

# Problems in Democratic Theory

POLS 4060

Fall 2016

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A central problem in democratic theory is to determine the conditions under which voting majorities will redistribute wealth and income to themselves. The theory must explain two broad empirical observations. One, in actual democracies a majority of voters have below-average incomes and therefore have an apparent incentive to use government to redistribute, but in practice redistribution is fairly limited. Two, there is nonetheless great variation in the degree of redistribution that takes place. For example, Western European countries seem more inclined to use government to reduce inequality, the United States seems less inclined. This difference is duplicated within the U.S.: Red states are less likely to support redistribution, while Blue states are more likely. In this course we will attempt to discover why these patterns exist. We will explore this contrast between the U.S. and Europe and consider why fundamental differences between the U.S. and Europe have developed. We also will consider the way these differences are reflected in our own polarized politics.

These required books are available from the University Bookstore:

Alberto Alesina and Edward L. Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe* [AG]

Andrew Gelman et al., *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State*  
expanded edition [G]

The following is a guide to the assignments. Note that the course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

## I. *U.S. vs. Europe*

August 12: Introduction

August 15: AG, Chapters 1 & 2

## II. *U.S. vs. Europe: Economic Explanations*

August 29: AG, Chapter 3

III. *U.S. vs. Europe: Political Explanations*

September 7: James Madison, Note to His Speech on the Right of Suffrage  
<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch16s26.html>

James Madison, Federalist #10  
<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>

September 12: AG, Chapter 4

September 19: AG, Chapter 5

IV. *U.S. vs. Europe: Race*

September 26: AG, Chapter 6

V. *U.S. vs. Europe: Ideology:*

October 3: AG, Chapters 7 & 8

**October 10: First Exam**

October 12: Exam returned

VI. *U.S. vs. Europe in the United States*

October 14: G, Chapters 1-2

October 17: G, Chapter 3:

October 19: G, Chapter 4:

October 24: G, Chapter 5:

October 28: Fall Break:

November 4: G, Chapter 6:

November 7: G, Chapter 7:

November 9: Election Post-Mortem:

November 11: Chapter 8:

November 16: G, Chapter 9:

November 28: G, Chapter 10 & Afterward:

December 5: Conclusion

**December 2: PAPER DUE**

**December 7: Final (8:00 - 9:30 AM)**

## Paper

Find a mix of three - five articles, books, newspaper columns, newspaper stories, or blog posts that discuss government policies and political debates related to the issue of income inequality. In what ways do your selections confirm or disconfirm the claims and hypotheses developed by AG or G? Obviously, if a selection does neither, it's a bad selection and you should pick another one. Similarly, if the selection is very superficial or just a rant, your discussion will be superficial as well (which is not a good thing). The paper must be typed and should run 4-5 double-spaced pages. Your selections need not be about the U.S. government but **they must have been printed or posted this semester**. They should not have been authored by anyone assigned for the class. **Any paper handed in late but before 4:30 PM December 5, 2016, will lose 10 points. Any paper handed in later than that will be treated as though the assignment were not completed. Please do not use covers or email me your paper. Instead, your paper should be brought to my office in 204 Candler Hall. Treat this like an exam: its purpose is to allow you another opportunity, in another format, to demonstrate your understanding of the class material.**

## Grades

Your grade for the term will be based on a weighted average of the grades on your first exam (35%), second exam (40%), and your paper (25%). The exams are not cumulative. Your numerical course average will be adjusted upward by 0 to 3 points based on the quality of your class participation.

The final calculation of your course grade is based on:

$92 \leq \mathbf{A} \leq 100$ ;  $90 \leq \mathbf{A-} < 92$ ;  $87 \leq \mathbf{B+} < 90$ ;  $82 \leq \mathbf{B} < 87$ ;  $80 \leq \mathbf{B-} < 82$ ;  
 $77 \leq \mathbf{C+} < 80$ ;  $70 \leq \mathbf{C} < 77$ ;  $68 \leq \mathbf{C-} < 70$ ;  $60 \leq \mathbf{D} < 68$ ;  $\mathbf{F} < 60$ .

**No make-ups will be given unless a legitimate excuse for absence is presented and accepted prior to the exam.**

Finally, all academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. If there is any doubt in your mind concerning the application of some regulation, you should see me. Otherwise assume the broadest interpretation of dishonesty.

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