Since the founding of the United States, most 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. The Civil Rights struggle and other rights revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s expanded the rights and participation of African Americans, women, and other formerly marginalized groups. Yet since the 1970s 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 ideals of equal opportunity and impartially responsive democracy may have stalled, and in some cases reversed. In recent years, forces reluctant to accept societal changes and institutional rules have gained clout and turned to violence and harassment to undermine U.S. democracy.

This seminar explores the impact of vast and rising economic inequality on the workings of U.S. democracy, including the interaction of economic disparities with other inequalities grounded in social identities and political geography. Substantive sessions consider how social analysts have done and can further undertake objective, factually grounded 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 class covers 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. Examine course deadlines carefully and make sure you can meet them along with other deadlines you face. Early in the semester, students will begin to pose researchable questions. Each student will prepare a First Research Ideas Memo by Sunday, February 20, outlining several possible research questions, and, later that week, will meet with Professor Skocpol to discuss them and narrow to one question. A final research proposal -- the Research Prospectus -- is due on Sunday, March 27, to be followed by another discussion with Professor Skocpol. At the end of the semester, two class sessions will be devoted to In-Class Presentation of Preliminary Findings of the research. The Final Paper for the semester, due Sunday, May 8 can be either a research paper or a well-elaborated research plan accompanied by indicative preliminary findings.
HOW TO ENROLL

Enrollment for all Gov 94-- seminars is limited to 16 undergraduates. For Gov 94oa, Prof. Skocpol is allotted four slots to assign at her discretion, with the remaining twelve slots to be assigned via lottery administered by the Government Department’s Undergraduate Services team. Because Gov 94-- seminars are a requirement for Government concentrators, they are given preference in the lottery. However, non-Government concentrators are welcome to enter it. The online form to enter the Gov 94-- lottery is at https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/gov-94-seminars and the deadline to submit it is 6:00pm ET on Tuesday, January 18.

Recommended approach to maximize your chances of being admitted to Gov 94oa:

1) Enter the Gov 94 lottery,
   AND
2) Email Prof. Skocpol skocpol@fas.harvard.edu asking to be considered for a discretionary slot in case you are not admitted to the course by lottery. In your email, introduce yourself (name, concentration, and year) and briefly say why you want to take the course.

The Government Department will post Gov 94-- lottery results no later than Wednesday, January 19, at https://undergrad.gov.harvard.edu/gov-94-lottery-results. If you have been lotteried in, you will be able to enroll in Gov 94oa by the course registration deadline of Thursday, January 20 (by 11:59pm ET). If you have not been lotteried in, send a followup email as soon as possible to Prof. Skocpol indicating that you still want to be considered for a discretionary slot in the course. She will respond as quickly as possible to let you know whether a slot is available. If a slot is available, you can petition (in Crimson Cart) to enroll, and she will approve your petition. If no slot is available, she will let you know where you rank on a waiting list. If a waiting list slot becomes available, she will email you to offer you the slot.
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.

Discussion Memos on Assigned Readings

Over the course of the semester, each student will write four discussion memos of roughly 1000 words each (two pages, single-spaced) on the assigned readings for various weeks. 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.

Posted to a Discussion page on the course website, memos will be shared with all class members and will serve to spark and orient the in-class discussion. So that everyone can read them before Tuesday’s class meeting, memos are due by 11:59pm on Sundays.

Schedule of Memo Assignments:

- Memos #1 and #2. Everyone will submit memos for Week 2 (due Sunday, January 30) and Week 3 (due Sunday, February 6). This will ensure that everyone jumps into the group discussions early, and it will allow Professor Skocpol to give feedback on early memos.

- Assigning Memos #3 and #4. Students should come to the Week 2 class, on Tuesday, February 1, prepared to list their preferences among Weeks 4, 6, and 7 for Memo #3 and among Weeks 8, 10, and 11 for Memo #4 so the teams can be assigned.

- Memo #3. For the third memo, students will be assigned to three teams of 4-6 students each to write individual memos for Weeks 4, 6, or 7. 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.

- Memo #4. For the fourth memo, students will be assigned to three teams of 4-6 students each to write individual memos for Weeks 8, 10, or 11. As with Memo #3, teams will also help orient the class discussion for their week.
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.

- **Writing 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 Sunday, February 20, by 11:59pm ET.** 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 optional book that may help some students develop their projects is Christopher Howard’s *Thinking Like a Political Scientist: A Practical Guide to Research Methods* (University of Chicago Press, 2017). An eventual 6-8 page, double-spaced, **Research Prospectus, due to the course website on Sunday, March 27, by 11:59pm ET,** will involve fully formulating a question, hypotheses, and research design for the final research paper or proposal. In other words, what question do you propose to ask and why; and how do you propose to do the research to investigate your question?

- **Individual Meetings.** Each student will meet with Professor Skocpol several times to discuss the development of their 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 Sunday, February 20) and one meeting after submitting the Research Prospectus (due Sunday, March 27). Meetings in between can happen as needed. Professor Skocpol’s assistant, Abby Peck, maryabigailpeck@outlook.com, 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 19 and Tuesday, April 26 (Weeks 12 and 13), will be devoted to presentation of preliminary findings of the research. Students will present and mutually comment on 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 ET on Sunday, May 8.** 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.
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 11:59pm ET on Sundays 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 Sunday, March 27) and the in-class presentation each student does in the final class meetings of the semester on Tuesday, April 19 and Tuesday, April 26.

Fifty percent will be based on evaluation of the final research paper for the class. The final paper is due to the course website no later than 11:59pm ET on Sunday, May 8. Late papers will have one half-grade per day deducted from the grade otherwise earned.

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 their 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.

Resources for further guidance:

- Harvard Guide to Using Sources
ACCESS TO READINGS

Most readings are available online via HOLLIS or directly from external websites. Links are 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 online via HOLLIS and downloadable as pdfs and others are not. All the books are available from the Harvard COOP Textbooks Department either to purchase as new or used physical books (and sometimes ebooks) or to rent for the semester. 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.

- **USEFUL BACKGROUND FOR THE RESEARCH PROJECT (OPTIONAL):**
COURSE OUTLINE and READING LIST

Week 1 (Tue 1/25): Introductions. Overview of the Seminar.

No required readings for class.


ACTION ITEMS TO COMPLETE BEFORE NEXT WEEK’S CLASS:

1. Memo #1 is due by 11:59pm ET on Sun 1/30, to course website (for Tue 2/01 class discussion).

2. Assigning memos/discussion leader teams for Weeks 4, 6, and 7 (Memo #3), and Weeks 8, 10, and 11 (Memo #4). Students should come to the Week 2 class, on Tue 2/01, prepared to list their preferences among Weeks 4, 6, and 7 for Memo #3 and among Weeks 8, 10, and 11 for Memo #4 so the memos/discussion leader teams can be assigned.

Week 2 (Tue 2/01): Different Perspectives on Rising U.S. Inequality.

All students submit their first two-page memo (roughly 1000 words; single-spaced) to course website by 11:59pm ET on Sunday, January 30, 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.


COURSE OUTLINE and READING LIST

Week 3 (Tue 2/08): Elite and Popular Dynamics in Contemporary U.S. Politics.

All students submit their second two-page memo (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by 11:59pm ET on Sunday, February 6, for all course members to read before class.


Week 4 (Tue 2/15): Understanding Recent Popular Resistance Movements.

Selected students submit their third two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by 11:59pm ET on Sunday, February 13 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


DUE BY 11:59PM ET ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20, TO COURSE WEBSITE: First Research Ideas Memo, 3-4 pages, double-spaced, outlining several possible research questions. 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 Sunday, February 20. Prof. Skocpol’s assistant Abby Peck maryabigailpeck@outlook.com will email students to schedule appointments.

Week 5 (Tue 2/22): 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 Sunday, February 20 by 11:59pm ET.


Week 6 (Tue 3/01): Representation and Governmental Responsiveness.

Selected students submit their third two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by 11:59pm ET on Sunday, February 27 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


Week 7 (Tue 3/08): 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 6:00pm ET on Monday, March 8 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


TUESDAY, MARCH 15: NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK


Selected students submit their fourth two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by 11:59pm ET on Sunday, March 20, (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.
DUE BY 11:59PM ET ON SUNDAY, MARCH 27, TO COURSE WEBSITE:
Research Prospectus, 6-8 pages, double-spaced. 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
maryabigailpeck@outlook.com will email students to schedule appointments.

- No memos due this week.
- Prospectus is due to the course website on Sunday, March 27 by 11:59pm ET.

Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol. “Hard-Fought Legacy: Obama, Congressional
Democrats, and the Struggle for Comprehensive Health Care Reform,” pp. 53-104
(Chapter 2) in Reaching for a New Deal: Ambitious Governance, Economic Meltdown,
and Polarized Politics in Obama’s First Two Years, edited by Theda Skocpol and

Michael Tesler. “The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama
Polarized Public Opinion by Racial Attitudes and Race.” American Journal of Political
Science 56(3) (July 2012): 690-704.

Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Theda Skocpol, and Daniel Lynch. “Business Associations,
Conservative Networks, and the Ongoing Republican War over Medicaid Expansion.”

Week 10 (Tue 4/05): Understanding U.S. Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic.
Selected students submit their fourth two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000
words) to course website by 11:59pm ET on Sunday, April 3 (for all course members to
read) and help lead the class discussion.


Jonathan Rothwell and Christos Makridis. “Politics is Wrecking America’s Pandemic

Elaine Godfrey. “Iowa is What Happens When Government Does Nothing.” The

Daniel A. Cox and Nat Malkus. “Controversy and Consensus: Perspectives on Race,
Religion, and COVID-19 in Public Schools.” Survey Center on American Life,
americansurveycenter.org, a project of the American Enterprise Institute, September 22,
2021.

TBD: Some new readings on the latest trends and controversies.
COURSE OUTLINE and READING LIST


Selected students submit their fourth two-page memos (single-spaced, roughly 1000 words) to course website by 6:00pm ET on Monday, April 12 (for all course members to read) and help lead the class discussion.


TBD: maybe a short reading on Biden administration tax policies, if known by this time.

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

Week 12 (Tue 4/19): Student Research Presentations – Session #1.

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

Week 13 (Tue 4/26): Student Research Presentations – Session #2.

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

FINAL PAPER DUE BY 11:59PM ET ON SUNDAY, MAY 8 TO COURSE WEBSITE:

Final Paper, approximately 20 pages, double-spaced.

“The final paper for the semester, due Sunday, May 8 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 ET on Sunday, May 8. 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.”