**POL 315: Political Inequality, Section 1**

Fall 2023

Tuesday/Thursday 1:00 -2:15pm

Bishop 107

**Dr. Marvin King**

Associate Professor |Political Science and African American Studies

325 Deupree

[marvin@olemiss.edu](mailto:marvin@olemiss.edu)

Office Hours: Monday: 10a – 1pm

A note about emails and titles: While I am not overly concerned about titles, many faculty do insist upon being addressed by their rank, so it is worth the time and trouble to use a person’s correct name and title – Dr. King, Professor, or Professor King – are all fine, rather than just “Hey.” The subject line should indicate the class you are in as well. I teach several classes and have some responsibility/contact with more than 500 students this semester.

I typically respond to all necessary and appropriate emails directly related to course matters within one working day during the workweek. I will likely not respond to unsolicited student emails after 5pm or on the weekends.

**KEY DATES - ADMINISTRATIVE**

August 20 Last day to officially cancel registration & avoid responsibility for payment of tuition/fees

August 22 Classes begin

September 1 Refund period ends

September 11 Mandatory drop date for non-attendance

October 9 Deadline for withdrawal (no refunds)

**KEY DATES - GRADES**

Tuesday, September 19 Paper 1 Due

Tuesday, October 10 Paper 2 Due

Tuesday/Thursday, November 28,30 Presentation Due

Thursday, December 7 Final Exam (Noon)

**PURPOSE**

This class is a deep dive into how income and economic inequality affects the political process. First, we examine objective measurements of inequality, such as official poverty rates, the Gini Index, and wage stagnation. We will read and discuss different and competing explanations for this inequality. We will discuss how money and small-group bias might contribute to this inequality. We will examine the actual outcomes of the federal tax code, as well as possible effects of monetary policy on income and wealth.

Next, the class pivots to the political ramifications of this inequality. How does this affect voting, participation, and social movements? How do the major political party’s see (or not see) this as a problem and what are potential long-term political consequences of income and wealth inequality? Finally, we will look at these outcomes in a comparative sense to other similar Western nations to learn how these countries manage this issue.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The objective is to provide students an overview of one important facet of American political economy. At the conclusion of this course, students can:

1. Understand different measures of inequality (economic and political).
2. Understand the scale of inequality and its historic roots.
3. Understand how recent policy changes (i.e. the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017) affect these issues.
4. Understand the relative approaches between the political party’s on addressing inequality.
5. Understand the long-term economic and political consequences of inequality.

**SCHEDULE**

Page 5 of this syllabus lists the daily schedule.

**REQUIRED TEXT**

Bartels, Larry M. 2016. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age.* Princeton University Press. Princeton, NJ.

Additional reading assigned on Blackboard.

**ATTENDANCE VERIFICATION**

I will take attendance on the first day. If attendance is not verified, then a student is dropped from the course and financial aid adjusted accordingly. The University must abide by federal guidelines to verify your attendance. For all course types, including thesis, internships, labs, online courses, etc., the instructor must verify your participation based on some type of participation.

**MAKE-UP POLICY**

I allow make-up work only for University-approved excuses. In lieu of a University-approved excuse, any student failing to turn in their assignment will receive a late penalty of 20 points. For instance, if you do not feel well and you visit the Student Health Center, it is insufficient to send me a note stating you visited the doctor or a copy of your prescription. I require a note from a health professional stating your illness prevented you from completing your assignment (however, I do not need to know and prefer not to know the exact nature of your illness).

**GRADING SCALE**

A: 93-100 A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89 B: 83-86 B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79 C: 73-76 C-70-72

D: <70 F: < 60

Discussion Forums 10%

Paper 1 20%

Paper 2 20%

Presentation 20%

Final Exam 30%

**Please do not ask me to calculate your grade for you**. The Political Science Department maintains a "C" policy. Students must make at least a grade of C or better for the course to count towards the major. If you think an error has occurred in the calculation of your grade, it is your responsibility to provide me copies of your work. To that end, it is prudent to save all your coursework until you receive your final grade report.

All graded assignments will be graded within ten days of submission.

**PAPERS**

Students will turn in two 3-page papers. I will post specific details regarding format on Blackboard.

The papers are due on **Tuesday, September 19** and **Tuesday, October 10 at 1pm.** Eachpaper counts **20%** toward your final grade. The specific formatting requirements (e.g. research requirements, APSA format, 12-point Times New Roman Font) will be posted on Blackboard at least three weeks prior to the due date. You will upload the papers to Blackboard.

**PAPER 1**

Explain the position of the two major American political party’s as it relates to income inequality. How does each party address the issue? How has each party contributed to reducing and/or increasing inequality? This paper is due **Tuesday, September 19**

**PAPER 2**

Explain American public opinion toward income inequality. You might divide Americans into different partisan, ideological, or class groupings. Is inequality an important issue to all Americans, some Americans, or just a few? Why do you believe that to be the case? This paper is due **Tuesday, October 10.**

**GROUP PROJECT**

On the last week of the semester, November 28 and November 30, students will present on the future of inequality in America. Is income inequality likely to increase, decrease, or remain the same? What do you base your conclusion on? How will the political party’s adapt to inequality over the next 5-10 years? What are the consequences to American politics if the status quo remains the same, if income inequality becomes larger, or if income inequality decreases? How might this affect the political participation rates and voting behavior of generational cohorts? The presentation and accompanying report count **20%** toward your final grade (**15%** written paper and **5%** in-class presentation). The specific requirements for the presentations will be posted October 3 and we will set aside time in class that day to discuss the group project.

**FINAL EXAM**

The final exam (**December 7 @noon**) is a mix of essay, short answer, and multiple-choice and/or fill-in-the blank. The final exam will be a comprehensive exam.

The final exam is **30%** of your final grade.

**DISCUSSION FORUMS**

Discussion is **10%** of your final grade. This will be assessed through your participation in **five** discussion prompts on Blackboard. The Forums open at 8am and close at 5pm. As an example, Discussion Forum #1 is open 8am Tuesday, September 5 and closes at 5pm Thursday, September 7. Your grade depends on your contribution to the conversation. Yes/No questions and Yes/No answers do not contribute to the discussion. To get full credit you must respond to the question prompt AND you must respond to the posts of at least **TWO** classmates in a manner contributing to the discussion. Answers with links to research that explain your position are ideal.

# DISABILITY ACCESS & INCLUSION

The University of Mississippi is committed to the creation of inclusive learning environments for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your full inclusion and participation or to accurate assessment of your achievement, please contact the course instructor as soon as possible. Barriers may include, but are not necessarily limited to, time limits, difficulty with the acquisition of lecture content, inaccessible web content or the use of non-captioned or non-transcribed video and audio files. Students must also contact Student Disability Services at 662-915-7128 or [sds.olemiss.edu/](http://sds.olemiss.edu/) so that office can 1) explore if barrier removal is necessary; 2) provide you, if approved, with Instructor Notification forms; 3) facilitate the removal of curricular barriers; and 4) ensure you have equal access to the same opportunities for success that are available to all students.

**STUDENT PRIVACY POLICY**

The University of Mississippi protects the privacy of all students, including online and distance learning students, through adherence to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) through compliance with other institutional policies and procedures governing the management and security of protected information of faculty, staff, and students, and by outlining the expectations of privacy for the university community as regards to electronic information. [Student Privacy Policy](https://secure4.olemiss.edu/umpolicyopen/ShowDetails.jsp?istatPara=1&policyObjidPara=11873531)

**ACADEMIC ETHICS**

* If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, just ask. If you think something might be wrong, it probably is. No matter, just ask for clarification. Please reference the [UM M Book](https://communications.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/10/MBook.pdf) for all policies regarding academic honesty, ethics, and plagiarism. Punishment for violations of academic ethics will range from loss of a letter grade on the assignment to failure in the class. The decision will be made by the faculty member in consultation with the department chair.
* Students are encouraged to visit the University’s Keep Learning site (https://olemiss.edu/keeplearning/) to access information and resources related to COVID-19 support. The site provides links to University student services to facilitate and support learning.

# MISCELLANEOUS

# Email is the best way to reach me. Emails sent after 5pm may not be returned until the next workday. All work must be submitted through Blackboard, unless specifically required.

# This syllabus is a guide for the coming semester. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, but I will do my best to adhere to this syllabus.

# Use your olemiss.edu email address and please be accessible via Blackboard.

* Materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection under Title 17 of the United States Code. Under certain Fair Use circumstances specified by law, copies may be made for private study, scholarship, or research. Electronic copies should not be shared with unauthorized users. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability as well as disciplinary action under University policies.

**SCHEDULE**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Topic | | | Assignment |
| Tuesday, August 22 | Course Introduction/Syllabus | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, August 24 | What is Inequality? | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, August 29 | What is Inequality? | | |  |
|  | Ch. 1: The New Gilded Age | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, August 31 | Ch. 1: The New Gilded Age | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, September 5 | Critique of Inequality | | | DF #1 Opens |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, September 7 | Ch. 2: The Partisan Political Economy | | | DF #1 Closes |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, September 12 | Ch. 2: The Partisan Political Economy | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, September 14 | Ch. 3: Partisan Biases in Economic Accountability | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, September 19 | Ch. 3: Partisan Biases in Economic Accountability | | |  |
|  | **Paper 1 Due** | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, September 21 | **No Class** | | | DF #2 Opens |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, September 26 | Ch. 4: Do Americans Care about Inequality? | | | DF #2 Closes |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, September 28 | Race and Income and Wealth Inequality | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, October 3 | Ch. 5: Homer Gets a Tax Cut | | |  |
|  | **Group Presentation Assignments** | | |  |
| Thursday, October 5 | Ch. 6: The Strange Appeal of Estate Tax Repeal | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, October 10 | **Paper 2 Due – No Class** | | |  |
|  | |  |
| Thursday, October 12 | Wealth Inequality | | | DF #3 Opens |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, October 17 | Ch. 7: The Eroding Minimum Wage | | | DF #3 Closes |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, October 19 | Federal Budget | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, October 24 | Housing Inequality | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, October 26 | Ch. 8: Economic Inequality and Political Representation | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, October 31 | Labor Unions | | | DF #4 Opens |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, November 2 | Ch. 9: Stress Test: The Political Economy of the Great Recession | | | DF #4 Closes |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, November 7 | Health Care Inequality | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, November 9 | Ch. 10: The Defining Challenge of Our Time? | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, November 14 | Ch. 11: Unequal Democracy | | | DF #5 Opens |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, November 16 | Fiscal Cliff | | | DF #5 Closes |
|  |  | | |  |
| Tuesday, November 28 | Presentations | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, November 30 | Presentations | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |
| Thursday, December 8 | **Final Exam (Noon)** | | |  |
|  |  | | |  |