The Politics of Spatial Inequality in the United States

Gov 94SW

Spring 2020
Tuesdays, 6-8:45pm in CGIS K354

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 4:30pm to 6pm, CGIS café or by appointment.
Course Website: https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/63677

Course Description
In this course, we will examine the spatial, or geographic, aspect of inequality and its relationship to politics in the United States. This includes examination of racial segregation, class segregation, and rural and urban divides. In addition, we will investigate the role of public policies in contributing to this spatial inequality, as well as how this inequality influences political behavior, representation, and policy outcomes. Finally, we will use the concepts and arguments learned in this course to analyze contemporary political events.

This course has three main objectives:

1) To understand the different components of spatial inequality and the role of public policy in the historical trajectory of these different components (e.g., racial and economic segregation).
2) To understand and interrogate the role of spatial inequality in individual political behaviors and outcomes.
3) To successfully apply the concepts learned in this course to recent political events.

Requirements
Class attendance and participation 30%
Reading responses 30%
Research proposal 40%
Research questions (5%)
Class Attendance and Participation
Students are expected to attend and participate in all sessions. This means students must complete the readings prior to class and come prepared to engage in discussion. Students must also arrive to each session on time. Cell phones are not permitted. Laptops are only permitted for access to the readings. Notes must be taken by hand. If laptops become distracting, I reserve the right to ban them from future sessions.

Examples of successful class participation include responding to questions related to the readings, responding to other students’ comments thoughtfully and respectfully, and offering connections between readings. Examples of unsuccessful participation include being on your phone or computer (rather than being engaged in discussion) and failing to indicate that you have completed the week’s readings.

Please come to each class prepared with two to three questions from the week’s readings. You do not need to turn in your questions to me, but I will ask students to raise their questions and discuss them during the class.

The goal of the course is to have all students participate in class discussions. However, I understand that students have different levels of comfort with this type of participation. Although I will engage students in a variety of in-class activities to measure participation, please talk to me if you are less comfortable with in-class discussions, and we can find another form of participation for you to receive credit.

Reading Responses
Students must submit three reading responses during the semester. Students may choose the weeks in which to submit a reading response through a sign-up sheet at the beginning of the semester, beginning with Week 4. The reading responses must synthesize and analyze the week’s readings and should not just be a summary of the readings. Students can do this by making an overall critique of the readings, by comparing and contrasting arguments between the readings, and/or by analyzing how the readings help answer an overarching question, among other options. In addition, the reading responses must have a thesis statement. The main purpose of the reading responses is to make a coherent assessment of the readings, using the text to support your argument. Each paragraph should relate to the overall argument, and students should make this connection clear in the responses.
The reading responses should be 3-4 pages in length (double-spaced with 12-point font), and you must use two or more readings from the week in your response papers. You may also use readings from previous weeks to support your argument, though this is not required. No outside research is necessary. Reading responses are due by 5pm the day before class.

Each reading response constitutes 10% of the final grade, for 30% total. The reading responses will be graded on a letter grade scale (A, A-, B+, B, etc.)

**Research Proposal**

For your main assignment in this course, you will write a 15 to 20-page research proposal. The research proposal will outline how you plan to answer a research question about a political event, outcome, or trend that relates to the theories and subject matter of this course. For example, you can write a proposal that examines why a city or town is racially or economically segregated, or you can write a proposal that examines how racial segregation affects protest behavior. These are just two examples among many options for this assignment, depending upon your interests.

Your proposal needs to outline a plausible hypothesis (or hypotheses). To do this, you will include a literature review using literature discussed in this course and outside literature that relates to your particular research question. The paper also needs to include a research design, or methodology, section where you outline how you plan to answer your research question. This might include quantitative data you plan to collect and a description of how you will use these data, or it might include historical cases you plan to examine. We will discuss the expectations for the research proposal in more detail throughout the semester.

**Research Questions**: You are required to brainstorm at least three research questions for the research proposal, with a paragraph for each question explaining how the question relates to the course. This is to help ensure that you have ideas for the final paper. However, you do not have to use a research question from this assignment as the research question in your final proposal. The research questions are due by 5pm on April 13th.

**Research Proposal Outline**: You are required to submit a research proposal outline with the following: (1) your main research question; (2) description of what sources you will use in your literature review; and (3) description of your research design. The outline can
be in bullet points. The research proposal should be approximately 2 pages and is due by 5pm on April 27th.

**Late Assignments**
All assignments are expected to be handed in on time. Assignments will be docked one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late. In the case of family or medical emergency, students can turn in late assignments with a note from the doctor or resident dean.

**Collaboration Policy**
Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers or with the instructor, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in political science and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc. from peers or the instructor), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

**Course Outline and Reading List**

**Week 1 (January 28): Introduction and course overview**

**Week 2 (February 4): Public policy and its role in racial and economic segregation**

Week 3 (February 11): Individual attitudes as a cause for racial and economic segregation


Week 4 (February 18): How should we think about and measure segregation today? The rise of economic segregation


Week 5 (February 25): Neighborhood segregation and social mobility


Week 6 (March 3): Neighborhood segregation and political behavior


Week 7 (March 10): Neighborhood segregation and political outcomes

Week 8 (March 24): Neighborhood segregation and environmental justice


Week 9 (March 31): Immigration and segregation


Week 10 (April 7): The potential for integration? Gentrification and changing neighborhood dynamics


*Research Questions due by 5pm on Monday, April 13th.*

**Week 11 (April 14): The rise of (some) cities**


**Week 12 (April 21): The rural-urban divide**


• Hendrickson, Clara. 2019. “Why Democrats Don’t Have a Plan to Save ‘Left-Behind’ America,” *Politico*.
*Research Proposal Outline due by 5pm on Monday, April 27th.

Week 13 (April 28): Conclusion and discussion of research projects