“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 Tuesday, February 23, 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 Tuesday, March 30, 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 Sunday, May 9 by 11:59 pm, 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 four slots to assign at her discretion and the remaining twelve 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. They can be reached at govtutorial@gov.harvard.edu.

MORE DETAILS TO BE POSTED HERE SOON.
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 Tuesdays to the course website, so that all class members can read them before Wednesday’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 Tuesday, March 30) and the in-class presentation each student does in the final class meetings of the semester (Wednesday, April 21 and Wednesday, April 28).
- 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 Sunday, May 9. 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 Tuesdays. 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 Wednesday’s class.

Memo Assignments. Four memos, two pages each (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words):

- Everyone will submit memos for Week 2 (due Tue Feb 2) and Week 3 (due Tue Feb 9). 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 Weeks 4, 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 three teams of 2-4 students each to write a memo for Week 9, 11, or 12 and, same as for the third memo, will help lead the discussion for their assigned week.
- Students should come to the Week 2 class (Wednesday, February 3) prepared to list their preferences among Weeks 4 and Weeks 6, 7, and 8 for their third memo and among Weeks 9, 11, and 12 for the fourth memo so the assignments can be doled out.
COURSE ORGANIZATION AND REQUIREMENTS, continued

Developing the Research Project

Research 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 Tuesday, February 23 by 11:59pm. The First Research Ideas Memo will suggest several researchoke 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 6-8 page, double-spaced, Research Prospectus, due to the course website on Tuesday, March 30 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 Tuesday, February 23) and one meeting after submitting the Research Prospectus (due Tuesday, March 30). 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 Wednesday, April 21 and Wednesday, April 28 (Weeks 13 and 14), 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 Sunday, May 9. 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.

For further guidance:
- Harvard Guide to Using Sources
- Academic Integrity and Academic Dishonesty section of the Harvard College Handbook for Students.
ACCESS TO READINGS

Most readings for this course are available online either directly or via HOLLIS. Links are provided in the Course Outline and Reading List (next section). There is no sourcebook for this course.

Books that are required for the course are listed below. As noted in the list, some are fully accessible via HOLLIS and downloadable as pdfs, but others are not. All the books are available for purchase as new or used physical books and sometimes as ebooks, as well as to rent for the semester, from the Harvard COOP Textbooks Department. If you are away from campus this semester, the COOP can ship books to you via UPS. Note, for rental returns at semester’s end, the COOP provides a pre-paid shipping label. More about COOP book rental here: FAQs.


- Theda Skocpol and Caroline Tervo, editors. *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. ONLINE ACCESS TO FULL TEXT AVAILABLE VIA HOLLIS. [Note, the landing tab in your browser may say “not able to complete your request” but another tab right next to it will show the book with full access.]

- Markus Prior. *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. ONLINE ACCESS TO FULL TEXT AVAILABLE VIA HOLLIS. [Note, the landing tab in your browser may say “not able to complete your request” but another tab right next to it will show the book with full access.]

- Suzanne Mettler. *Degrees of Inequality: How the Politics of Higher Education Sabotaged the American Dream.* New York: Basic Books, 2014. HOLLIS HAS VERY LIMITED ONLINE ACCESS TO THIS BOOK. It is, a) not downloadable, b) only available for one hour at a time, and c) only one HOLLIS user can access it at a time. So, because whole book is assigned to read, best to purchase your own copy of it.


COURSE OUTLINE and READING LIST

Week 1 (Wed 1/27): 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. Memo #1 is due by NOON ON TUESDAY 2/02 to course website (for Wed 2/03 class discussion):

   By noon on Tue 2/02, 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.

2. Assigning memos/discussion leaders for Weeks 4, 6, 7, and 8 (third memo), and Weeks 9, 11, and 12 (fourth memo):

   Students should come to the Week 2 class (Wednesday, February 3) prepared to list preferences for Weeks 4, 6, 7, and 8 and for Weeks 9, 11, and 12 so the third and fourth memo assignments can be doled out.

Week 2 (Wed 2/03): 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 Tuesday, February 2 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 (Wed 2/10): Elite 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 Tuesday, February 9 for all course members to read before class.


Week 4 (Wed 2/17): Understanding Recent Popular Resistance Movements

Selected students submit their third two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by noon on Tuesday, February 16 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


COURSE OUTLINE and READING LIST


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DUE BY 11:59PM ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 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 the First Research Ideas Memo on Tuesday, February 23. Abby Peck peck@wjh.harvard.edu will email students to schedule appointments.

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Week 5 (Wed 2/24): The Changing Role and Impact of the Mass Media

- No memos due this week.
- First Research Ideas Memo is due to the course website on Tuesday, February 23 by 11:59pm.


COURSE OUTLINE and READING LIST

Week 6 (Wed 3/03): Representation and Governmental Responsiveness

Selected students submit their third two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by noon on Tuesday, March 2 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


“How PROTESTS MATTER” reading. TBD.

Week 7 (Wed 3/10): 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 Tuesday, March 9 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


Week 8 (Wed 3/17): 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 Tuesday, March 16 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


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

Alexander Hertel-Fernandez. “Policy Feedback as Political Weapon: Conservative Advocacy and the Demobilization of the Public Sector Movement.” Perspectives on Politics 16(2) (June 2018), 364-379.


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 Tuesday, March 23 and help lead the class discussion.


DUE BY 11:59PM ON TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 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 10 (Wed 3/31): NO CLASS - FAS WELLNESS DAY


Selected students submit their fourth two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by noon on Tuesday, April 6 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


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 Tuesday, April 13 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.

15 minutes each: 7-8 min to present and 7-8 min for class discussion.

15 minutes each: 7-8 min to present and 7-8 min for class discussion.

FINAL PAPER DUE BY 11:59PM ON SUNDAY, MAY 9 TO COURSE WEBSITE:

Final Paper, approximately 20 pages, double-spaced.

“The final paper for the semester, due Sunday May 9, 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 Sunday, May 9. 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.”