

LSJ 490/POLS 447: The Politics of Inequality in the 21st Century

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Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30-4:20

Course Overview

Inequality is a ubiquitous feature of social and political life in the 21st century. We all experience it every day in our personal relationships, at the UW, and in the workplace. In national politics, inequality has received increasing attention amid crises like the Great Recession and the Covid-19 pandemic, and protests for racial and gender justice. At the international level, inequality is a defining feature of the global economy and international security alike, and its impacts are likely to be exacerbated amid wars and climate change.

But what, exactly, is inequality? How can we think about and measure the differences between social, economic and political inequality? Is inequality a feature or a bug of our institutions? How do people experience inequality and how does it impact politics around the world? In this class, we will think about these questions from an interdisciplinary socio-legal perspective, drawing on research from across the social sciences, and sometimes from fiction, films, and documentaries. We will study inequality in its many manifestations, both within and across countries.

Required Reading: All required readings will be posted for free on Canvas. There are no required textbooks.

Assignments:

Reading Memos
Inequality Policy Analysis
Inequality Op-Ed
Made (In) Equality Final Project
Mid-Term and Final Self-Evaluations

To receive credit for this course, you must complete all assignments above. I include a brief description of each component below. The syllabus marks clearly when all assignments are due, enabling all students to schedule their quarter accordingly. If you have conflicting commitments, such as military service or others, please come speak with me as soon as possible so accommodations can be made.

Engagement/Participation: We recognize that every student participates differently. Participation will reflect your active engagement with course material and support of your peers, and can include verbal contributions in class, note-taking in small groups, online discussions, peer review assignments, study groups, conversations with the instructor, among other activities.

Reading Memos: These are semi-weekly assignments that ask you to think about course readings. These are somewhat open-ended opportunities for you to explore ideas you're

interested in more closely. So long as you thoroughly integrate specific discussion of course readings, you may submit these assignments as recorded memos (or in other forms – talk to me!) with a written outline to help guide my listening.

Inequality Policy Analysis: Deploying the tools for defining, measuring and analyzing inequality that we have been developing, students will produce a policy analysis paper. This paper will be supported by strong research, and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Inequality Op-Ed: Building on your analysis from the Inequality Policy Analysis, you will translate your research for public audiences in the form of a newspaper op-ed. This assignment requires you to think about how to summarize complicated information for non-expert audiences, as well as how to develop persuasive skills.

Made (In) Equality Final Project: The course culminates with the Made (In) Equality Final Project, which is a combination of individual and collaborative efforts. We will discuss and define the scope of this project collectively.

Grades: In this class, you will work hard, you will read a lot, you will collaborate with your peers and, I hope, you will learn a lot. Because our ultimate goal is learning growth, the task of assigning specific grades to work at different stages can be a real challenge. Instead of assigning letter or number grades for your assignments, I will instead provide substantive feedback on major assignments that will indicate whether I think your assignments are developing, proficient, or excellent via a holistic rubric, comments, and one-on-one discussion.

You will engage in a self-evaluation process once mid-way through the quarter and once at the end of the quarter. You may do this in written form or in a one-one-one meeting with me. In your final self-evaluation, you will make the case for the grade that best reflects your assignments, overall course engagement, and my feedback. While I reserve the right to submit the final grade that I feel best reflects your contributions, my goal is to use this final evaluation as an opportunity to provide you with a holistic assessment of your work this term rather than an average of graded assignments.

We will discuss this evaluation procedure at the beginning of and throughout the academic term. If you have any questions or concerns, you should feel welcome reaching out to me as soon as possible.

Academic Honesty: You are assumed to be familiar with the university's policies on cheating and plagiarism and the potential penalties involved (a link to those policies is on the section website or you can find it at: <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm>). In the event that there is a question about your work, you may be asked to produce any notes and outlines you used, to identify your sources, and to provide an electronic copy of your paper. It is my policy to forward any incidents of probable academic misconduct to the College of Arts and Sciences' Committee on Academic Conduct for investigation and resolution. Remember: When in doubt, cite.

Access and Accommodations: Your experience in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you experience barriers based on

disability, please seek a meeting with DRS to discuss and address them. If you have already established accommodations with DRS, please communicate your approved accommodations to your instructor at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

Disability Resources for Students (DRS) offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary or permanent disability that requires accommodations (this can include but not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924, Mary Gates Hall 011, uwdrs@uw.edu or disability.uw.edu.

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/)

(<https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/>). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/) (<https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/>).”

Basic Needs Policy: Your safety, health and well-being are far more important than anything going on in class. Please feel free to reach out to me if you need to talk. Any student who faces challenges securing their food, housing, or personal safety should feel welcome to come to the instructor so that we can connect you with any resources available through the university.

Diversity Statement: Diversity creates opportunities for people to engage, understand and respect others whose perspectives, values, beliefs, traditions, and world views have been shaped by experiences and backgrounds that may be different from their own, particularly those from historically marginalized and underrepresented groups. This account of diversity includes, but is not limited to differences in gender, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, immigration status, intellectual and physical ability, sexual orientation, income, faith, socio-economic class, family status, primary language, military experience, political identification, cognitive style, and communication style. If any student has concerns, they should feel welcome and encouraged to express their concerns to me in person or via e-mail. Please see a breakdown of some campus resources at the end of this syllabus.

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change based on the needs of our learning community.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 1	3/26	Welcome!		
	3/28	Defining Inequality	Paul Krugman, "Why We're in a New Gilded Age"; Amartya Sen, "From Income Inequality to Economic Inequality"	
Week 2	4/2	Inequality & Society I	bell hooks, <i>Where We Stand: Class Matters</i> , chapters 2, 9 & 10	Reading Memo 1 due Sunday, 4/7
	4/4	Inequality & Society II	Octavia Butler, "The Book of Martha" ; NYT, "The Visions of Octavia Butler"	
Week 3	4/9	Inequality & Society III	Hall & Lamont, "Introduction" from <i>Successful Societies: How Institutions and Culture Affect Health</i> ; McKoy, "Racism, Sexism and the Crisis of Black Women's Health" ; Durose, "Why 70 percent of the world's maternal deaths are in sub-Saharan Africa"	Inequality Policy Analysis Proposal due in class Thursday, 4/11
	4/11	Inequality & Society IV	Josephine Ensign, chs. 7 and Epilogue from <i>Skid Row</i> Proposals due in class!	
Week 4	4/16	Law & Inequality I	McFadden, "German citizenship law and the Turkish diaspora"	Reading Memo 2 due Sunday, 4/21
	4/18	Law & Inequality II	Kandaswamy, "State Austerity and the Racial Politics of Same Sex Marriage"	
Week 5	4/23	Law & Inequality III	Byler, "Anti-colonial friendship"; Listen to Throughline episode, "Five Fingers Crush the Land" ; Wang, "Hong Kongers are Purging the Evidence of their Lost Freedom"	Midterm Self-Evaluations (written or by appointment) due Sunday, 4/28
	4/25	Law & Inequality IV	Midterm Self-Evaluations!	
Week 6	4/30	Global Inequality I	Bourguignon, ch. 3 and 5 of <i>The Globalization of Inequality</i>	Inequality Policy Analysis Rough Draft due Sunday, 5/5

	5/2	Global Inequality II	Godoy, "Market Myths and Assumptions"; The Economist , "A healthy re-examination of free trade's benefits and shocks"	
Week 7	5/7	Global Inequality III	UN, "Advancing a rights-based approach to climate change resilience in the Sahel"	
	5/9	Politics & Inequality I	Inglehart & Norris, "Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties"; (skim) Silver et al , "Left Behind by Globalization"	
Week 8	5/14	Politics & Inequality II	Chua, "Rights Mobilization: A View from Southeast Asia"; Parker & Towler, "Race & Authoritarianism in American Politics"	Inequality Op-Ed due Sunday, 5/19
	5/16	Politics & Inequality III	Capoccia, "Militant Democracy: The Institutional Bases of Democratic Self-Preservation"; Solomon , "Germany Looks to Stop the Far Right from Assuming Power"	
Week 9	5/21	The Future & Inequality I	Toya , "Responsibility to Others in the Future: The Foundation of the Imperative of Responsibility in Hans Jonas"; Hermann, "Artificial intelligence in fiction"; Tavani , "Artificial intelligence, the future of work, and inequality"	Policy Analysis Final Draft due 5/26
	5/23	The Future & Inequality II	Review Tuesday's readings	
Week 10	5/28	The Future & Inequality III	TBD	
	5/30	The Future & Inequality IV	TBD	
Exam Week	6/1-7			Made (In) Equality Project due Thursday, 6/6 Final Self-Evaluation due no later than Friday, 6/7 (written or by appt)

