

Politics of Inequality

Fall 2017

Basic Information

Instructor: Dr. Ondercin

Office: 013 Kauke

E-mail: hondercin@wooster.edu

Office Phone: 330-287-1934

Office hours:

You are welcome to meet with me about the class or your professional development at any point during the semester. To facilitate meeting with me, please go to <https://ondercin.youcanbook.me/> and select an available time. You must do this at least 24 hours before you wish to meet with me.

Overview of the Course

Thomas Jefferson inscribed equality into the ethos of the United States when he penned the words “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.” in the preamble of the Declaration of the Independence. Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the United States has struggled to understand what is meant by equality and to live up to this lofty goal. While many of the most notable legal obstacles to political equality have been removed, we still with struggle with the idea of equality. Economic, social, and political inequality are a complex and interconnected phenomenon. In particular, economic inequality has rapidly grown in the United States over the past several decades. In this class, we will systematically examine inequality in the United States.

We start our discussion of inequality by reviewing recent trends in economic inequality and how we conceptualize inequality. Then we turn our attention to understanding the intersection of inequality and politics, examining the theoretical arguments for equality and how the concept has shaped U.S. politics and Constitution. We then explore the political sources of inequality, focusing both on policy and public opinion. Then we shift to examining unequal voices in political participation and representation. Finally, we conclude by looking at how policy reinforces both political and economic inequality.

Course Objectives

- Through classroom learning and discussions, assigned readings, writing assignments, and exams students will analyze the role inequality plays in the U.S. political system.
- Through classroom learning and discussions, assigned readings, writing assignments, and exams students will think critically about the cause and consequences of inequality on the U.S. political system.

- Through classroom learning and discussions, assigned readings, writing assignments, and exams students will analyze contemporary research in political science and other social sciences to develop a deeper understanding of inequality in the United States.

What You Can Expect of the Course and What I Expect of You

The class meets three times a week. I expect you to be there at **all times**. A large portion of your grade is based on participation in class discussion and you are not able to participate if you are not in class. Material not covered in the readings will be covered in class. There is no other place to gain this information other than being in class.

You can expect a mixture of lecture, class discussion, small group projects, and individual projects. At all times, my aim will be to help you achieve a deep understanding of the material. Since so much of what I want you to learn will be dealt with only in class, it is important that you attend. Two things are very important to the success of this class: 1) your participation in every class; and 2) that you have completed the readings **before** the class in which we will discuss them. You cannot learn from each other, and I cannot learn from you, if you are not prepared for class. I encourage you to ask questions you may have about lectures, class discussions, readings, and things you see in the news. Do not be passive; class will be much more interesting and you will learn the material better if you are an active participant.

I expect you to observe common courtesy when you are in class. Please come on time; lateness is very rude! Please turn off cell phones and pagers. Please leave the newspaper, crossword puzzles, and other work at home. **NO LAPTOPS ALLOWED.** I do not teach in your bedroom; therefore, please do not sleep in my classroom. I expect you to be mentally present as well as physically present in class; this is the best way to ensure that you learn the course material. If I see you using electronic devices or engaging in inappropriate classroom behavior you will lose one point of your participation grade. If this happens more than 3 times you will receive a 0 for participation.

In this class we will engage in discussions about politics and policies. I want everyone to feel free to share their opinions during our discussions. Each of us brings a unique perspective to the class and we can all learn from this diversity. In order to make this possible you need to be respectful of other people's opinions, even if they are the direct opposite of your own beliefs. I will not tolerate personal attacks on one another or the use of disrespectful language. There is no room for an atmosphere of intimidation, and I will not tolerate it in this class. If there are any issues that you feel uncomfortable with please feel free to talk to me.

Moodle and Campus E-mail. This course will largely rely on Moodle for me to distribute assignments, to post course announcements, and to post readings. Please check the site regularly. You will submit all assignments via Moodle. You are expected to login to

Moodle by the second day of classes to make sure you can navigate the site. I will return assignments via Moodle. You are responsible for checking your Wooster email account daily for important class communications.

A note about email communications. Please do not hesitate to email me with any questions or concerns you may have. However, please be professional in your emails. Just like a written letter, be sure to open your email with an appropriate greeting like, “Dear Dr. Ondercin” or “Professor Ondercin.” Please make sure to identify who you are and what class you are taking from me in the body of the e-mail. Before sending an email, please make sure you cannot easily get the answer from another source (e.g., from the syllabus or other class documents). In addition, in many cases I may request you meet with me to discuss your question rather than engage in a series of back-and-forth emails.

Meeting with the Professor. I strongly encourage you to meet with me during office hours. You must schedule your meetings during office hours at <https://ondercin.youcanbook.me/>. I encourage you to come to me with any questions or concerns.

Late Work. Late work is not tolerated in this course. Think of the deadline as the time that an airline flight takes off. Just as you arrive at the airport with plenty of time, so too should you submit your assignment with plenty of time. Once the flight takes off or the deadline passes, you will receive a zero. Try Firefox as your browser or contact IT - if you're having issues with Moodle. I am skeptical of any excuses for late work that involve computer failure, thus you should be sure to save your work often and to back it up in another way.

Attendance Policy. Since this course requires active participation in the classroom you are expected to attend all class meetings. It is your responsibility to sign in at the beginning of class to verify your attendance. You are responsible for whatever happens in class, such as announcements, group work, and handouts. For each absence over three, excused or unexcused, you will lose one point of your participation grade. You do not need to e-mail me if you will be missing class. If you have a university related absence (i.e., traveling with a university sports team, attending a conference) it is your responsibility to arrange written notification of the absence from your superior BEFORE you are absent and make arrangement for any missed work. All assignments will be due before anticipated absences.

Incomplete. Incomplete coursework is a major inconvenience for students and professors. I expect you to do everything in your power to avoid this situation. Legitimate excuses include verified illnesses and family emergencies. No incomplete will be given unless a legitimate excuse is verified and you have a prior written agreement with the professor. As per College of Wooster policy, any unfinished work resulting in an “Incomplete” must be submitted by the first week of the following semester.

I will not discuss or send grades via e-mail. E-mail is not a secure form of communication,

meaning anyone can read your messages. In order to protect your privacy I will not e-mail you your grades. However, I am happy to discuss your grades with you in person during office hours or by appointment.

Required Readings

All required readings are outlined below. You will be able to find them on Moodle.

Grading

Grades for the class will be based on participation, the identity assignment, issue portfolio, and two exams. A total of 100 points are available. Below you will find a description of each of the factors that go into the final grade, the due dates, and the grade distribution.

Table 1: Assignments and Due Dates

	percent of total grade	due dates
Participation	20%	continually assessed
Identity Assignment	5%	September 11 ¹¹
Policy Portfolio		
Proposal	5%	October 2 nd
Brief	5%	November 3 rd
Analysis	5%	December 4 th
Presentation	5%	December 4 th -8 th
Midterm Exam	25	25%
Final Exam	30	30%
	100	100%

Participation Participation is worth 20% of your final grade. You are expected to be engaged in class discussions, ask questions, and contribute to group work. Participation is not simply about quantity or quality. You should participate on a regular basis in a meaningful way. You cannot make-up work completed in class if you are absent.

Exams. There will be two exams in the class. The mid-term exam is worth 25% of your final grade. The final exam is worth 30% of your final grade. Exams will be a mixture of short-answer and short-essay questions. You will need to bring a blank blue book to class. While grammar and spelling are not graded in the exam you will be expected to write clear, complete, and legible sentences. Make-up midterm examinations are only authorized for documented reasons involving personal, medical, or family emergencies. Ideally students need to inform the instructor of such events before the scheduled exam. If advance notification is impossible, then the student must inform the instructor as soon as reasonably possible. If such notification and documentation is provided, it is up to the instructor's discretion to

grant a make-up exam. If a make-up exam is approved by the instructor, its content and format may significantly differ from the scheduled exam.

Grade Appeal. I will not discuss changes in grades on exams or papers for 24 hours after a paper or exam has been handed back. If you feel that I missed an important point that you made or there is some other problem with your grade, after 24 hours you may submit a grade appeal. Your appeal should be a typed argument for why your grade should be changed. It should be no longer than 1 page. You will need to hand the appeal and the original paper or exam back into me for review. I will then ask you to schedule a time to meet or come in during office hours to discuss the appeal. Appealing the grade does not mean that I will automatically increase your grade.

Table 2: Grade Distribution

A	100 – 93
A–	92–90
B+	89–87
B	86–83
B–	82–80
C+	79–77
C	76–73
C–	72–70
D	69–60
F	59 and below

Other Important Policies

Academic Integrity. Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in College of Wooster courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. The complete policy can be found at: http://www.wooster.edu/home/Academic_Policies.php. The College policy suggests that a student will not give, offer, or receive aid other than that specifically allowed by the professor on any course work or examination; knowingly represent the work of others, including materials from electronic sources, as his/her own; falsify data; submit an assignment produced for a course to a second course without the authorization of all the instructors involved; deny other students access to necessary documents/materials by stealing, misplacing or destroying those materials; copying or paraphrasing from any source without proper citation, going beyond what is allowed in a group project, fabricating excuses and lying in connection with your academic work, give false reasoning to a faculty member or Dean when requesting an exam change or an extension on a

paper/project. You should cite your sources to avoid plagiarizing ideas and text. Particular attention should be directed to the appropriate use of materials available on-line through the Internet. It is important that you read and understand the ethical use of information (<http://library.wooster.edu/services/instruction/ethics/ethics.php>). Whether intentional or not, improper use of materials can be considered a violation of academic honesty. Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty will be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course.

Policy on Harassment. The College of Wooster has a harassment policy which is detailed in the Handbook of Selected College Policies. According to this policy, harassment of both employees and students based upon race, color, creed, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or political affiliation will not be tolerated. Further, the policy suggests that “Any behavior, whether verbal or physical, which exhibits a negative animus toward any person on account of a protected characteristic may be considered illegal harassment.”

Title IX. The College of Wooster and its faculty are committed to ensuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to meet this commitment and to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the College has developed policies and procedures which prohibit discrimination, sexual harassment/misconduct, and retaliation. Any member of the College community (faculty, staff, students, visitors, and third party vendors) who believes that they have been a victim of sexual harassment/misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, bullying, cyber-bullying, stalking and/or gender-based discrimination is encouraged to file a report with the Colleges Title IX Coordinator (Angela Johnston - ajohnston@wooster.edu; 330-263-2141). Reports can be filed in person, via email, or online at <http://wooster.edu/offices/discrimination/sexual/>. In order to ensure student safety and address the well-being of students, the College requires all employees, including faculty members, to report incidents of sexual and gender-based violence shared with them by students to the Colleges Title IX Coordinator. Exceptions are situations where students are unlikely to expect that a disclosure would trigger a reporting obligation such as in a class writing assignment. A faculty member reporting to the Title IX Coordinator does NOT mean that the student will be obligated to participate in any formal proceedings; that decision remains at the discretion of the student unless the information indicates that one or more students are at risk of further harassment. Information regarding the Colleges non-discrimination policy (including bias-related harassment), sexual assault/sexual misconduct, Title IX, and filing a report can be found at <http://wooster.edu/offices/discrimination/>.

Resources

Academic Resources. The College of Woosters Learning Center offers services designed to help students improve their overall academic performance and to assist them in achieving

their academic goals. You can go to the Learning Center for help with things like time management, improving your test preparation skills, or to improve your reading skills. The office is also designated with the responsibility for determining reasonable accommodation according to the Americans with Disabilities Act and for maintaining confidential records documenting disabilities. Please contact them if you have a disability that may affect your ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. The Learning Center is located in the Rubbermaid Student Services Building at 554 E. University Avenue. Call -2595 on campus to schedule an appointment. The complete College policy regarding student disabilities is at: http://www.wooster.edu/Learning_Center/handbook/full_manual.pdf.

The Writing Center. I encourage all students to take advantage of the campus Writing Center. You can get on-on-one guidance, resources and support with regard to your writing skills. The Writing Center is located on level 1 of the Andrews Library. You can call them at extension 2205, e-mail them at writing_center@wooster.edu, or visit their website at www.wooster.edu/writing_center.

Course Outline¹

Week 1 Introduction and Overview

- Wednesday, August 23rd Introduction to Course
- Friday, August 25th Trends in Inequality
 - Cassidy, John. 2014. “Process of Divergence” *The New Yorker* March 31, 2014
 - Cassidy, John. 2014. “Piketty’s Inequality Story in Six Charts” *The New Yorker* March 26, 2014.

Week 2

- Monday, August 28th Measuring Inequality
 - Conwell, Frank. 2011. *Measuring Inequality* Oxford University Press. Chapter 1
 - Noah, Timothy. 2010. “The Great Divergence” *Slate*
 - Wilkinson, Will. 2010. “The Inequality Myth: Is Rising Inequality in America Exaggerated?” *The Economist*. September 17th
 - Chetty, Raj, Hendren, Nathaniel Kline Patrick and Emmanuel Saez. 2014. “Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the US” (executive summary of QJE paper)

¹Any changes to this schedule will be announced verbally in class. It is the student’s responsibility to note changes and adhere to the new schedule.

- Wednesday, August 30th Exploring the Data
 - Congressional Budget Office, 2011 Trends in the Distribution of Household Income between 1979 and 2007
 - The United States Census Bureau: Poverty
 - Economic Policy Institute 2011. “When Income Grows, Who Gains?” Interactive Graphs based on data gathered by Emmanuel Sea.
- Friday, September 1st Exploring our identities.
 - Watch. *People Like US: Social Class in America*. Can be streamed through the library.
 - Stelle, Claude. 2011. “Chapter 1: An Introduction: At the Root of Identity” *Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do*. W.W. Norton & Company pp. 1-15

Week 3 Exploring Class and Politics

- Monday, September 4th
 - Johnson, Jamie. 203 *Born Rich*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8o46HH-TfNY>
- Wednesday, September 6th What is class?
 - Katherine S. Newman and Victor Tan Chen (2007) *The Missing Class: Portraits of the Near Poor in American Boston*: Beacon Press Chapter 1 & 4.
 - David K. Shipler (2004) *The Working Poor: Invisible America* New York Alfred A. Knopf. Chapter 1.
 - Teresa A. Sullivan, Elizabeth Warren, and Jay Lawrence Westbrook, *The Fragile Middle Class: Americans in Debt*. (New Have: Yale University Press) Chapter 1
- Friday, September 8th Gender and Class
 - Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. Introduction and Chapter 3.
 - Barabra Ehrenreich “Nicheled and Dimed (2011) Version” The Huffington Post
 - Jane Collins and Victoria Mayer (2010) *Both Hands Tied: Welfare Reform and the Race to the Bottom in the Low-Wage Labor Market*. Chicago, IL

Week 4 Class and Race

- Monday, September 11th Race and Class
 - Massey, Douglas S. (1990) “American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass” *American Journal of Sociology* 96(2): 329-357.

- Thomas J. Surge. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. (Princeton UP 2005) Introduction
- Pew Research Center 2011. “Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics”
- Wednesday, September 13th Location and Class
 - Hochschild, Arlie Russe (2016) “I spend 5 years with Some of Trumps biggest Fans: Here What They Wont Tell you”
 - Cramer, Katherine (2016) “How Rural Resentment Helps Explain the Surprising Victory of Donald Trump”
- Friday, September 15th Does Equality Matter?
 - Christopher Jencks “Does Inequality Matter?” *Daedalus* (Winter 2002) pp 48-65.
 - Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How Todays Divided Society Endangers our Future*. 2012 Chapter 5.
 - Joseph E. Stiglitz 2013 “Inequality is Holding Back the Recovery”

Identity Assignment Due Today

Week 5

- Monday, September 18th Policy and Inequality (Introduce Assignment)
 - Hacker, Jacob S., Suzanne Mettler, and Joe Soss. 2007. n“*The New Politics of Inequality: A Policy-Centered Perspective*” *Remaking America: Democracy and Public Policy in an Age of Inequality*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press.
 - Discussion of policy paper assignment.
- Wednesday, September 20th Theoretical Perspectives on Inequality
 - John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* Chapters 2 &5
- Friday, September 22nd Key documents on Equality in America
 - Thomas Jefferson Declaration of Independence
 - James Madison Federalist 10
 - Elizabeth Cady Santon Declaration of Sentiments
 - Abraham Lincoln Gettysburg Address
 - Martin Luther King I have a dream

Week 6

- Monday, September 25th Constitution and Equality
 - Plessy v. Ferguson
 - Brown v. Board of Education
 - San Antonio v Rodriguez
- Wednesday, September 27th Constitution and Equality
 - Robert Dahl How Democratic is the Constitution Chapters 1, 2, and 5.
- Friday, September 29th
 - Exam 1

Week 7 Sources of Inequality

- Monday, October 2nd Political Sources of Inequality
 - Policy Proposal Due Today
 - Bartels, Larry (2008) *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economic of the Gilded Age*. Russell Sage and Princeton University Press. Chapter 2, Chapter 6 and chapter 7
- Wednesday, October 4th
 - Western, Bruce (2006) *Punishment and Inequality in American*. Russell Sage. Chapter 4&5
 - Pettit, Becky (2012) *Invisible Men: Mass Incarceration and the Myth of Black Progress*. Russell Sage Chapter 1 and 5
- Friday, October 6th Benefits
 - Semuels, Alana (2016) “The End of Welfare as We Know it” *The Atlantic*. April 1 2016.
 - Soss, Joe, Richard Fording, and Sanford Scram (2011) *Disciplining the Poor: Neoliberal Paternalism and the Persistent Power of Race* Chapters 4, 5, & 7.
 - This American life Episode 409 “Trends with Benefits”

Week 8 Fall Break

Week 9 Attitudes about Inequality

- Monday, October 16th
 - Bartels, Larry (2008) *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economic of the Gilded Age*. Russell Sage and Princeton University Press. Chapter 5.
- Wednesday, October 18th
 - Giles, Martin. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media and The Politics of Antipoverty Policy* Chapter 3.
 - Winter, Nicholas. 2008. *Dangerous Frames*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 5.
- Friday, October 20th
 - Movie: Inequality for All.

Week 10

- Monday, October 23rd
 - Paper work day.
- Wednesday, October 25th More on attitudes
 - Nathan Glazer. “Why Don’t Americans Care about Income Inequality?”
 - Cooke, Kristina, David Rhode, and Ryan McNeil. 2012. “The Undeserving Poor”
- Friday, October 27th Democracy Slow?
 - Bonica, Adam, McCarty Nolan, Poole, Keith, and Howard Rosenthal (2013) “Why Hasnt Democracy Slowed Rising Inequality” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27(3) 103-24
 - Mettler, Susanne (2015) “From Pioneer Egalitarianism to Reign of the Super Rich: How the U.S. Political System has promoted Equality and Inequality over time” *Tax Law Review* 68: 563-611.

Week 11

- Monday, October 30th Who Governs?
 - McElwee, Sean (2014) “The Death of Working-Class Politics: How Wealth Conquered Congress and Abandoned Blue-Collar American” *Salon*. November 22, 2014.
 - Bonica, Adam 2016 “Avenues of Influence: On the Political Expenditures of Corporations and their Directors and Executives”

- Wednesday, November 1st Organized Interests
 - Kay L. Schlozman and John T. Tierney *Organized Interest and American Democracy* Chapter 4.
 - Ellen S. Miller and Micah L Sifry “Labor’s Loss” *American Prospect* August 14, 200.
 - Catherine M. Paden. *Civil Rights Advocacy on Behalf of the Poor*. Chapter ?
- Friday, November 3rd
 - Martin Gilens. “Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America”
 - Bartels, Larry (2008) *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economic of the Gilded Age*. Russell Sage and Princeton University Press. Chapters 9 and 10

Policy Brief Due Today

Week 12

- Monday, November 6th
 - Guiner, Lani “The Representation of Minority Interests in Congress”
 - Michele L. Swers “Are Women More likely to Vote for Womens Issue Bills than Their male Colleagues”
- Wednesday, November 8th
 - Verba, Sidney “Would the Dream of Political Equality Turn Out to Be Nightmare”
 - Steven J. Rosenstone and Mark Hansen. 1996. *Mobilization Participation, and Democracy in America*. Chapter 1
- Friday, November 10th
 - Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Brady, and Henry “Civic Participation and the Equality Problem” In *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*
 - Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady “Who Participates? Economic Circumstances and Needs” In *Voice and Equality*

Week 13

- Monday, November 13th
 - Policy paper working day.
- Wednesday, November 15th
 - Schlozaman, Kay Lehman, Sidney Verba, and Henry Brady. 2012. *The Unheavenly Chours: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy* Princeton UP Chapter 1.
 - Chetty, Raj, Friedman John N. Saez, Emmanuel, Turner Nicholas and Yagn, Danny. 2017 “Mobility Report Cards: The Role of College in Intergenerational Mobility”
 - NYT Upshot about college.
- Friday, November 17th
 - Mettler, Suzanne. 2014. *Degrees of Inequality How the Politics of Higher Education Sabotaged the American Dream*. Basic Books. Introduction, Chapter 1-3.

Week 14

- Monday, November 20th Affirmative Action
 - Christine Emba. “Black people aren’t keeping white Americans out of college. Rich people are.” *Washington Post*
 - Lloyd Green. “Time for affirmative action to be based on income, not race” *Fox News* <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2017/08/07/time-for-affirmative-action-to-b.html>
 - Andrew Lam. “White Students’ Unfair Advantage in Admissions” *New York Times*
- Wednesday, November 22nd Thanksgiving Break
- Friday, November 24th Thanksgiving Break

Week 15

- Monday, November 27th
 - Helen Ingram “Poverty, Policy, and the Social Construction of Target Groups” In *Remaking*
 - Joe Soss, “Lessons of Welfare: Policy Design, Political Learning, and Political Action” APSR

- Wednesday, November 29th
 - Susan Mettler “Bring The State Back In to Civic Engagement: Policy Feedback of the G.I. Bill for World War II Veterans”
- Friday, December 1st
 - Noah, Timothy *The Great Divergence* Chapter 11.

Week 16 Presentations

- Monday, December 4th
 - Group A Presentations
 - Papers due.
- Wednesday, December 6th
 - Group B Presentations
- Friday, December 8th
 - Group C Presentations