

Princeton University
Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs

WWS 593f
Inequality and American Democracy

Fall 2006, Session II

Larry M. Bartels

This course will explore the political causes and consequences of growing economic inequality in the contemporary U.S. We will consider broad aspects of American political culture, the party system, and the institutions of government that shape policy-making in this domain. We will examine recent policy developments in key areas such as taxation and income support. We will attempt to weigh the impact of politics and policy in the broader constellation of forces (such as technological change and global economic development) influencing the U.S. income distribution. And we will assess how economic inequality feeds back into the political system, challenging the ideal of political equality. Finally, we will look briefly at parallel developments in other rich democracies in an effort to gauge how and why the U.S. is different.

Class sessions: Tuesdays, 1-4, in 014 Robertson Hall.

Readings: Required readings are available electronically on Blackboard. Supplementary readings (denoted by “+”) are on reserve in Stokes Library.

Course requirements and grading: The course will be conducted as a seminar. Students should come to each class session, including the first, prepared to discuss the assigned readings. To facilitate discussion, each student will be required to submit a one-paragraph comment or question on each week’s readings in advance of our meeting; these should be circulated to the class via Blackboard no later than 11 a.m. each Tuesday. In addition, there will be a 72-hour take-home final exam during the January exam period. Course grades will be based on class participation (30%), weekly written comments (30%), and the final exam (40%).

Office hours: Wednesdays 2-4, or by appointment, in 215 Robertson Hall. Generally, the best way to contact me is by e-mail: *bartels@princeton.edu*.

Week 1 – November 7

The New Gilded Age

- Larry Bartels, *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age* (unpublished manuscript), chap. 1.
 Sheldon Danziger & Peter Gottschalk, *America Unequal* (1995), chap. 7.
 Paul Krugman, “For Richer: How the Permissive Capitalism of the Boom Destroyed American Equality.” *New York Times Magazine*, October 20, 2002.
 + Frank Levy, *The New Dollars and Dreams: American Incomes and Economic Change* (1998).

Week 2 – November 14

Partisan Politics

- Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, chaps. 2-4.
 Kevin Phillips, *Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich* (2002), chap. 7.
 V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949), chap. 14.
 Robert D. Brown, “Party Cleavages and Welfare Effort in the American States.” *American Political Science Review* (1995), 23-33.
 + Jeffrey Stonecash, *Class and Party in American Politics* (2000).

Week 3 – November 21

Political Culture and Public Opinion

- Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, chap. 5.
 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume 1 (1835), Part 1, chap. 3; Volume 2 (1840), Part 2, chap. 2, Part 3, chap. 1.
 Martin Luther King, “I Have a Dream” (1963).
 Herbert McClosky & John Zaller, *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes toward Capitalism and Democracy* (1984), chap. 3.
 Katherine S. Newman and Elizabeth Jacobs, “Brothers’ Keepers? The Limits of Social Solidarity from the New Deal to the Clinton Era.” Paper prepared for the Open Society Institute Conference on “What We Owe Each Other” (2006).
 Jennifer L. Hochschild, *What’s Fair? American Beliefs about Distributive Justice* (1981), chap. 6.
 + Sidney Verba & Gary R. Orren, *Equality in America: The View from the Top* (1985).

Week 4 – November 28

Inequality and Public Policies

- Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, chaps 6-8.
 Jacob S. Hacker & Paul Pierson, “Abandoning the Middle: The Bush Tax Cuts and the Limits of Democratic Control.” *Perspectives on Politics* (2005), 33-53.
 Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole & Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches* (2006), chap. 6.
 + Michael J. Graetz & Ian Shapiro, *Death by a Thousand Cuts: The Fight over Taxing Inherited Wealth* (2005).

Week 5 – December 5

Political Influence

- Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, chap. 9-10.
- Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba & Henry E. Brady, “Civic Participation and the Equality Problem.” In Theda Skocpol & Morris P. Fiorina, eds., *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (1999).
- Martin Gilens, “Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* (2006), 778-796.
- Richard Hall & Frank Wayman, “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.” *American Political Science Review* (1990), 797-820.
- Stephen Ansolabehere, John M. de Figueiredo & James M. Snyder, “Why is There So Little Money in U.S. Politics?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* (2003), 105-130.
- + Robert A. Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* (2001).

Week 6 – December 12

International Comparisons

- Alberto Alesina, Edward Glaeser, & Bruce Sacerdote, “Why Doesn’t the United States Have a European-Style Welfare State?” *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* (2001), 187-254.
- Timothy M. Smeeding, Lee Rainwater & Gary Burtless, “U.S. Poverty in a Cross-National Context.” In Sheldon Danziger & Robert H. Haveman, eds., *Understanding Poverty* (2001).
- Lane Kenworthy & Jonas Pontusson, “Rising Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution in Affluent Countries.” *Perspectives on Politics* (2005), 449-471.
- Lars Osberg & Timothy Smeeding, “‘Fair’ Inequality? Attitudes toward Pay Differentials: The United States in Comparative Perspective.” *American Sociological Review* (2006), 450-473.
- + Jonas Pontusson, *Inequality and Prosperity: Social Europe vs. Liberal America* (2005).

Additional References

- + Lawrence R. Jacobs & Theda Skocpol, eds., *Inequality and American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn* (2005).
- + Kathryn M. Neckerman, ed., *Social Inequality* (2004).
- + Benjamin I. Page & James R. Simmons, *What Government Can Do: Dealing with Poverty and Inequality* (2000).