1 Course Description

This course is about the distribution of power in contemporary democratic societies: who governs? Is there a “power elite?” Or does public policy making incorporate the diverse interests that exist in democratic societies?

This course will address these questions, focusing first on the local distribution of power (in London, and in other worldclass cities), and then in national governments, in a broadly comparative context. For each level of government, we will examine the distribution of power, its relationship to income and sociodemographic distributions, and sustaining policies and institutions.

Students will have the opportunity to work with income and labor force surveys in a mid-term assignment, and in a final paper, to examine different dimensions of inequality and their implications for the quality of democracy.

2 Learning Goals and Course Requirements

This course has the following learning goals:

1. Students will read, discuss, and engage with current political science research about the quality of political representation in the UK, the US, and in other contemporary democracies.
• **Discussion Papers (20%)**
  Beginning in the second week (i.e., January 23) of the quarter, discussion questions will be circulated early in each week. In preparation for seminar, each student should prepare a brief response to these questions (max. 2 pages; due by noon, on Mondays) that explicitly reference the readings assigned for that week, and provide some analysis. These papers are intended to assess comprehension of course material, and to provide an opportunity for reflection on key topics prior to section meetings. Papers should be well-written, with appropriate professional/academic style, full citations, etc..

• **Class Participation (10%)**
  Students are expected to have read all course materials before class and section, and should be prepared to analyze them in detail. Students who do not effectively contribute to class and section discussions—i.e., those who are absent, do not raise on-point questions or comments, or are unprepared—will not receive full credit for participation.

2. Students will work with income and labor force surveys to develop a **hands-on understanding of contemporary national income distributions** and standard measures of income inequality.

• **Assignment: Income Inequality. (30%)**
  For this assignment, students will use the Luxembourg Income Study to calculate measures of income inequality for the US and for each state. This hands-on assignment will guide students, step-by-step, through an analysis and comparison of income distributions, with the goal of providing insight into the challenges of assessing overall economic well-being and the effectiveness of government responses to poverty and inequality.
  This assignment is due on **February 21**.

3. Students will develop their own **empirical projects, focusing on some aspect of the politics of income inequality**, developing and testing their own hypotheses, or evaluating an implication of existing research.

• **Final Paper. (Topic Memo, 10%; Final Paper, 30%)**
  Students will use the measures of income inequality, developed in the Assignment, in a test of a working hypothesis that is informed by the existing political science literature, or its implications. Topic memos should clearly state a research question, identify three pieces of existing research on the topic (and a brief discussion of their insufficiencies), and outline a strategy for empirical analysis. Students will be encouraged to meet with their instructor or section leader to review their topic memo, before proceeding with the larger project. (A list of suggested topics will be posted on Canvas early in the quarter.)
  Topic memos will be due on **March 1**; final papers will be due on **March 24**.
3 Grading Policies

Regarding late work:

**Late discussion papers** will not be accepted; students will be assigned a grade of ‘0’ for papers that are not submitted on time.

**Late assignments, topic memos, and final papers** will be penalized at a rate of one-third of a letter grade per day late, for a maximum of three days, at which point students will be assigned a grade of ‘0’.

If you feel strongly that your grade on an assignment, topic memo, or final paper, does not reflect the quality of your work, you may appeal in the following way: Write a memo that explains, in as much detail as possible, why you think you should have received a different grade. Submit this memo, along with your graded work, and a letter in which you formally request that the assignment be re-graded. The revised grade may be higher, lower, or identical to the grade that you originally received, but it will be final.

4 Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae).
5 Course Outline

Introduction

WEEK 1. January 16 Who Governs? Representation and Influence


Part 1. The Long-Term Consequences of Local Distributions of Power

WEEK 2. January 23 Introduction to Greater London


[Class to be re-scheduled]


WEEK 4. February 6 Political Representation in North American and European Cities


[Field trip to the Museum of London and London Transport Museum]
Part 2. The Politics of Inequality in Contemporary Democracies

WEEK 5. February 13 Workshop: Measuring Inequality

WEEK 6. February 20 Origins and Persistence of Economic Inequality


WEEK 7. February 27 Parties and the Politics of Inequality

- Dancygier, Rafaela (2017). Dilemmas of Inclusion: Muslims in European Politics. Princeton UP.

WEEK 8. March 6 Globalization and the Politics of Inequality

- BBC Analysis “Brexit: A Tale of Two Cities.”

Conclusion

WEEK 9. March 13 The Politics of Inequality and the Quality of Democratic Representation