

Directed Readings Course: Douglas Jensen
Income Inequality and Tax Policy
Summer 2019 | Time: TBD | Haley 8024

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Overview, Objectives, and Outcomes

This is a Ph.D.-level directed readings and research course. We will be reviewing some literature together that you have considered individually before, and we will exploring some new literature together. The goal of this course is for both of us (but mostly Douglas) to gain an actionable footing in the inequality and taxation literature, with the implication of writing a research paper using original data at the end of the semester (explained below).

Learning outcomes: by the end of the course, you should have read a variety of original research on income inequality, collected original data on a research project of your choosing, and formulated at least a rough draft of an original research paper. A “stretch” goal is to complete the analysis for that paper, which I’m (of course) willing to help with.

Expectations

As a Ph.D. summer class, we’re under a little different schedule of expectations and commitments. We’ll meet once every two weeks (at least), at least six times over the summer. Meeting days and times will be agreed upon and scheduled by the two of us. In addition, email, telephone, and Skype will also be used as needed to facilitate communication and to ensure student progress. Each week, I expect you to have the readings completed. I’d also recommend making summaries of the readings.

I expect you to come prepared to talk about (a) the theory, data, and findings of each assigned reading, (b) the implications of that reading for your own research, and (c) an updated copy of the research paper you envision writing.

Lastly, I’d appreciate if you’d prepare a two-page summary that synthesizes that week’s readings together. As you’re writing this, try to answer the questions (a) what ties these readings together, (b) what is the most compelling contribution they make collectively (or individually), and (c) where do they suggest research should go? I’ll “grade” these as if they were comprehensive exam answers, in an attempt to give you exposure to that practice.

Required Materials

There will be a variety of readings which I will communicate to you by email. The first week is outlined in the syllabus.

Assignments

The course is divided into the following components:

Weekly summary synthesis of readings	30% points
Participation (actually talk about the readings)	10% points
Original data collection	30% points
Research paper	30% points
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 100%

I would not fret too much about this, as I've already mentioned that my expectation is that all graduate students make A's, especially in substantive classes. Each of these components is outlined under "Expectations." However, I'll elaborate more on original data collection and research paper.

Original data collection: the biggest comparative advantage a student can have when seeking to get published or to get a job on the academic market is original data collection. It may not feel like it, but you're at the most creative point in your career, and your time is as free as it will ever be. So I encourage you to explore potential sets of data to collect. This might be a time series of tax policies on inequality over time. It might be a more specific measure of inequality over time, like the share of wealth held by the top X %. It might be a dataset of inequality in the 50 states as well as tax policy. Whatever it is, I want you to think about what that data would look like and collect it over the summer.

Research paper: I want you to have at least half of a research paper completed by the semester end. The ultimate goal would be to have one *submitted* by the end of the summer. You should know what you want this paper to look like by the first week in June, so that you can spend time collecting data and framing your argument. Each meeting, we will devote time to reviewing your progress. I expect you to have content added each meeting: in other words, I want to hold you to a more productive standard than I was in graduate school! The only way to guarantee your is not published is for it not to be submitted anywhere, so I want to make sure it gets submitted!

Potential ideas include:

- Inequality in the 50 states over time, compared to their taxation policy
- Inequality in the US over time, compared to national taxation policy
- A pre/post design on the changes in the 2018 tax code eliminating many of the tax deductions and their effect on inequality

Boilerplate syllabus information follows. The reading schedule is at the end.

Makeups and Grades

Writing assignments and homework assignments must be turned in, electronically, on the day assigned. Makeup examinations will only be offered to those with a University excused absence,

which can be found at tinyurl.com/au-st-pol. It is your responsibility to ensure that your absence is covered by the University, and it is your responsibility to comply with all policies. These policies require that you notify me of your absence prior to the date of absence if such notification is feasible, but within one week from the missed class. Your makeup examination must be scheduled within two weeks of this notification (though I recommend much, much earlier). If I need additional information on your absence (doctor's notes, for instance), you must provide this additional documentation within one week of the last date of the absence. Note that this policy also allows for makeup examinations for reasons deemed appropriate by the instructor. If you do not have a University excused absence, and you are going to miss an examination, it is much easier for me to work with you if you notify me promptly, especially if you can provide some sort of documentation.

Student Academic Honesty

Auburn University is a institution committed to integrity and honor. It is your job as a University citizen to uphold those values. I will not tolerate any cheating or plagiarism, broadly defined as using unauthorized aids during examinations or attempting to represent someone else's work as your own. You are not as sly as you think you are. With hundreds of heads facing forward, it is extremely easy to tell who is working alone and who is not. Be aware that academic dishonesty can lead directly to failing the course and being referred to the Academic Honesty Committee. Penalties include expulsion from Auburn, as per Chapter 1202 of Title XII. For additional information visit tinyurl.com/au-st-pol.

Emergency Contingency

If normal class is disrupted due to illness, emergency, or crisis situation, the syllabus and other course plans and assignments may be modified to allow completion of the course. If this occurs, an addendum to your syllabus and/or course assignments will replace the original materials.

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please electronically submit your approved accommodations through AU Access and make an individual appointment with me during the first week of classes (or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately). If you have not established accommodations through the Office of Accessibility, but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office of Accessibility, 1228 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT).

Any requests or arrangements made with the instructor in person must be followed up with an official email request for documentation. If you believe you may need an accommodation, it is your responsibility to secure it before the first exam.

Copyrighted Materials

The lectures, presentations (including slides), readings, and exams for this course are copyrighted, so you do not have the right to copy and distribute them. This includes recording class lectures.

Course Outline

Meeting 1: How do we feel about inequality (Part 1: Philosophic arguments and values)

- Jacoby, William G. 2000. "Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (4): 750-767.
- Feldman, Stanley. 1988. "Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: The Role of Core Beliefs and Values." *American Journal of Political Science* 32 (2): 416-440.
- Pedersen, Rasmus T. and Diana C. Mutz. 2018. "Attitudes Toward Economic Inequality: The Illusory Agreement." *Political Science Research and Methods* (First View).
- Rasmussen, Dennis C. 2016. "Adam Smith on What Is Wrong with Economic Inequality." *American Political Science Review* 110 (2): 342-352.

Meeting 2: How do we feel about inequality (Part 2: Societal conditions and empirics)

- Howard, Christopher, Amirio Freeman, April Wilson, and Eboni Brown. 2017. "The Polls—Trends: Poverty." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 81 (3): 769-789.
- Sauermann, Jan. 2018. "Do Individuals Value Distributional Fairness? How Inequality Affects Majority Decisions." *Political Behavior* 40: 809-829.
- Chavanne, David. 2018. "Headwinds, Tailwinds, and Preferences for Income Redistribution." *Social Science Quarterly* 99 (3): 851-871.
- Clinton, Joshua D. and Michael W. Sances. 2018. "The Politics of Policy: The Initial Mass Political Effects of Medicaid Expansion in the States." *American Political Science Review* 112 (1): 167-185.

Meeting 3: How do we feel about inequality (Part 3: Characteristics about people)

- Mendelberg, Tali, Katherine T. McCabe, and Adam Thal. 2017. "College Socialization and the Economic Views of Affluent Americans." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (3): 606-623.
- Clifford, Scott and Spencer Piston. 2017. "Explaining Public Support for Counterproductive Homelessness Policy: The Role of Disgust." *Political Behavior* 39: 503-525.
- Campbell, Colin and S. Michael Gaddis. 2017. "'I Don't Agree with Giving Cash': A Survey Experiment Examining Support for Public Assistance." *Social Science Quarterly* 98 (5): 1352-1373.
- Fernandex-Albertos, Jose, and Alexander Kuo. 2018. "Income Perception, Information, and Progressive Taxation: Evidence from a Survey Experiment." *Political Science Research and Methods* 6 (1): 83-110.

Meeting 4: (Some) structural causes of opinion towards inequality

- Ballard-Rosa, Cameron, Lucy Martin, and Kenneth Scheve. 2016. "The Structure of American Income Tax Policy Preferences." *The Journal of Politics* 79 (1): 1-16.
- Alt, James and Torben Iversen. 2017. "Inequality, Labor Market Segmentation, and Preferences for Redistribution." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (1): 21-36.

- Thal, Adam. 2017. "Class Isolation and Affluent Americans' Perception of Social Conditions." *Political Behavior* 39: 401-424.
- Minkoff, Scott L. and Jeffrey Lyons. 2019. "Living with Inequality: Neighborhood Income Diversity and Perceptions of the Income Gap." *American Politics Research* 47 (2): 329-361.

Meeting 5: (Some) institutional causes of opinion towards inequality

- Widestrom, Amy, Thomas J. Hayes, and Christopher Dennis. 2018. "The Effect of Political Parties on the Distribution of Income in the American States: 1917-2011." *Social Science Quarterly* 99 (3): 895-914.
- Phinney, Robin. 2016. "Advocacy for the Poor: Organized Interests and Social Policymaking in the American States." *American Politics Research* 44 (5): 903-938.
- Morgan, Jana and Nathan J. Kelly. 2016. "Social Patterns of Inequality, Partisan Competition, and Latin American Support for Redistribution." *The Journal of Politics* 79 (1): 193-209.
- Berens, Sarah and Armin von Schiller. 2017. "Taxing Higher Incomes: What Makes the High-Income Earners Consent to More Progressive Taxation in Latin America?" *Political Behavior* 39: 703-729.
- Boudreau, Cheryl and Scott A. MacKenzie. 2018. "Wanting What Is Fair: How Party Cues and Information about Income Inequality Affect Public Support for Taxes." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (2): 367-381.

Meeting 6: (Political) consequences of inequality

- Wright, Graham. 2018. "The Political Implications of American Concerns About Economic Inequality." *Political Behavior* 40: 321-343.
- Trump, Kris-Stella. 2017. "Income Inequality Influences Perceptions of Legitimate Income Differences." *British Journal of Political Science* 48: 929-952.
- Newman, Benjamin J. and John V. Kane. 2017. "Economic Inequality and Public Support for Organized Labor." *Political Research Quarterly* 70 (4): 918-932.
- DeScioli, Peter, Alex Shaw, and Andrew W. Delton. 2018. "Share the Wealth: Redistribution Can Increase Economic Efficiency." *Political Behavior* 40: 279-300.

Meeting 7: Tax policy

- *Reading to be assigned*