This module studies the relationship between economic inequality and democracy. The module will begin by introducing students to the concepts, measurement and historical development of economic inequality in advanced industrial democracies. It will then focus on the role of globalization and technological change as drivers of rising inequality in recent decades and examine the role of public policies in contributing to or dampening income differentials. The third part of the module will consider the relationship between elections and inequality, asking why voters do not consistently punish governments for allowing increasing concentrations of wealth and income “at the top”: voter cognition and information about inequality, unequal political participation, and the role of culture and ideology. We will also consider what can be done: what sorts of policy or institutional changes might help reduce economic inequality and how politically feasible these responses might be.

There are two important things to emphasize about the focus of this course. First, the course is focused on inequality within the world’s developed democracies, and thus is not intended to address issues of global inequality. Second, the course is largely oriented around issues of economic inequality and their political causes and implications. The course does not deal centrally with other important forms of inequality -- of which there are many, including gender inequality or inequality among ethnic groups. However, in our final session we do consider the intersection of economic and cultural issues in the politics of inequality.

Several readings for this module use quantitative methods. This has not been an issue for students who previously took this module, and we will obviously go over the material together in class. If you have any concerns about this, please reach out to me. You may also take a look at some of the readings (for example, chapters 3 and 5 in Bartels 2016 [week 4] which can be accessed online through TCD Library) to see if you would enjoy reading them.

**Learning outcomes**

On successful completion of this module students will be able to:

- Describe the historical development of income inequality in advanced industrial democracies
- Understand patterns of income inequality across these countries
- Explain and critically evaluate the major factors leading to rising economic inequality
- Understand the relationship between elections and increasing concentrations of wealth and income “at the top”
• Construct arguments concerning current debates about citizen preferences for redistribution in modern democracies

Assessment

Participation (20%)

Student participation and discussion is a central aspect of the seminar. This means that it is necessary to do the readings. Students should come prepared with topics of discussion and questions. The assessment of participation will be based on the quality of input into class discussions. To prepare for discussion you should: identify the theory or argument of the readings, identify the method used by the authors in the readings to test their arguments, and evaluate the strength of these method for testing the authors' argument; and you should think of possible extensions or alternatives to the arguments put forward in the readings.

Response Papers (20%)

Students are required to submit two response papers. Each paper should be 800 words long and each will be worth 10%. Each paper should be related to a topic covered in the module (weeks 9-12). Students can choose the two weeks (out of four possible weeks) in which they write their response papers but have to submit them through Turnitin on Blackboard before the start of class (i.e., by TBD) in these two weeks. Building on the readings from that week, the response papers should discuss a potential research design that improves on this literature. Please do not write a summary of a particular week’s readings. Instead, identify a weakness or limitation in the articles and offer suggestions on how to improve the research. The critical evaluation may focus on the empirical or theoretical aspects of the readings or both. In these response papers, the student should:

1. Identify a research question.
2. Provide brief theoretical intuitions that generate one or more hypotheses (for this, you are likely to draw on the readings for a given week – there is no need to draw on outside sources).
3. Describe how they would answer that question. What they propose can be ambitious but should also be feasible for the student to execute.

The purpose of the response papers is to begin brainstorming ideas for potential research projects.

Final Paper (60%)

The research paper is due by TBD. It should be 2,500 words in length, including footnotes but not the list of references. I have no preference for any particular citation style, but please make sure you use citation procedures consistently throughout. You should double-space the essay and provide the word count at the beginning. The paper should outline a research design for a larger project, be creative, and also feasible for the student to carry out. The paper should follow a clear structure:

1. What is the motivating question?
2. How does the project relate to existing work?
3. What are the hypotheses? These should flow naturally from good theory.
4. What relevant data are available, or could feasibly be collected?
5. What methods would be used to test the hypotheses? This could include any combination
of comparative case studies, interviews, statistical analysis, etc.

**Readings**

Details of readings for individual topics are given separately. A very useful resource for this module is the following book, which is available online through TCD Library:


The following items will occur on the reading for specific topics and are of general relevance and usefulness.

Atkinson, A. B., and Thomas Piketty. 2007. *Top Incomes Over the Twentieth Century*. Oxford University Press. (available online through TCD Library)
- Provides an overview of the historical development and cross-national variation in income inequality.

- Distinguishes between three different types of welfare state regimes: liberal, social democratic, and conservative (or Christian Democratic or continental European). A classic.

- A collection of articles that highlights the fundamental differences between what the editors call two main types of market economies: liberal versus coordinated market economies.


- Argues that Labour’s political shift to the centre alienated the British working class from Labour, turning working class people into non-voters and potentially driving some of them to anti-EU and anti-immigration parties such as UKIP.

**Academic integrity**

Please do not plagiarize. Academic dishonesty is a serious matter, with serious consequences that can result in receiving no credit for an assignment, a failing grade for the module, and even expulsion from the programme. It is never permissible to turn in any work that contains others’ ideas without proper acknowledgment. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth in the College Calendar (see [https://www.tcd.ie/calendar/](https://www.tcd.ie/calendar/)). Useful information is available at
http://libguides.tcd.ie/academic-integrity/. If you are paraphrasing, cite the source. If you are quoting, use quotation marks and appropriate citation. In addition, we strongly recommend that you visit http://www.plagiarism.org/ for more information on what is and is not plagiarism. Lastly, students are required to only submit “new work” in each module, which means work that has not been submitted previously in any other university module. Students who wish to use previously submitted work as part of a new project will need the approval of the lecturer. The Assignment Submission Form available from the Departmental website (https://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/assets/word/Plagiarism%20cover%20sheet.docx; see also https://libguides.tcd.ie/academic-integrity/declaration) should be filled out and included as the first page of all your submissions. All written assignments are to be submitted through Turnitin in Blackboard.

Disability policy
Students with a disability are encouraged to register with the Disability Service to seek supports where the disability could affect their ability to participate fully in all aspects of the course.

Course Schedule

PART I: DESCRIBING ECONOMIC INEQUALITY
This module will examine both the causes of rising inequality and its consequences for democratic politics. Part I will begin by unpacking the concept and measurement of economic “inequality” and taking a comparative and historical view of how the distribution of income and wealth has evolved in industrialized countries since the 19th century.

Week 1. Characterizing economic inequality: concepts, measurement, and historical developments

Bartels, Unequal Democracy, Postscript, pages 365-366. (Not included in 1st edition; available on Blackboard.)


Further reading (optional):

Explore and play with the data at: http://www.oecd.org/social/inequality.htm

**Short pieces:**


*Taking taxes, transfers and mobility into account:*


**PART II: EXPLAINING ECONOMIC INEQUALITY**

Part II will inquire into the role of globalization and technological change as causes of rising inequality in recent decades, and will examine the role of public policy, including tax and social policies, in contributing to or dampening income and wealth differentials.

**Week 2. Drivers of inequality: economic structure and change; political choice**


**Further reading (optional):**


**Week 3. Drivers of inequality: economic institutions**


Further reading (optional):


**PART III: THE INTERACTION OF INEQUALITY AND DEMOCRACY**

Part III will consider the relationship between elections and inequality, asking why voters do not consistently punish governments for allowing increasing concentrations of wealth and income “at the top.” We will examine how changes in the relative political influence and bargaining leverage of labor (as compared to capital) has affected the distribution of income as well as whether and how inequalities in material resources distort democratic processes, generating inequalities in political influence. We will also consider what can be done: what sorts of policy or institutional changes might help reduce economic inequality and how politically feasible these responses might be.

**Week 4. The median-voter model of democracy and its limits; cognition and information about inequality**

Kim, James Je Heon. “The Median Voter Theorem.” [6:13], available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFt0k6n_HKc


Further reading (optional):


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**Week 5. Material distribution meets culture**


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Further reading (optional):


**Further reading that is not linked to any specific week (optional):**


