

POLSCI 149: The Politics of Poverty and Inequality in American Politics

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Summer Session A, 2020

Pronouns: She/Her (why?)

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Web: [CCLE Page](#)

[Zoom Room Link](#)

Zoom Hours: Th 12-1pm

In a political system where nearly every adult may vote, but where knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other resources are unequally distributed, who actually governs?

—Robert Dahl

As long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality exist in the world, none of us can truly exist.

—Nelson Mandela

Course Description

When Kanye West rapped, "Before you ask me to go get a job today / Can I at least get a raise of the minimum wage?" in 2005 ¹ he did not know that years later in 2008 a national recession would emerge, further reducing wages, increasing unemployment, and changing the landscape and conversation about poverty and inequality in American politics. Further stagnating upward mobility for families, the outcomes of the recession would exacerbate pre-existing economic disparities while also reviving a national conversation on economic divisions that reinforce power differences across race, ethnicity, gender, and region of residents, undermining a core value of American equality for all. In this course, we will discuss, the causes, implications, and consequences of poverty and economic inequality for American public policy, institutions and behavior.

Our course will revolve around a central question, *How have economic disparities influenced the political voice of American citizens?* We will examine this question by looking at three aspects of the American political system: public policies, institutions, and behavior. First, we will examine how measurement of poverty and inequality influence national political debates around addressing poverty and inequality. We will look at these implications in who has been able to ameliorate or exacerbate inequality, in both a historical and contemporary context. We will do this through examining how political parties, elites, and policy entrepreneurs have talked about, and acted on, growing economic gaps. Second, We will examine how poverty and inequality has influenced representation within American institutions, this will look at this through public opinion of policies to redress growing inequality. In order to do this, we will examine how the intersection of race and class has shaped solutions and theories about poverty. Lastly, we will examine political voice and the political behavior

¹Kanye West and Lupe Fiasco, Touch the Sky, 2005, <https://genius.com/Kanye-west-touch-the-sky-lyrics>.

of low-income individuals. We do this with specific attention to how shocks in the economic system have political consequences, such as citizens behaviors in political activities, interest groups, political parties, social movements, and civic associations.

Course Expectations

An online summer session completely online is unprecedented. Note that under-normal circumstances, this class would involve more in-person, group-based, and critical discussion, which cannot be replicated completely in an online environment. Even as we try our best to replicate high-quality in-class instruction online, in some areas, it is reasonable to fall short. Towards that end, we will not meet online, as we would an in-person class, and much of our engagement with each-other will be asynchronous. Class participation and class discussion will look different than usual, but I expect you to be engaged in course materials and virtual discussions, responsive to requests for individual check-in meetings, provide evidence and empirics to your opinions, and complete all assignments on or before the deadline. At any point, if the COVID-19 pandemic impacts your, or your immediate family hindering your ability to focus on and complete readings and assignments, please do communicate with me.

Course Reading Materials

Primary books used in the course:

- Lang, Kevin. 2007. *Poverty and Discrimination*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Larry M. Bartels, *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*, Second edition (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2016).
- Miler, Kristina C. 2018. *Poor Representation: Congress and the Politics of Poverty in the United States*. Cambridge University Press.
- Allard, Scott W. 2017. *Places in Need: The Changing Geography of Poverty*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

But notes on these books:

- The readings for this course are drawn primary from book chapters and journal articles, all of which I have made available on CCLE. In some instances, we will consult news-articles and academic blog posts to supplement. The assigned articles are labeled to correspond with the topic of the week. Most are available through the UCLA Library.
- **We will be read select chapters from the primary books.** I will link to online sources for the books, and will upload chapters to the course website. **You do not need to purchase books.** However, if you do, check *local* book outlets for purchase of these texts and other, including, EsoWon Books in Leimert Park and the Last Bookstore in DTLA.
- You should also follow the news daily. It is important to think about how current events are related to the material being discussed throughout the course. This will help you better understand and evaluate course concepts, as well as keep discussions interesting (and this is welcomed in the discussion posts).

Prerequisites

Requisites: Political Science Course 40 - Introduction to American, two courses in Field III. Designed for juniors/seniors. Intensive examination of one or more special problems appropriate to American politics.

Course Objectives

Successful students:

1. Will be able to identify the implications of economic inequality for American public policy, institutions and political behavior
2. Will be able to describe how poverty and inequality intersect with gender and/or racial disadvantage.
3. Will be able to explain the historical and contemporary influences producing inequality and poverty.
4. Will be able to decompose empirical arguments relevant to the persistence of poverty in America.
5. Will be able to evaluate how you as an individual can effectively participate in civic engagement related to economic. issues.
6. Have improved their ability to critically evaluate and assess scholarly concepts and theories.

Course Structure

Course Webpage

The course webpage is the primary space for communication and submission of of course materials. Course readings and announcements will be posted to the course webpage. I encourage you to subscribe to the CCLE digest to that you are notified when a message is posted, either by me or your peers. A link to our course is here: [CCLE Page](#).

Class Structure

You should organize yourself in this manner for the class:

1. Complete Course Readings in advance of Tuesday or Thursday
2. Take Participation Reading Quiz (graded on $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{}$, $\sqrt{-}$)
3. Access the pre-recorded weekly lectures
4. Write or Record discussion post for discussion board
5. Comment on group members discussion post
6. Visit Zoom Room Hours for Questions and further discussion

Participation

In order to be a productive member of the course, comprehending and reading the course materials is expected. To do this, there will be 6 total quizzes. Quizzes will consist of no more than four short answer questions to gauge your comprehension and completion of the assigned readings. These quizzes are to mostly help keep you on track with readings.

Lecture

Each week, I will post up to four 15-20 minute videos to the course website that will cover an overview of the weeks theme and will include discussion of the week's reading. You are required to watch these videos before writing your discussion posts. These lectures are similar to what you would experience in an in-person session. Videos will be posted by **Monday at 5pm** before scheduled lecture. In order to access the videos for Tuesday's and Thursday's lecture you will have to complete the reading quiz of the assigned readings.

Discussion Posts

Each week, you will either write, audio record, or video record a reflection the weeks lectures of reading. Over the course, 2 posts must be written (250-500 words), the other 2 can be audio or video recorded (2-3 minutes). These will be posted on the course website for your peer's review and commentary. Discussion posts should be made between Wednesday and Thursday of each week. You will be assigned to a small group where you will read, and comment on your peer's post. Both the quality of your post, and the quality of your contributions and insights are evaluated. Submit the post by before Thursday **at 5pm** to allow members of your group to comment on your posts, and for you to comment on their posts **by Monday at 5pm**.

- Offers a different and unique, but relevant, perspective;
- Contributes to moving the discussion and analysis forward;
- Builds on other comments;
- Transcends the "I feel" syndrome. That is, it includes some evidence, argumentation, or recognition of inherent tradeoffs. In other words, the comment demonstrates some reflective thinking. We all having feelings, but we don't all have empirics.

Note that on at the beginning of the week, you will be randomized into discussion groups. Depending on class size, the groups will be between 5-7 people. I will chime into the group discussion posts and comment on your comments, and discussions. Failure to post to the discussion board by Thursday **at 5pm PST** will result in a 0 grade for that week. Please comment by **Monday at 5pm PST** (the earlier, the better!).

Reading Objectives

The assigned readings for each week are listed just below the bolded date and topic. The readings here often feature dense arguments and complicated research designs. I do not expect you to understand the technical details of statistical tests and the like, but I would like you to understand the arguments, basic research approach (i.e, the data they collected). To help structure your approach to the assigned texts, consider the following questions:

1. What's the research question and why is it important?
2. What's the theoretical argument and does it help us understand the question better than before?
3. What evidence do the authors offer to support their theoretical claims and is that evidence credible?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the study?

Important Dates + Assessments

Assessments include participation in reading, engagement in discussion posts, a midterm reflection essay and research paper outline, and final research essay. Assessments will posted on the CCLE course web-page, and there will be submission links for materials embed into the site.

1. Mid-term critical reflection of a policy area: housing, employment, education and/or health (20%)
Due by July 9th 5pm
2. Discussion posts (original + comment) (30%)
Completed by Thursday 5pm, and Monday 5pm
3. Completion of Reading Quizzes (10%)
Completed before Discussion posts
4. A research paper on course topic (40%)
completed by Friday, July 31st 5pm PST

Midterm + Critical Reflection

For this assignment, you are to prepare a well-researched policy argument for a specific anti-poverty policy, in regards to housing, employment, health, education, income-transfers, that you believe should or should not be enacted. Papers should take the form of a 2-page, double spaced document that is persuasive, purposeful, critical, credible, and authoritative. You are expected to engage course materials in your written material with at least 3 specific page citations in your reflection. The goal of the assignment is to assess how you can apply class discussion to real world issues. I will circulate a handout on this assignment closer to the deadline.

Final + Research Paper

For the final paper, you will be asked to consider material from the course to make your assessment of the current and future state of class, poverty, and inequality in American politics. This research paper must build upon your reflection paper of your selected area in week 3. Think of this 5-7 double spaced page research paper as an opportunity to reflect on the course material in full, and evaluate the overall state of politics, with a specific focus to income based-differences. You must include at least 10 specific page citations in your final paper.

This paper should be no longer than 7 pages, and students will submit a brief synopsis of the argument as a discussion post beginning the 4th week of the course. More details will be provided. The final paper is due by July 31st, 5pm.

Grading Policy

The typical UCLA Political Science **grading scale** will be used. The grade will count the assessments using the following proportions:

- **10%** of your grade will be determined by completion of the quizzes.
- **30%** of your grade will be the discussion posts and comments.
- **20%** of your grade will be determined by a midterm critical reflection essay.
- **40%** of your grade will be determined by final research paper.

Students are expected to do their own work and cite sources used to write their papers. All work submitted in this class must be original and cannot be submitted to more than one class.

Study Habits

According to the UCLA Catalog, "One unit represents three hours of work per week per term by the student, including both class attendance and preparation." Because this is a four-credit class condensed into a summer term, you will be spending 1 hour per week watching course lectures, and should therefore expect to spend 10-12 hours per week outside of class. The difference between those who will succeed in this class and those who will not is a matter of effort, not ability. Multi-tasking is not an effective study habit. Whether you are sitting in class or studying on your own, you are most likely to understand and retain the material if you remove other internet based-distractions, and put away your phone.

Library Resources

Looking for help with a research paper or project? Set up a consultation or get 24/7 research help online at <http://library.ucla.edu/questions> ! Also, there is an interactive research tips page, which will prove useful for this course and others: <https://uclalibrary.github.io/research-tips/workshops/>.

Schedule and Weekly Learning Goals

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. The learning goals below should be viewed as the key concepts you should grasp after each week, and also as a guide to writing your discussion posts, policy reflections, and research papers.

Week 1: *Understanding Poverty and Inequality in the US*

Tuesday *What Poverty and Inequality?*

- Linda Midgett, *The Line: Poverty in America*, 2014,
Watch here: <https://ucla.kanopy.com/video/line-poverty-america>
- In *Poverty and Discrimination*, Chapter 2 - Who Is Poor? - pg 31-62. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1bd6jww.5>

Thursday *What are the foundational theories about poverty and inequality?*

- Shesol, Jeff. 2014. 'The 'P' Word: Why Presidents Stopped Talking About Poverty.' *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-p-word-why-presidents-stopped-talking-about-poverty> (June 14, 2020).
- Christopher Jencks, "Does Inequality Matter?," *Daedalus* 131, no. 1 (2002): 49-65.
- Ms. Hutchison Testimony on Proposed Changes to the Poverty Line Calculation. 2020. Washington, D.C. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ptHavHrDuE> (June 16, 2020).

Week 2: *Awareness, Attribution, and Allocation of Poverty*

Tuesday *The Attribution of Poverty*

- Porter, Eduardo. 2015. 'The Myth of Welfare's Corrupting Influence on the Poor.' *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/21/business/the-myth-of-welfares-corrupting-influence-on-the-poor.html> (June 16, 2020).
- Cozzarelli, Catherine, Anna V. Wilkinson, and Michael J. Tagler. 2001. 'Attitudes toward the Poor and Attributions for Poverty.' *Journal of Social Issues* 57(2): 207-27.

Thursday *The Geography of Poverty*

- Chapter 2 - "(RE)Considering Poverty and Place in the United States" - Allard pgs. 19-46 -
- Douglas S. Massey, "American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass," *American Journal of Sociology* 96, no. 2 (1990): 329-57.

Week 3: *Policy Changes and Poverty and Inequality*

Tuesday *Establishing a Safety Net*

- Chapter 3 - The Evolution of Poverty Policy - Lang pp. 63-82 (20 pages)
- Newkirk II, Vann R. 2018. 'The Real Lessons From Bill Clinton's Welfare Reform.' *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/02/welfare-reform-tanf-medicaid-food-stamps/552299/> (June 16, 2020).
- *Additional Reading* Chapter 5 - Homer Gets a Tax Cut Bartels pg. 136-169

Thursday *Production of Inequality and Spending*

- Chapter 7 - The Eroding Minimum Wage Bartels pg. 199-232
- "Fresh Air Interview: Journalist Gary Rivlin - 'Turning Poverty Into A Multi-Billion-Dollar Industry':" NPR. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127236038> (June 16, 2020). (36 minutes)

Week 4: *Representation of the Poor in American Institutions*

Tuesday *Representation in Congress pt.1*

- Chapter 8 - Economic Inequality and Political Representation - Bartels, Pg. 234-268
- Florida, Richard. 2014. 'Why Democrats Are Focused on Inequality: Liberal Metros Face the Worst of It.' CityLab. <http://www.citylab.com/politics/2014/06/why-democrats-are-focused-on-inequality-liberal-metros-face-the-worst-of-it/371827/> (June 16, 2020).

Thursday *Representation in Congress pt. 2*

- Chapter 6 - Surrogate Champions of the Poor - Miller - pg. 131-161
- Carnes, Dr Nicholas. 2018. 'Working-Class People Are Underrepresented in Politics. The Problem Isn't Voters.' Vox. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/10/24/18009856/working-class-income-inequality-randy-bryce-alexandria-ocasio-cortez> (June 16, 2020).

Week 5: *Poverty's Impact on Peoples Political Behavior*

Tuesday *Political Behavior of the Poor*

- Cathy Cohen and Michael Dawson, 'Neighborhood Poverty and African American Politics,' *American Political Science Review*, 1993, 286 -302.

Thursday

- Soss, Joe, and Lawrence R. Jacobs. 2009. 'The Place of Inequality: Non-Participation in the American Polity.' *Political Science Quarterly* 124(1): 95-125.

Week 6: *Political Impacts of Economic Crisis*

Tuesday *Great Recession*

- Chapter 9 - Stress Test: The Political Economy of the Great Recession
- Huyser, Kimberly R. et al. 2018. 'Differential Influence of the Great Recession on Political Participation Among Race and Ethnic Groups*.' *Social Science Quarterly* 99(2): 512 -23.

Thursday *COVID 19*

- Ugarte, Rodrigo. 'Voting in Crisis: The Likely Impact of Coronavirus on US Political Participation.' *Items*. <https://items.ssrc.org/covid-19-and-the-social-sciences/democracy-and-pandemics/voting-in-crisis-the-likely-impact-of-coronavirus-on-us-political-participation/> (June 16, 2020).

Course Policies

Course Materials

Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures, assignments, and review questions are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is **strictly prohibited**. Students shall not sell notes (or receive remuneration for taking notes) during this course to or by any person or commercial entity without the express written permission of the professor teaching this course. (thanks, Meghan Ming Francis, PhD!). Especially since all lectures are delivered online, you are not permitted to download materials from CCLE to redistribute anywhere else on the internet. Please review the UCLA policies regarding intellectual property: <https://www.adminvc.ucla.edu/covid-19/academic-continuity/protecting-privacy-and-data-during-remote-working-and-using-zoom>.

Email Correspondence

Please email christine.slaughter@ucla.edu to get in contact. This is the only email address that I will use to correspond with the class. Please update your email filter to prevent class messages from entering the spam folder online so that you can receive all relevant class e-mails. On weekdays, my goal is to respond within 24 hours of receiving your message. When emailing me, please have an informative email subject. Example: *Questions about Upcoming Submission* or *Resources for Understanding Racial Capitalism*. Under no circumstances are assignments accepted via email.

Zoom Attendance Policy

There will be 3 virtual check-ins for the course where we *all* come together via the zoom room. **These check-ins will occur the Tuesday during Week 1 - June 23, 2020 (Introductory), Week 3 - July 7, 2020 (Mid-Term), and - July 28, 2020 Week 6 (Final - Review Session)**. These sessions are designed to last one hour. Please mark your calendars to attend these synchronous meetings. You are strongly encouraged to attend these sessions.

Zoom Hours

I look forward to speaking with you during office hours and I encourage you to drop in to talk about class material, assignments, American politics, and the role of class more broadly. In respect of your time, I use the appointments to allot time for meetings. The scheduler ensures that you will not have to wait to speak. Note, meetings are limited to 10 minutes per person. Please do not schedule consecutive meetings and cancel appointments at least 10 minutes in advance if you cannot make it. [Schedule meetings here](#).

Policies on Incomplete Grades and Late Assignments

If an extended deadline is not authorized by the instructor or department, an unfinished incomplete grade will automatically change to an F after either (a) the end of the next regular semester in which the student is enrolled (not including summer sessions), or (b) the end of 12 months if the student is not enrolled, whichever is shorter. Incompletes that change to F will count as an attempted course on transcripts. The burden of fulfilling an incomplete grade is the responsibility of the student. The university policy on incomplete grades is located at <https://www.aap.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/IncompletePolicy.pdf>

The midterm will be accepted with a 20% reduction in potential score for each day late. Discussion posts submitted after 5pm Thursday, or comments posted after 5pm Friday will be reduced by 20%. Exams may not be re-scheduled, or made up, or retaken under any circumstances. Please check your schedule to prevent

conflicts. If you foresee any legitimate challenges to submitting assignments, please reach out to me privately. Note that, vacations do not constitute a legitimate challenge. For anything else, I am more than willing to work with you to ensure that assignments are submitted in a timely-fashion. Knowing that summer courses are fast-paced, I am more than willing to work with you in the submission of assignments in the wake of disruptions to your academic study.

Extra Credit

There are no extra credit or bonus assignments, under any circumstances, offered in this course.

Inclusive Learning Environment/Class Participation

In this class I will work to promote an anti-discriminatory environment where everyone feels safe and welcome. I recognize that discrimination can be direct or indirect and take place at both institutional and personal levels. I believe that such discrimination is unacceptable and I am committed to providing equality of opportunity for all by eliminating any and all discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimization. The success of this policy relies on the support and understanding of everyone in this class. We all have a responsibility not to be offensive to each other, or to participate in, or condone harassment or discrimination of any kind.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please look to the course webpage for more detailed guidelines. We will be using Vericite, which provides students and faculty with a score indicating what, if any, portions of your paper are not your own. If you receive Vericite score of more than 50% or higher on any one assignment will result in an automatic 'F' (0%) on said assignment. Use citations to avoid problems with plagiarism. You are not expected to cite class presentations. The UCLA library has resources to assist with avoiding plagiarism: [here](#) is a great resource on best practices to not plagiarize. Another vital resource to consider, it is much easier to learn than to plagiarize. Yes, you. You know exactly what I'm talking about. See <https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/studentconductcode>.

Accommodations and Accessibility

Please utilize UCLA campus resources for accommodations. In compliance with federal and state laws and University policy, UCLA is committed to ensuring that students with disabilities have full access to all aspects of the university experience that are available to all students. Academic accommodations are designed to provide that access. The Center for Accessible Education (CAE) has been designated as the campus entity that determines a student's eligibility for accommodations and services on the basis of disability.

If you are already registered with the Center for Accessible Education (CAE), please request your Letter of Accommodation in the Student Portal. If you are seeking registration with the CAE, please submit your request for accommodations via the CAE website. Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should submit their request for accommodations as soon as possible, as it may take up to two weeks to review the request. For more information, please visit the CAE website, visit the CAE at A255 Murphy Hall, or contact us by phone at (310) 825-1501.

Non-Discrimination Policy UCLA provides equality of opportunity in education and employment for all students and employees. Accordingly, UCLA affirms its commitment to maintain a work environment for all employees and an academic environment for all students that is free from all forms of discrimination.

Discrimination based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation is a violation of state and federal law and/or UCLA policy and will not be tolerated. Harassment of any person (either in the form of quid pro quo or creation of a hostile environment) based on

race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation also is a violation of state and federal law and/or UCLA policy and will not be tolerated. Retaliation against any person who complains about discrimination is also prohibited. UCLA's policies and regulations covering discrimination, harassment, and retaliation may be accessed at <https://equity.ucla.edu/programs-resources/policy/> or <https://catalog.registrar.ucla.edu/ucla-catalog19-20-1423.html>. Any person who feels that they have been the subject of prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should contact the Office of UCLA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at (310) 825-3935. As always, please refer to the UCLA True Bruin Values, <https://truebruin.ucla.edu/> when engaging in any assignment or communication related to the course.

Undergraduate Writing Center

The Undergraduate Writing Center offers UCLA undergraduates one-on-one sessions on their writing. The Center is staffed by peer learning facilitators (PLFs), undergraduates who are trained to help at any stage in the writing process and with writing assignments from across the curriculum. PLFs tailor appointments to the concerns of each writer. Multiple locations and hours available. For more information or to schedule an appointment, visit <http://wp.ucla.edu/wc/>

The instructor reserves the right to make modifications to this information throughout the quarter