

Examining Income and Wealth Inequality
CRN 20165
2 Credit Hours
Winter 2024
Michael Crow

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Class dates: Friday, January 19, 6 – 8:50 pm
Saturday, January 20, 9 am – 4:50 pm
Sunday, January 21, 9 am – 4:50 pm
Classroom: Virtual (link on Canvas page)
Canvas Page: <https://canvas.evergreen.edu/courses/6246>
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Course objectives

Any serious study of American politics and public policy today must include a firm understanding of social policy. Social policy comprises those areas of public policy that distribute or redistribute society's resources across lines of economic class, race, gender and other broad social categories, including such issues as poverty, racial and gender inequalities, taxes, health care, education, urban renewal and labor relations. More often than not, these issues pit social groups in a zero-sum game and thus often generate much political conflict. Moreover, social policy issues have increasingly come to dominate the policy agenda at federal, state and local levels. Studying social policy, then, can shed light on how we govern ourselves today.

Our main objective in this course is to develop analytical tools for *explaining* the causes of social and economic inequalities in society, *analyzing* the impact of social policy on these inequalities, and *evaluating* proposed alternatives in social policy. These skills will prepare you to make effective arguments about public policy and thus are essential for aspiring legislators, policy advocates, nonprofit administrators, professional policy analysts and government officials. In this way, this course complements and expands on the analytic toolkit you have developed in your research methods and policy analysis courses. By the end of this course, you will have demonstrated your ability to:

- Evaluate the impact of social policies on individuals, social groups and society
- Develop arguments about the scope and causes of social and economic inequality
- Critique alternative policy proposals for addressing social and economic inequalities.

Communications

I encourage and expect contact from you over the quarter. The easiest way to reach me is by e-mail (crawm@evergreen.edu). You may also reach me at my office phone during business hours (9 am to 5 pm) and cell phone before 9 pm. Or you may make an appointment with me for a one-on-one meeting, Zoom conference, or phone call.

I use Evergreen's e-mail and the course Canvas system to conduct course business. If you do not use Evergreen's e-mail system, please be sure to forward messages from this account to the e-mail account that you use. I will also place course assignments, handouts, PowerPoint slides and other course materials on the course Canvas site.

Course Materials

Books: No book purchases are required for this course. Course readings will be made available on the course Canvas site.

Course assignments, credit, and assessment

You will be evaluated in this course based on your progress in meeting the course objectives described above, as assessed by the following assignments and requirements. To earn full credit for the course, students must satisfactorily complete all the following requirements:

Course participation: One of the primary objectives of this class is to develop your ability to critically analyze budget policy issues. In class sessions and activities, we will engage in activities such as discussion and group work that will call on you to apply new ideas from the reading to policy problems. Thus, it is important for you to come to the class prepared to participate by having studied the assigned reading. Your participation will be assessed on the following criteria:

--- *Attendance:* You are expected to be present for the scheduled times when we meet together on January 19-21.

--- *Collegiality:* Showing respect for your peers by being in class on time, staying through the entire session, and respecting the views of others in class discussion.

--- *Preparation:* Completing reading before class, coming to class prepared with assignments and reading materials, active participation in discussion and small group work.

--- *Engagement out of class:* Our sessions on January 19-21 are not the only opportunity to discuss course ideas with me. I want to know if you are having trouble with the material and what you like and don't like about the course. You may reach me by e-mail or phone or schedule an in-person or Zoom chat session.

Policy evaluation paper: You will demonstrate your ability to make effective arguments about public policy by researching and writing a policy analysis paper on a social policy problem of your choosing.

Your policy analysis will be a paper of at least 3500 words (about 12 pages double-spaced) that:

- 1) Introduces a problem of economic inequality by:
 - a) Explaining the significance of the problem in terms of its social or individual consequences.
 - b) Providing data showing the scope of the problem, who is affected, and how it has changed over time
- 2) Evaluates the effectiveness of a federal and/or state government program that addresses this problem by:
 - a) Explaining the goals and design of the program (i.e. how it is funded and implemented)
 - b) Logically explaining how the policy affects the problem or outcome of interest (have current policies helped to make the problem better or worse? Why have they had this effect?)
 - c) Providing evidence that evaluates the relationship between the policy in question and the outcome of interest
- 3) Makes a policy recommendation by:
 - a) Explaining the goals and design of a policy alternative that other policy researchers have suggested
 - b) Explaining how this policy alternative could result in outcomes that are better (or worse)
 - c) Providing evidence from scholarly sources or policy reports to support claims about the effectiveness of this policy alternative.

A problem statement and an annotated bibliography of at least ten scholarly or professional policy sources is due on **Monday, February 12th**. The completed policy recommendation paper is due on **Monday, March 4th**.

Evaluation: Students are encouraged to complete a self-evaluation and faculty evaluation and to participate in an evaluation conference with the faculty member. The evaluations must be submitted using the My Evergreen system (my.evergreen.edu).

Submitting Assignments

Assignments may be submitted to me either on Canvas and/or by email to me (crawm@evergreen.edu). I recommend both uploading your assignment to Canvas and emailing it to me to ensure I receive it. It is your responsibility to assure that I have received your work on time.

Academic Integrity

Cheating, plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity standards will not be tolerated. Any student turning in work that is in violation of Evergreen's academic integrity standards will automatically receive a No Credit in the course and the matter will be referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for disciplinary action. An overview of academic integrity standards and the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities are available at <https://www.evergreen.edu/offices-services/student-affairs/student-rights-responsibilities>

Accessibility

Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of The Evergreen State College to create inclusive learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the office of Access Services for Students with Disabilities (360) 867-6348; accessservices@evergreen.edu) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. For more information, please visit the Access Services website at <https://www.evergreen.edu/offices-services/access-services-for-students-with-disabilities>

Course Schedule

Our course will take place the weekend of January 19-21, and will be divided into five modules. Reading assignments for each module are noted below.

Date	Topic and reading assigned
<p>Friday, January 19 6 pm - 9 pm</p>	<p>Defining and Describing Economic Inequality Iceland, "Methods of Measuring Poverty" Coy, "The Unfinished Pursuit of a Better Poverty Measure" U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Point-in-Time Count Methodology Guide" Best, "Stat Wars" Guest Speaker: Delmar Algee, Pierce County Human Services Recommended: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2023. An Updated Measure of Poverty: (Re)Drawing the Line. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/26825</p>
<p>Saturday, January 20th 9 am - noon</p>	<p>Racial Inequality and Public Policy Katznelson, "Welfare in Black and White" Swanstrom, "National Policy and the City/Suburban Divide" Murray, "Incentives to Fail" and The Destruction of Status Rewards" Fields, Perry, and Donoghoe. "How the Property Tax System Harms Black Homeowners and Widens the Racial Wealth Gap"</p>
<p>Saturday, January 20th 1 pm - 5 pm</p>	<p>Political and Economic Inequality in America Hacker and Pierson, "Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States" Olson, Mancur, 1965, The Logic of Collective Action, pp. 5-16 and 132-167 Page, Bartels, and Seawright, "Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans" Edwards and Bourne, "Exploring Wealth Inequality"</p>
<p>Sunday January 21st 9 am - noon</p>	<p>Is there an equality-efficiency tradeoff? Okun, "Increasing Equality in an Efficient Economy" (Blackboard) Stiglitz, "Inequality and Economic Growth" Pontusson, "Inequality and Economic Growth in Comparative Perspective" Alesina & Glaeser, "Why are Welfare States in the US and Europe so Different?" Recommended: "40 Years After Arthur Okun's 'Tradeoff', the Classic Book Still Has Lessons for Tackling Inequality", https://www.brookings.edu/articles/40-years-after-arthur-okuns-tradeoff-the-classic-book-still-has-lessons-for-tackling-inequality/</p>

<p>Sunday January 21st 1 pm - 5 pm</p>	<p>Analyzing gender inequality and family change Goldin, "The Quiet Revolution That Transformed Women's Employment, Education and Family" Blau and Kahn, "The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations" Edin and Kefalas, excerpt from <i>Promises I Can Keep</i></p>
<p>Monday, February 12</p>	<p>Problem Statement and Annotated Bibliography due at 11:00 p.m.</p>
<p>Monday, March 4</p>	<p>Policy Evaluation Paper due at 11:00 p.m.</p>