“We hold these truths to be self-evident,” wrote Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, “that all men are created equal....” Since the Founding, Americans have cherished the ideals of political equality and democratically responsive government. Reformers and mass movements have repeatedly highlighted disparities between ideals and reality and sought to extend citizenship rights. In recent times, the Civil Rights struggle and other rights revolutions expanded the rights and participation of African Americans, women, and other formerly marginalized groups. Yet over the past four decades, new threats have emerged. Disparities of income, wealth, and access to opportunity are growing more rapidly in the United States than in many other nations. Progress toward realizing American ideals of equal opportunity and impartially responsive democracy may have stalled, and in some cases reversed.

This seminar explores the impact of vast and rising economic inequality on the workings of American democracy and considers how social analysts can do research on important questions. We begin by surveying recent socioeconomic and political trends. Then we consider existing research about inequalities of electoral and civic participation, the responsiveness of government to different strata of citizens, and the role of government policies as well as social movements in mitigating or exacerbating social inequalities and shaping the political engagement or disengagement of citizens.

Although the seminar will cover and debate important contributions to the literature, it is an active exercise for each student, who must define and at least partially conduct a research project over the course of the semester. If you are not committed to doing this, do not apply to the course. Early in the semester, students will begin to pose researchable questions. Each student will prepare a First Research Ideas Memo by Monday, February 25, outlining several possible research questions and meet with Professor Skocpol later that week to discuss them and narrow to one question. A final research proposal -- the Research Prospectus -- is due on Monday, April 1, to be followed by another discussion with Professor Skocpol. At the end of the semester, two class sessions will be devoted to presentation of preliminary findings of the research. The final paper for the semester, due Friday, May 10, can be either a research paper or a well-elaborated research plan accompanied by indicative preliminary findings.
HOW TO ENROLL

Enrollment for all Government 94-- seminars is limited to no more than 16 undergraduates. Prof. Skocpol is allotted six slots to assign at her discretion and the remaining ten slots are assigned via a Government 94-- lottery, which is administered by the Government Department’s Undergraduate Services team. Government concentrators are given preference in the lottery; however, non-Government concentrators are welcome to enter it. For an overview of the lottery process for Gov94-- seminars, see https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/gov-94-seminars. The Government Undergraduate Services team can also help with any questions. Their offices are in room K151 on the first floor of CGIS Knafel.

Recommended approach:

1. Email Prof. Skocpol, skocpol@fas.harvard.edu, any time before the first class meeting on Tuesday, January 29, asking to be considered for a discretionary slot in case you are not admitted by lottery. Introduce yourself (name, concentration, year) and say why you want to take the course.

...AND/OR...

Come to the first class on Tuesday, January 29, at 12:00-2:00pm in CGIS Knafel K401 to add your name and info to the list of students to be considered for discretionary slots. No enrollment decisions will be made before Tuesday’s class.

...THEN...

2. Print out HARD COPY of the Gov 94-- lottery form from https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/gov-94-seminars or pick one up from the Government Department. Complete the form and hand in the hard copy form to the Government Undergraduate Services Office in CGIS Knafel K151 by the 6:00pm deadline on Wednesday, January 30.

3. Check lottery results. As early as possible on the evening of Thursday, January 31, the Government Undergraduate Services team will post lottery results at https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/gov-94-lottery-results and will email Prof. Skocpol a list of students who have been lotteried in to Gov94oa. Prof. Skocpol (or her staff assistant Abby Peck) will then email each student on the list asking the student to confirm whether they plan to enroll in Gov94oa. If you have been lotteried in to Gov94oa, please reply as soon as possible to accept or decline the slot.

4. Once all responses from lotteried-in students are in -- hopefully by the morning of Friday, February 1 (course registration deadline) -- Prof. Skocpol (or Abby Peck) will email the students who had expressed interest but were not lotteried in and will offer them the discretionary slots (and any slots that lotteried-in students may have declined). If you are offered a discretionary slot, please reply as soon as possible to accept or decline, so that Prof. Skocpol can offer the slot to another student.
COURSE ORGANIZATION AND REQUIREMENTS

This course will be conducted seminar-style, which means that students must attend regularly, do all the readings and preparatory activities each week, and come prepared for an intensive discussion. Because this is a research tutorial, each student will gain experience in defining researchable questions and hypotheses and thinking about data that can be gathered to test arguments.

Grading

- Thirty percent of the final course grade will be based on the quality of regular and informed participation in class discussions, including the memos you prepare on readings for certain weeks. Due by noon on Mondays to the course website, so that all class members can read them before Tuesday’s class, the memos will help structure class discussion.
- Twenty percent of the final grade will be based on evaluation of the Research Prospectus (due Monday, April 1) and the in-class presentation each student does in the final class meetings of the semester (Tuesday, April 23 and Tuesday, April 30).
- The other fifty percent will be based on evaluation of the final research paper for the class. The final research paper will be due to the course website no later than 11:59pm on Friday, May 10. Late papers will have one half-grade per day deducted from the grade otherwise earned.

Discussion Memos on Assigned Readings

Discussion memos should, a) synthesize the findings and scholarly disagreements from each week’s readings; b) advance a hypothesis for, in short, what you think is really going on with the issues addressed in the readings; and, c) suggest some ways you could gather evidence to test and prove your hypothesis. Students will submit four individual memos on the assigned readings for various weeks, as detailed below. Memos should be two pages (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) and are due to the course website by noon on Mondays. Memos will be posted to a Discussion page on the course website and visible to all course members, so everyone can read each other’s memos ahead of Tuesday’s class.

Memo Assignments - two pages (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words):

- Everyone will submit memos for Week 2 (due Mon Feb 4) and-Week 3 (due Mon Feb 11). This will ensure that everyone jumps into the group discussions early, and it will allow Professor Skocpol to give feedback on early memos.
- For the third memo, students will be assigned to four teams of 2-4 students each to write memos for one of the weeks among Week 4 and Weeks 6, 7, and 8. Teams for these weeks will also help lead the seminar discussion for their week. The idea is to have a few students circulating ideas to orient the discussion for these class sessions.
- For the fourth memo, students will be assigned to write a memo for either Week 10 or Week 11.

Students should come to the Week 2 class (Tuesday, February 5) prepared to list their preferences among Weeks 4 and Weeks 6, 7, and 8 for their third memo and between Weeks 10 and 11 for the fourth memo so the assignments can be doled out.
Developing the Research Project

Projects for the seminar may embody further investigations of topics covered in the seminar readings and discussions or they may formulate and address new questions about inequality and American democracy in other issue areas or at state or local levels.

Written Assignments: Early in the semester, Professor Skocpol will hand out and post on the course website guidelines for a good “research prospectus” to help students prepare a 3-4 page, double-spaced, First Research Ideas Memo, due to the course website on Monday, February 25 by 11:59pm. The First Research Ideas Memo will suggest several researchable questions that the student would like to discuss in an individual meeting with Professor Skocpol later in the same week, to prepare for fleshing out one of them more fully in later assignments. An eventual 5-7 page, double-spaced, Research Prospectus, due to the course website on Monday, April 1 by 11:59pm, will involve fully formulating a question, hypotheses, and research design for the final research paper or proposal. What question do you propose to ask and why; and how do you propose to do the research?

Individual Meetings: Each student will meet with Professor Skocpol several times to discuss the development of his or her research project. Students are encouraged to schedule a first meeting with Professor Skocpol sometime in early to mid-February. Two meetings are mandatory -- one meeting within a few days after submitting the First Research Ideas Memo (due Monday, February 25) and one meeting after submitting the Research Prospectus (due Monday, April 1). Meetings in between can happen as needed. Professor Skocpol's Staff Assistant, Abby Peck, will work with students to set up the mandatory appointments and students may contact her at any time to schedule other appointments with Professor Skocpol.

In-Class Presentation of Preliminary Findings: The final two class sessions, on Tuesday, April 23 and Tuesday, April 30 (Weeks 12 and 13), will be devoted to presentation of preliminary findings of the research. Students will present and mutually comment upon their research designs and preliminary findings. About 15 minutes will be allotted for each presentation, with half for presenting and half for class questions and feedback.

Final Paper: Final papers developing the research as fully as possible should be about 20 pages long (double-spaced) and are due, with no extensions, to the course website by 11:59pm on Friday, May 10. Late papers will lose one-half grade per day, unless the student has a medical or emergency excuse verified by the student’s Resident Dean and, if applicable, the University Health Services.

Course Collaboration Policy

Some assignments in the course will explicitly ask students to collaborate with one another. When individual work is required -- above all, for the assignments to do with developing the research project -- each person is expected to present his or her own work. Discussion is always encouraged, but students should not exchange written outlines or texts unless they are engaged in an explicitly approved joint effort. Work presented by an individual student must always properly cite quotes and sources of evidence.

ACCESS TO READINGS

Online readings: Most readings are available online via Hollis or directly from external websites. Links are in the Course Outline and Reading List (ahead).

Sourcebook: There is no sourcebook for this course.

Books: Unless otherwise noted, all books listed below (in order of assignment) are required. All are on order at the Harvard Coop and will also be on reserve at Lamont Library. Links to the Hollis record for each book, showing library checkout status, are in the Course Outline and Reading List. For some books, as noted below, an eBook version can be accessed via Hollis. Note however that although the full book may be accessible online, some books have limits on how much text can be downloaded and/or printed.


COURSE OUTLINE and READING LIST

Week 1 (Tue 1/29): Introductions and Overview of the Seminar

No required readings for class, but at some point, read the following book.


ACTION ITEMS TO COMPLETE BEFORE NEXT WEEK’S CLASS MEETING:

1. **Lottery form due Wed 1/30 by 6:00pm.** Lottery and enrollment dates:

   Wed 1/30 by 6:00pm: HARD COPY of lottery form for Government 94 Seminars is due to CGIS Knafel K151. Link to form is at https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/gov-94-seminars or pick one up in K151.

   Thu 1/31 evening: Lottery results will be posted at https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/gov-94-lottery-results and also emailed to Prof. Skocpol.

   Thu 1/31 evening through Fri 2/01 morning: Prof. Skocpol will email all students who were lotteried into Gov94oa asking whether they plan to enroll. Once all responses are in, she will email the students who expressed interest but were not lotteried in and will offer them the discretionary slots and any other open slots.

   Fri 2/01 11:59pm: Course registration deadline.

2. **Memo #1 is due by NOON ON MONDAY 2/04 to course website (for Tue 2/05 class discussion):**

   By noon on Mon 2/04, each student should post to the course website a two-page memo (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) giving your reasoned reactions to the readings on rising economic and political inequality. A good strategy is to indicate two or three arguments or findings that struck you as important and say why. In addition, indicate the arguments or findings you find most questionable and say why and what further investigation might be required.

3. **Assigning memos/discussion leaders for Weeks 4, 6, 7, and 8 (third memo), and Weeks 11 and 12 (fourth memo):**

   Students should come to the Week 2 class (Tuesday, February 5) prepared to list preferences for Weeks 4 and 6-8 and for Weeks 11 and 12 so the third and fourth memo assignments for can be doled out.
Week 2 (Tue 2/05): Different Perspectives on Rising U.S. Inequality

All students submit their first two-page memo (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by noon on Monday, February 4 for all course members to read before class.

“...giving your reasoned reactions to the readings on rising economic and political inequality. A good strategy is to indicate two or three arguments or findings that struck you as important and say why. In addition, indicate the arguments or findings you find most questionable and say why and what further investigation might be required”


Bruce Western and Becky Pettit. “Incarceration and Social Inequality.” Daedalus 139(3) (Summer 2010): 8-19.


Week 3 (Tue 2/12): Elite and Mass Dynamics in Contemporary U.S. Politics

All students submit their second two-page memo (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by noon on Monday, February 11 for all course members to read before class.


COURSE OUTLINE and READING LIST

Week 4 (Tue 2/19): Understanding Recent Popular Resistance Movements

Selected students submit their third two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by noon on Monday, February 18 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


DUE BY 11:59PM ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, TO COURSE WEBSITE: First Research Ideas Memo, 3-4 pages, double-spaced, outlining several possible research questions. “The First Research Ideas Memo will suggest several researchable questions that the student would like to discuss in an individual meeting with Professor Skocpol later in the same week, to prepare for fleshing out one of them more fully in later assignments.” For detailed guidance, review Developing the Research Project section of syllabus and guidelines for a good “research prospectus” handout.

Mandatory Individual Consultations to discuss your research ideas will be scheduled with Professor Skocpol within a few days after submitting First Research Ideas Memo on Monday, February 25. Abby Peck peck@wjh.harvard.edu will email students to schedule appointments.

Week 5 (Tue 2/26): The Changing Role and Impact of the Mass Media

No memos this week.


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COURSE OUTLINE and READING LIST

Week 6 (Tue 3/05): Representation and Governmental Responsiveness

Selected students submit their third two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by noon on Monday, March 4 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


Week 7 (Tue 3/12): Do U.S. Social Policies Ameliorate or Reinforce Inequalities?

Selected students submit their third two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by noon on Monday, March 11 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


SPRING BREAK - Saturday, March 16 - Sunday, March 24
Week 8 (Tue 3/26): How Policies Reshape Citizenship and Group Leverage

Selected students submit their third two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by noon on Monday, March 25 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


Chart from Theda Skocpol: “Varieties of Policy Feedbacks and Relevant Evidence.”

DUE BY 11:59PM ON MONDAY, APRIL 1, TO COURSE WEBSITE:
Research Prospectus, 6-8 pages, double-spaced. “An eventual 6-8 page (double-spaced) Research Prospectus... will involve fully formulating a question, hypotheses, and research design for the final research paper or proposal. What question do you propose to ask and why; and how do you propose to do the research?” For detailed guidance, review Developing the Research Project section of syllabus and guidelines for a good “research prospectus” handout.

MANDATORY INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS about your Research Prospectus to be scheduled with Professor Skocpol after submitting Research Prospectus. Abby Peck peck@wjh.harvard.edu will email students to schedule appointments.

Week 9 (Tue 4/02): Understanding the U.S. Opioid Crisis

No memos this week.


Week 10 (Tue 4/09): The Politics of U.S. Health Insurance

Selected students submit their fourth two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website (for all course members to read) by noon on Monday, April 8 and help lead the class discussion.


Week 11 (Tue 4/16): U.S. Tax Policies and Politics

Selected students submit their fourth two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website (for all course members to read) by noon on Monday, April 15 and help lead the class discussion.


IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS: The last two class sessions will be devoted to presentation of preliminary findings of the research. Students will present and mutually comment upon their research designs and preliminary findings.

Week 12 (Tue 4/23): Student Research Presentations - 1st Session.
12:00pm-2:00pm in K401. May be extended to 2:45pm to fit everyone in. 15 minutes each: 7-8 min to present and 7-8 min for class discussion.

Week 13 (Tue 4/30): Student Research Presentations - 2nd Session.
12:00pm-2:00pm in K401. May be extended to 2:45pm to fit everyone in. 15 minutes each: 7-8 min to present and 7-8 min for class discussion.

FINAL PAPER DUE BY 11:59PM ON FRIDAY, MAY 10 TO COURSE WEBSITE:
Final Paper, approximately 20 pages, double-spaced.

“The final paper for the semester, due Friday, May 10, can be either a research paper or a well-elaborated research plan accompanied by indicative preliminary findings.”

“Final papers developing the research as fully as possible should be about 20 pages long (double-spaced) and are due, with no extensions, to the course website by 11:59pm on Friday, May 10. Late papers will lose one-half grade per day, unless the student has a medical or emergency excuse verified by the student’s Resident Dean and, if applicable, the University Health Services.”