POLI 256: American Political Economy  
(Race, Class and Institutions)  

Winter 2020  
Thursday 12:00p-2:50p  

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Social Sciences Building, Room 393  
Office hours: Thursday 11:00am – 12:00pm, and by appointment

Course Description: This course examines the distribution of income and wealth in the United States. Central to this discussion are the politics of race, class, and immigration. The course is intended for political science Ph.D. students but may be relevant for students in other disciplines as well.

Course Requirements:  
1. Participation (30%): Each student is expected to attend each class and be prepared to contribute to an in-depth discussion of each reading.

2. Reading Summaries (20%): You will be expected to lead or co-lead discussions of at least one week of readings (depending on the number of students in class). The discussions should not be a regurgitation of the readings (everyone should have a grasp of the readings before class), but it should assess and critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of central argument, methods, evidence and implications of the readings. Finally, you should prepare a set of “big” questions to motivate the class discussion.

3. Written Assignment(s) (50%): There are three options for the written assignment. The topics should be discussed with me in advance.  
   a. Option A: Three 5-page literature reviews on topics we’ve discussed in this course. The literature review should compare readings of the topic to each other, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of readings on the topic, and consider areas of future research. The literature reviews will be due by January 30, February 20, and March 12.
   b. Option B: Two 8 to 10-page research proposals. The research proposal should include all the elements of a published article, except for the empirical analyses (although some preliminary analyses are encouraged). That is, the proposals should include a research question, literature review, hypotheses, and proposed methods. The research proposals are due by February 13 and March 12.
   c. Option C: One 15 to 20-page research paper on some aspect of American Political Economy. This could be an original paper or a substantial improvement on a paper that was written for a previous course. This paper should make progress towards a publishable research paper or dissertation prospectus. The final paper is due by March 18.
Recommended Readings:

- Peter Hall and David Soskice, “An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism” in Hall and Soskice, eds., Varieties of Capitalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-68
- W. J. Wilson, More Than Just Race, 2010
- Foner, A Short History of Reconstruction, 180-237.
- Daniels, Prisoners Without Trial (1993), 3-121.
- S.A. Venkatesh, Off The Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor.
- B. Western, Punishment and Inequality in America
- Piven and Cloward. Poor People’s Movements.

Course Readings:

January 9

I. The U.S. in Comparative Perspective: Varieties of Capitalism

January 16

II. Racial Formation and Racial Power

January 23

III. Race and/or Class? Inequality
January 30
IV. Distributive Politics

February 6
V. State building
   c) Ozawa v. United States, 260 U.S. 178 (1922)
   d) United States v. Thind, 261 U.S. 204 (1923)

February 13
VI. The Courts and (Re)distributive Politics
February 21

VII. Partisan Accounts


February 28

VIII. Public Opinion


c) Leslie McCall and Lane Kenworthy, “Americans’ Social Policy Preferences in the Era of Rising Inequality,” *Perspectives on Politics* 7 (2009), 459-474.


March 7

Updated December 30, 2019
IX. Policy Feedback


March 14

X. Institutional and Extra-institutional Demands


b) Gause, LaGina. “Protests, Resources, and Legislative Behavior”