25%):

During the semester, you will be asked to reproduce and extend one paper on the syllabus. You

may complete this assignment alone or with a partner. Through this assignment, you will learn about:

1. Reproducible workflow and replication package organization. We will apply some aspects of the Berkeley Initiative for Transparent Social Science (BITSS) [Guide for Accelerating Computational Reproducibility in the Social Sciences](#) to catalogue and organize replication packages.
2. Accurate and complete communication of a research design. You will formally characterize the research design and examine its properties.
3. Creative applications of secondary data analysis. At a time when many forms of field and human subjects research are infeasible due to the pandemic, we will emphasize ways to build from existing data.

This assignment will take the form of a memo. Guidance for the memo is posted in the course Dropbox. You will be expected to have examined the research design and reproduced (or attempted to reproduce) the paper's results by the class session in which the work is discussed.¹ The written memo will be due within one week of that class. You are welcome to incorporate feedback or ideas from class discussion in the written memo.

Please select an article by February 9 using this [form](#). I have marked the articles that represent good candidates with a †. These articles use very different research designs – which aspects of this assignment are most challenging will depend on the research design of the article that you choose.

Research Design (50%):

The final paper for this course is an original research design on a topic related to course materials. Research designs should clearly articulate a research question and provide a comprehensive “roadmap” for a full paper. Your research design may be for an empirical paper, a theory paper, or a theory/empirics paper. Expectations for each type of paper are below:

- For an **empirical paper**: Your research design should include a well-motivated research question. You should then develop an argument in response to this question, drawing out implications that you will test empirically. You should then describe your data sources in detail. If your paper relies on original data collection (i.e., a survey, archival research, or an experiment), you should carefully describe the design of the data collection and/or experiment. If your paper relies exclusively on secondary data, you should collect and process as much of the data as possible. Regardless of your research design and the data you are using, you should simulate any data that you have not yet collected, clearly noting what data is simulated versus “real.” You should then clearly identify the estimands that test the implications of your argument and your estimators thereof. You should then estimate the results using the simulated (or mixed data). Finally, you should explore the properties of your estimator. You can do this analytically (by derivation) or by simulation. For any simulations, you can write your own Monte Carlo simulations or use `DeclareDesign`.

¹You may also reproduce papers on the “recommended reading” lists, though you will likely benefit less from class discussion of these works.

- For a **theory paper**: Your paper should present a well-motivated research question. Your paper should then present the model, defending modeling choices and assumptions. You should further identify the equilibrium concept that you will use. The analysis of the model need not be complete, but you should clearly describe: (1) what work you have done to solve the model; and (2) describe your next steps with respect to the analysis.
- For a **theory/empirics paper**: Your paper should draw on the outline for an empirical or theory paper and adopt the “best of both worlds.” The expectation is that you follow the guidance for papers as above, albeit with the acknowledgement that one component may be more developed than the other.

Readings

Note: All articles are collected in a course Dropbox. Electronic copies of the required books are freely available through Cambridge Core with your NYU credentials.

Week 1 – February 2: Introduction and Motivation

- **Recommended**
 - Max Weber. 2009 [1922]. “Class, Status, Party”. Chap. VII in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 180–196. London: Routledge.
 - Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman. 2016. “Wealth Inequality in the United States Since 1913: Evidence from Capitalized Income Tax Data”. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 131 (2): 519–578

Week 2 – February 9: Political(?) Origins of Economic Inequality

- **Required**
 1. Carles Boix and Frances Rosenbluth. 2014. “Bones of Contention: The Political Economy of Height Inequality”. *American Political Science Review* 108 (1): 1–22.
 2. Gregory K. Dow and Clyde G. Reed. 2013. “The Origins of Inequality: Insiders, Outsiders, Elites, and Commoners”. *Journal of Political Economy* 121 (3): 609–641.
 3. Emily Sellars and Jennifer Alix-Garcia. 2018. “Labor scarcity, land tenure, and historical legacy: Evidence from Mexico”. *Journal of Development Economics* 135:504–516.
 4. Philip Roessler et al. 2020. “The Cash Crop Revolution, Colonialism and Legacies of Spatial Inequality: Evidence from Africa”. CSAE Working Paper WPS/2020-12.
- **Recommended**
 - Kenneth L. Sokoloff and Stanley L. Engerman. 2000. “Institutions, Factor Endowments, and Paths of Development in the New World”. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14 (3): 217–232.
 - Carles Boix. 2015. *Political Order and Inequality: Their Foundations and their Consequences for Human Welfare*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Week 3 – February 16: Political vs. Economic Inequality

- **Required**

1. Chana Joffe-Walt. 2020. “Nice White Parents”. Podcast available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/23/podcasts/nice-white-parents-serial.html>. [Note: This is a podcast, not an academic work. It is five parts and around 4.5 hours.]
2. Jeff Manza. 2015. “Political Inequality”. Chap. Political Inequality, ed. by Robert Scott and Stephen Kosslyn, 1–17. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
3. Daron Acemoglu et al. 2008. “Economic and Political Inequality in Development: The Case of Cundinamarca, Colombia”. Chap. 5 in *Institutions and Economic Performance*, ed. by Elhanan Helpman, 181–245. Harvard University Press.
4. † Daron Acemoglu, Tristan Reed, and James A. Robinson. 2014. “Chiefs: Economic Development and Elite Control of Civil Society in Sierra Leone”. *Journal of Political Economy* 122 (2): 319–368.

- **Recommended**

- Daron Acemoglu et al. 2015. “Democracy, Redistribution, and Inequality”. In *Handbook of Income Distribution, Volume 2B*, ed. by Anthony Atkinson and Francois Bourguignon, vol. 2B, 1885–1960. Elsevier.
- Tara Slough. 2021a. “Bureaucrats Driving Inequality in Access: Experimental Evidence from Colombia”. Working paper available at http://taraslough.com/assets/pdf/colombia_audit.pdf.

Week 4 – February 23: Measurement of Inequality

- **Required**

1. Robert Adcock and David Collier. 2001. “Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Quantitative and Qualitative Research”. *American Political Science Review* 95 (3): 529–546.
2. F.A. Cowell. 2000. “Measurement of inequality”. In *Handbook of Income Distribution, Volume 1*, ed. by Anthony Atkinson and Francois Bourguignon, 87–166. Elsevier. [Focus on sections 1-4, 6, and 8.]
3. Kate Baldwin and John D. Huber. 2010. “Economic versus Cultural Differences: Forms of Ethnic Diversity and Public Goods Provision”. *American Political Science Review* 104 (4): 644–662.

- **Recommended**

1. Angus Deaton. 2010. “Price Indexes, Inequality, and the Measurement of World Poverty”. *American Economic Review* 100:5–34.

Week 5 – March 2: Regimes and Transitions

- **Required**

1. Ben Ansell and David Samuels. 2010. "Inequality and Democratization: A Contractarian Approach". *Comparative Political Studies*.
2. Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson. 2001. "A Theory of Political Transitions". *American Economic Review* 91 (4): 938–963.
3. Ruth Berins Collier. 1999. *Paths Toward Democracy: The Working Class and Elites in Western Europe and South America*. New York: Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 1 and 5.]
4. ‡ Michael T. Dorsch and Paul Maarek. 2019. "Democratization and the Conditional Dynamics of Income Distribution". *American Political Science Review* 113 (2): 385–404.

- **Recommended**

- ‡ Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman. 2012. "Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule". *American Political Science Review* 106 (3): 495–516.
- ‡ Agustina S. Paglayan. 2020. "The Non-Democratic Roots of Mass Education: Evidence from 200 Years". *American Political Science Review* First view:1–20.

Week 6 – March 9: Institutions and Outcomes

- **Required**

1. Stephen Ansolabehere, James M. Snyder Jr., and Michael M. Ting. 2003. "Bargaining in Bicameral Legislatures: When and Why Does Malapportionment Matter?" *American Political Science Review* 97 (3): 471–481.
2. Tara Slough. 2021b. "Oversight, Inequality, and Capacity". Working paper.
3. ‡ Siwan Anderson. 2018. "Legal Origins and Female HIV". *American Economic Review* 108 (6): 1407–1439.
4. Henry S. Farber et al. 2020. "Unions and Inequality over the Twentieth Century: New Evidence from Survey Data". Working paper.

- **Recommended**

- ‡ Guy Grossman, Macartan Humphreys, and Gabriella Sacramone-Lutz. 2020. "Information Technology and Political Engagement: Mixed Evidence from Uganda". *Journal of Politics* 82 (4): 1321–1336.
- Daron Acemoglu, James A. Robinson, and Ragnar Torvik. 2013. "Why do Voters Dismantle Checks and Balances?" *Review of Economic Studies* 80:845–875.
- John Ahlquist. 2017. "Labor Unions, Political Representation, and Economic Inequality". *Annual Review of Political Science* 20:409–432.

Week 7 – March 16: Elections

- **Required**

1. John D. Huber. 2017. *Exclusion by Elections: Inequality, Ethnic Identity, and Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

2. † Thomas Fujiwara. 2015. "Voting Technology, Political Responsiveness, and Infant Health: Evidence from Brazil". *Econometrica* 83 (2): 423–464.
3. † Kimuli Kasara and Pavithra Suryanarayan. 2015. "When do the Rich Vote Less than the Poor and Why? Explaining Turnout across the World". *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (3): 613–627.

- **Recommended**

- † Margit Tavits and Joshua Potter. 2015. "The Effect of Inequality and Social Identity on Party Strategies". *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (3): 744–758.

Week 8 – March 23: Representation

- **Required**

1. † Ernesto Dal Bó et al. 2017. "Who Becomes a Politician?" *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 132 (4): 1877–1914.
2. † Trevon Logan. 2020. "Do Black Politicians Matter? Evidence from Reconstruction". *The Journal of Economic History* 80 (1): 1–37.
3. † Amanda Clayton, Diana Z. O'Brien, and Jennifer M. Piscopo. 2019. "All Male Panels? Representation and Democratic Legitimacy". *American Journal of Political Science* 63 (1): 113–129.
4. † Julien Labonne, Sahar Parsa, and Pablo Querubín. 2021. "Political Dynasties, Term Limits and Female Political Empowerment: Evidence from the Philippines". *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* Forthcoming.

- **Recommended**

- † Ernesto Dal Bó, Pedro Dal Bó, and Jason Snyder. 2009. "Political Dynasties". *The Review of Economic Studies* 76:115–142.
- † Olle Folke, Johanna Rickne, and Daniel M. Smith. 2021. "Gender and Dynastic Political Selection". *Comparative Political Studies* 54 (2): 339–371.
- Saad Gulzar and Muhammad Yasir Khan. 2020. "Social Motivation, Political Candidacy, and Performance: Experimental Evidence from Pakistan". Working paper.

Week 9 – March 30: Identity

- **Required**

1. Moses Shayo. 2009. "A Model of Social Identity with an Application to Political Economy: Nation, Class, and Redistribution". *American Political Science Review* 103 (2): 147–174.
2. † Katherine Cranmer Walsh. 2012. "Putting Inequality in its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective". *American Political Science Review* 106 (3): 517–532.
3. † Pavithra Suryanarayan and Steven White. 2020. "Slavery, Reconstruction, and Bureaucratic Capacity in the American South". *American Political Science Review* First view:1–17.

4. † Alberto Alesina, Stelios Michalopoulos, and Elias Papaioannou. 2016. "Ethnic Inequality". *Journal of Political Economy* 124 (2): 428–488.

- **Recommended**

- Frederick Solt. 2011. "Diversionalry Nationalism: Economic inequality and the Formation of National Pride". *Journal of Politics* 73 (3): 821–830.

Week 10 – April 6: Beliefs about Inequality and Preferences for Redistribution

- **Required**

1. Kristoffer B. Hvidberg, Claus Kreiner, and Stefanie Stantcheva. 2020. "Social Position and Fairness Views". NBER Working Paper No. 28099.
2. † Alberto Alesina, Stefanie Stantcheva, and Edoardo Teso. 2018. "Intergenerational Mobility and Preferences for Redistribution". *American Economic Review* 108 (2): 521–554.
3. † Elizabeth Suhay, Marko Klasnja, and Gonzalo Rivera. 2021. "Ideology of Affluence: Explanations for Inequality and Economic Policy Preferences among Rich Americans". *Journal of Politics* 83 (1): 1–14
4. † Taishi Muraoka and Guillermo Rosas. 2020. "Does Economic Inequality Drive Voters' Disagreement about Party Placement?" *American Journal of Political Science* First view:1–16.
5. Elizabeth Maggie Penn. 2016. "Inequality, Social Context, and Value Divergence". *Journal of Politics* 79 (1): 153–165

- **Recommended**

- † Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage. 2021. "Equal Treatment and the Inelasticity of Tax Policy to Rising Inequality". *Comparative Political Studies* Forthcoming.
- † Adam Thal. 2020. "The Desire for Social Status and Economic Conservatism among Affluent Americans". *American Political Science Review* 114 (2): 426–442.
- † James Alt and Torben Iversen. 2017. "Inequality, Labor Market Segmentation, and Preferences for Redistribution". *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (1): 21–36.
- Ilyana Kuziemko et al. 2014. "'Last Place Aversion': Evidence and Redistributive Implications". *Quarterly Journal of Economics*: 105–149.

Week 11 – April 13: Redistribution I: Policy

- **Required**

1. † Isabela Mares and Didac Queralt. 2015. "The Non-Democratic Origins of Income Taxation". *Comparative Political Studies* 48 (14): 1974–2009.
2. † Kenneth Scheve and David Stasavage. 2012. "Democracy, War, and Wealth: Lessons from Two Centuries of Inheritance Taxation". *American Political Science Review* 106 (1): 81–102.
3. Ana de la O. 2015. *Crafting Policies to End Poverty in Latin America: The Quiet Transformation*. New York: Cambridge University Press [Chapter 4, pages 57-95.]

4. † Ellora Derenoncourt and Claire Montialoux. 2020. "Minimum Wages and Racial Inequality". *Quarterly Journal of Economics*: 1–60.

- **Recommended**

- Noam Lupu and Jonas Pontusson. 2011. "The Structure of Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution". *American Political Science Review* 105 (2): 316–336.
- Avinash Dixit and John Londregan. 1996. "The Determinants of Success of Special Interests in Redistributive Politics". *Journal of Politics* 58 (4): 1132–1155.
- Assar Lindbeck and Jörgen W. Weibull. 1987. "Balanced-Budget Redistribution as the Outcome of Political Competition". *Public Choice* 52:273–297.

Week 12 – April 20: Redistribution II: Implementation

- **Required**

1. Alisha C. Holland. 2016. "Forbearance". *American Political Science Review* 110 (2): 232–246
2. † Florian M. Hollenbach and Thiago N. Silva. 2019. "Fiscal Capacity and Inequality: Evidence from Brazilian Municipalities". *Journal of Politics* 81 (4): 1434–1445.
3. Juliana Londoño-Vélez and Javier Ávila-Mahecha. 2020. "Behavioral Responses to Wealth Taxation: Evidence from a Developing Country". Working paper.
4. James A. Robinson and Ragnar Torvik. 2005. "White Elephants". *Journal of Public Economics* 89:197–210.

- **Recommended**

- Timothy Besley, Ethan Ilzetzki, and Torsten Persson. 2013. "Weak States and Steady States: The Dynamics of Fiscal Capacity". *American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics* 5 (4): 205–235.
- Martin J. Williams. 2017. "The Political Economy of Unfinished Development Projects: Corruption, Clientelism, or Collective Choice?" *American Political Science Review* 111 (4): 705–723.

Week 13 – April 27: Spatial Inequality and Segregation

- **Required**

1. † Jessica Trounstein. 2020. "The Geography of Inequality: How Land Use Regulation Produces Segregation". *American Political Science Review* 114 (2): 443–455.
2. † Christopher F. Karpowitz and Tali Mendelberg. 2018. "Do Enclaves Remediate Social Inequality?" *Journal of Politics* 80 (4): 1134–1149.
3. † Stephen B. Billings, David J. Deming, and Jonah Rockoff. 2014. "School Segregation, Educational Attainment, and Crime: Evidence from the End of Busing in Charlotte-Mecklenburg". *American Economic Review*: 435–476.
4. Avinash Dixit and John Londregan. 1995. "Redistributive Politics and Economic Efficiency". *American Political Science Review* 89 (4): 856–866

- **Recommended**

- Rajiv Sethi and Rohini Somanathan. 2004. “Inequality and Segregation”. *Journal of Political Economy* 112 (6): 1269–1321
- † Leah Platt Boustan. 2010. “Was Postwar Suburbanization “White Flight”? Evidence from the Black Migration”. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*: 417–443.
- † Dong Wook Lee and Melissa Ziegler Rogers. 2019. “Interregional Inequality and the Dynamics of Government Spending”. *Journal of Politics* 81 (2): 487–504.

Week 14 – May 4: Conflict

- **Required**

1. Joan Esteban and Debraj Ray. 2011. “Linking Conflict to Inequality and Polarization”. *American Economic Review* 101:1345–1374
2. Joan Esteban, Laura Mayoral, and Debraj Ray. 2012. “Ethnicity and Conflict: An Empirical Study”. *American Economic Review* 102 (4): 1310–1342
3. Lars-Erik Cederman, Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2011. “Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison”. *American Political Science Review* 105 (3): 478–495
4. Cyrus Samii and Emily A. West. 2019. “Repressed productive potential and revolt: insights from an insurgency in Burundi”. *Political Science Research and Methods* 9 (1): 106–121

- **Recommended**

- John D. Huber and Laura Mayoral. 2019. “Group Inequality and the Severity of Civil Conflict”. *Journal of Economic Growth* 24:1–41
- James A. Robinson. 2003. “Social Identity, Inequality, and Conflict”. In *Conflict and Governance*, ed. by Amihai Glazer and Kai A. Konrad, 7–22. Springer
- † Manuel Vogt. 2018. “Ethnic Stratification and the Equilibrium of Inequality: Ethnic Conflict in Postcolonial States”. *International Organization* 72 (Winter): 105–137