Contact Information

Course Instructor: Melissa Rogers

Melissa Rogers is an Assistant Professor in Comparative Politics in the Department of Politics and Policy. Her specialties are the political economy of inequality, comparative political institutions, Latin American politics, and government finance.

Office: McManus 228
E-mail: Melissa.rogers@cgu.edu
In-person Office Hours: Wednesday 11am-12pm; Thursday 11am-12pm
Skype Hours by appointment

Teaching Assistant:
Dong-wook Lee, Politics and Policy
E-mail: dong-wook.lee@cgu.edu

Course Schedule
Semester start/end dates: September
Meeting day, time: Thursday 1-4pm
Course Location: Stauffer 106

Course Description

Income inequality is an important and complex issue that faces every society. The challenge of managing inequality from a policy perspective is not merely a political concern, but one that is fundamentally economic, psychological, sociological, historical, philosophical, and geographic in nature. In this proposed trans-disciplinary course, students will engage the diverse literature on income inequality to develop a nuanced understanding of the issue and, ultimately, develop a policy proposal to manage rising income inequality with a multifaceted approach.

Disciplinary Approaches

Political/Philosophical: The study of politics is the study of distribution. Income inequality is the philosophical and ideological basis for competition in democratic politics throughout the world. All democratic party-systems are, to varying extents, structured around class interests and, related to this, the role of government in influencing the distributive effects of economic markets. In the proposed class we will examine the distributive nature of political conflict around the world, with particular focus on the United States in comparative perspective, to understand what leads to greater or lesser income inequality. In these discussions, we will address how political institutions influence the salience of inequality and the tools used by governments to address distributive conflict.
Economic: Classic models of the effects of inequality on politics come from the field of economics. In early work using stark formalizations, increasing income inequality is shown to drive preferences for increased government spending and redistribution. We will look at these models and subsequent work that has questioned the validity of these theories. We will also learn how inequality is calculated using economic statistics, the variance in these measures, and their theoretical implications. Finally, we will analyze inequality as an independent variable that may influence other important economic outcomes, such as growth and development.

Psychological: Inequality is not a simple distributive concern, but one that is strongly influenced by psychology and culture. Inequality is known to have psychological effects on those who experience poverty or perceived economic or political injustice. Inequality also influences the psychology and sociology of those at the higher ends of the income spectrum, including shaping beliefs about the distribution of skills, merit, and effort in society. These psychological and cognitive effects are inseparable from political preferences on redistributive policy and the two will be examined in tandem.

Historical: The United States has low government redistribution and high income inequality in comparison with other industrialized countries. The reasons for this difference between the USA and other high-income countries cannot be simply explained by ideological exceptionalism amongst Americans. Rather, U.S. policy toward income inequality is a complex process that is not easily understandable without a view to historical economic and political development. Similarly, European approaches to inequality reflect historical development that has a path-dependent effect on current political debate.

Sociological/Geo-Spatial: Inequality is not only caused by economic or political forces, but is affected by choices made by individuals. A significant body of literature in sociology suggests that many individuals prefer to live and work in relatively homogenous groups, whether informed by political, racial, ethnic, or income differences. We will investigate these sociological and related psychological bases for “otherness.” These groupings inform citizen preferences on politics and, along with other socio-demographic factors, has resulted in a process of geographic self-sorting that influences political representation based on geographic representation, and has contributed to dramatic political polarization in the United States.

Background Preparations (Prerequisites)
None. Understanding of basic economic principles is helpful but not required.

Student Learning Outcomes:
By the end of this course, students will be able to:
1. Articulate the relevance of inequality to political, social, and economic systems.
2. Discuss the varied concepts and measurement of inequality.
3. Analyze the relationships between politics, economics, social structure, public policy, and inequality.
4. Evaluate theories of the political causes and outcomes of income inequality.
5. Use the tools of social science research to evaluate the prominent literature on the income inequality.
Texts and Journal References
Students are expected to check the ISBN or doi number for each reference to ensure the intended edition is studied.


Grusky, David and Sonya Szeley, editors. The Inequality Reader: Contemporary and Foundational Readings in Race, Class, and Gender. Westview Press.


All other readings are available on Sakai

Course Requirements & Assignments:

Short Papers: All students will write three 3-4 page discussion papers on the topic of the class that week. These papers should be an analytical discussion of how you would incorporate the concepts of that week to your field and how you might incorporate this research into your own research. Each week that a student writes a paper, he or she should bring 2 discussion questions to share with the class. Students will sign up in the first or second week of class.

Midterm: the midterm exam will cover the macro concepts addressed in the first half of the course, especially defining, measuring and studying inequality from different research perspectives. The structure will be 3 essay questions. Students will have three hours to complete the exam.

Course participation: Two students each week will bring in three substantive discussion questions for the week’s readings. These students will present the questions after my introduction to the class. After reading the questions, students will break up into groups of two to discuss the questions and create additional questions to discuss throughout the class period. ALL students will be expected to participate in the creation and discussion of these questions. Student participation is 20% of the course grade—do not sit quietly!

Collaborative Project: The course is built around the premise that income inequality is an issue of relevance to all of the social sciences. Accordingly, students will form multi-disciplinary teams and develop policy proposals to address either 1) the origins of inequality; or 2) the effects of inequality on societal outcomes. Depending on the composition and interest of the teams, these policy proposals can target interventions to reduce inequality through political, economic, or sociological/psychological transformation, or more specific policies to address differential opportunity structures in specific policy areas such as education, employment, or health policy.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Element</th>
<th>Points Allocated</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in class &amp; outside</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Project</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30%</td>
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I will make every effort to return to you each assignment with feedback within 7 days.

**Grading**

*Your grade will be calculated using the following scale. Grades with plus or minus designations are at the professor’s discretion.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Point</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Complete mastery of course material and additional insight beyond course material</td>
<td>Insightful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Complete mastery of course material</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Gaps in mastery of course material; not at level expected by the program</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>Ineffective</td>
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Continual matriculation at CGU requires a minimum grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 in all coursework taken at CGU. Students may not have more than two incompletes. Details of the policy are found on the Student Services webpage ([http://www.cgu.edu/pages/5081.asp](http://www.cgu.edu/pages/5081.asp)).

**Important Dates**

*Midterm: October 16th*

*Discussion Papers: Three 3-page discussion papers (sign up sheet distributed in first two weeks of class)*

*Collaborative Assignment: topic sign up sheet distributed in first two weeks of class; Policy proposal and Presentations due December 11th*
Course Policies:

The CGU institutional policies apply to each course offered at CGU. A few are detailed in the space below. Students are encouraged to review the student handbook for the program as well as the policy documentation within the bulletin and on the Registrar’s pages (http://bulletin.cgu.edu/ http://www.cgu.edu/pages/179.asp).

Attendance
Students are expected to attend all classes. Students who are unable to attend class must seek permission for an excused absence from the course director or teaching assistant. Unapproved absences or late attendance for three or more classes may result in a lower grade or an “incomplete” for the course. If a student has to miss a class, he or she should arrange to get notes from a fellow student and is strongly encouraged to meet with the teaching assistant to obtain the missed material. Missed extra-credit quizzes and papers will not be available for re-taking.

Scientific and Professional Ethics
The work you do in this course must be your own. Feel free to build on, react to, criticize, and analyze the ideas of others but, when you do, make it known whose ideas you are working with. You must explicitly acknowledge when your work builds on someone else’s ideas, including
ideas of classmates, professors, and authors you read. If you ever have questions about drawing the line between others' work and your own, ask the course professor who will give you guidance. Exams must be completed independently. Any collaboration on answers to exams, unless expressly permitted, may result in an automatic failing grade and possible expulsion from the Program. Additional information on CGU academic honesty is available on the Student Services webpage (http://www.cgu.edu/pages/1132.asp).

Instructor Feedback and Communication
The best way to get in touch with me is email. I will respond to email messages within two business days. If you have not received an email from me after two days, please contact me again.

Expectations and Logistics
Papers should be submitted via Sakai each assigned week prior to the start of class. Late papers will be deducted a letter grade for each day late and will not be accepted after the fourth day. If you have a good reason why you cannot turn in an assignment on time or complete an examination, please contact me at least one week in advance. We can arrange an alternative schedule.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
CGU is committed to offering auxiliary aids and services to students with verifiable disabilities, in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. To ensure that their individual needs are addressed, students with special needs are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office or the Office of Disability Services, as early as possible. Additional resources can be found on the linked page (http://www.cgu.edu/pages/1154.asp).

Mental Health Resources: Graduate school is a context where mental health struggles can be exacerbated. If you ever find yourself struggling, please do not hesitate to ask for help. If you wish to seek out campus resources, here is some basic information about Monsour (http://www.cuc.claremont.edu/monsour/):

“Monsour Counseling and Psychological Services (MCAPS) is committed to promoting psychological wellness for all students served by the Claremont University Consortium. Our well-trained team of psychologists, psychiatrists, and post-doctoral and intern therapists offer support for a range of psychological issues in a confidential and safe environment.”

Phone 909-621-8202
Fax 909-621-8482
After hours emergency 909-607-2000
Address
Tranquada Student Services Center, 1st floor
757 College Way
Claremont, CA 91711
Weekly Assignments

Week 1 (September 4th): Introduction to the Inequality
  • Inequality Reader- Chs. 1-4

Week 2 (September 11th): Defining and Measuring Inequality
  • Article on Measuring Inequality: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2652960/
  • Stiglitz, p. 1-34
  • Milanovic, p. 3-32

Week 3 (September 18th): Economics of Inequality I
  • Stiglitz- 35-103

Week 4 (September 25th): Economics of Inequality II
  • Stiglitz p. 104-147; 298-364
  • Milanovic, p. 95-109, p. 149-164, p. 193-202
  Guest Speaker: Maya Federman, Economics, Pitzer College

Week 5 (October 2nd): Inequality and Social Capital
  • Inequality Reader- 62, 63, 64
Week 6 (October 9th): Inequality and Human Capital

- Inequality Reader- Chapters 51, 52

Guest Speaker: Lucrecia Santibañez, Department of Educational Studies

Week 7 (October 16th): Midterm

Week 8 (October 23rd): Sociology of Inequality

- Inequality Reader- Chapters 5, 6, 26, 33, 39, 68, 69

Week 9 (October 30th): Psychology of Inequality

- http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2832600/
- Inequality Reader- 28, 31, 56-60
- Milanovic- p.120-129, p. 37-60

Guest Speaker: Azamat Junisbai, Sociology, Pitzer College

Week 10 (November 6th): Politics of Inequality I

- Stiglitz- p. 234-297
Week 11 (November 13th): Politics of Inequality II
- Stiglitz- Chs. 148-233

Week 12 (November 20th): Poverty
- Inequality Reader 15-22

Guest Speaker: Linda Perkins, Applied Womens Studies CGU

Week 13 (November 27th): Wealth
- Inequality Reader Ch 11-14; 65-67
- Milanovic- p. 33-60

Week 14 (December 4th): Geography of Inequality
- Inequality Reader- Ch 71
- Milanovic- p. 61-67; 74-77; 149-164
Week 15 (December 11th): Policy Approaches to Reduce Inequality

- Inequality Reader- Chs. 73, 74, 75, 76, 78

Group Presentations