Problems in Democratic Theory

POLS 4060
FALL 2019

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In actual democracies, a majority of voters have below-average incomes and therefore have an apparent incentive to use government to redistribute wealth and income to themselves. A central problem in democratic theory is to determine why, nonetheless, there is great variation in the degree of redistribution that takes place. The United States, for example, does substantially less to reduce inequality than do many Western European countries. This course explore possible explanations for this difference between Europe and the U.S. and the often unappreciated ways in which government policies actually increase inequality.

These required books are available from the University Bookstore::

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

Brink Lindsey and Steven M. Teles, *The Captured Economy* [LT]

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 15: Introduction

August 20: AG, Chapters 1 & 2

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

August 27: AG, Chapter 3

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

September 5: James Madison, Note to His Speech on the Right of Suffrage
http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch16s26.htm

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

September 10: AG, Chapter 4

September 17: AG, Chapter 5

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

September 24: AG, Chapter 6

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

October 1: AG, Chapters 7 & 8

October 8: First Exam

October 10: Exam returned

VI. *Government as a Source of Inequality*

October 15: LT, Chapters 1-2

October 22: LT, Chapter 3

October 31: LT, Chapter 4

November 7: LT, Chapter 5

November 12: LT, Chapter 6

November 21: LT, Chapter 7

November 26: LT, Chapter 8

December 3: Conclusion

December 6: PAPER DUE (5:00 PM)

December 10: Final (8:00 - 9:30 AM)

Paper

Find a mix of three - five articles, newspaper columns, newspaper stories, or blog posts, or a book, 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 LT (but not both)? Obviously, if a selection neither confirms or disconfirms, 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 is not a book report: you should focus on connecting your additional readings back to AG or LT, not on summarizing them. The paper must be typed and should run 4-5 double-spaced pages. With the exception of books, **your selections 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 9, 2019, will lose 10 points. Any paper handed in later than that will be treated as though the assignment was not completed. Please do not use covers or email me your paper. Instead, your paper should be given to me directly or left in my mailbox in the Department of Political Science Office in Baldwin 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:

$92 \leq$ **A** ≤ 100; $90 \leq$ **A-** < 92; $87 \leq$ **B+** < 90; $82 \leq$ **B** < 87; $80 \leq$ **B-** < 82; $77 \leq$ **C+** < 80; $70 \leq$ **C** < 77; $68 \leq$ **C-** < 70; $60 \leq$ **D** < 68; **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.