Inequality and Political Representation

Course Outline

Over the past decade(s) we have seen a rise in social inequality in many countries around the world, among them many rich and developed OECD countries. In this course we will discuss the causes of rising income inequality and poverty, but also the repercussions of these phenomena for the political system. We start out by defining what poverty is, and how income inequality can be measured. Then we take a closer look at how social inequality has developed over time in various OECD countries, but we will discuss these issues also on a global scale. During the later stages of the course we then investigate how income inequality effects the political representation of various groups, among them the poor, in the policy making process. The course should enable students to make informed arguments about inequality and poverty, but also enable them to increase their research skills and their ability to write scientific papers.

Master course: MA Hauptseminar: Vergleichenden Politikwissenschaft IV
Zeit und Ort: Monday, 10 - 12:00pm, Room FMA/00.07 (Starting: 12.10.2015)
Registration: FlexNow, 01.09.2015 - 19.10.2015 (Deregistration by 25.10.2015)
Prerequisites: None
Grading: Term paper (75%), Presentation (25%)
ECTS: 8

Course Goals

At the completion of this course, students should

- have an overview of the most important theories regarding inequality and political representation,
- know about current empirical research regarding these theories,
- be able to apply these theories to conduct a small research project on inequality by their own.
**Introductory Readings**


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**Course requirements**

You will be evaluated on the basis of your oral presentation and your research paper. In order to pass the course, you need at least a 4.0 in both grade components.

**Presentation (25%)**:

Students are expected to give a presentations (about 30 minutes) in which they discuss the most important theoretical and empirical aspects of their assigned topic. In addition, students are asked to prepare a detailed handout which summarizes the major points of their presentation. The handout should be informative and clearly structured. It is important that you not only summarize the required readings, but that you consult a variety of different sources. The required readings can be taken as a starting point for further literature research, but the presentation shall not be exclusively based on the assigned readings. Students are furthermore expected to present three discussion questions at the end of their presentations that are central for their assigned topic. Students should email me a draft of their handout and the slides for their presentation (if using) until Tuesday before their presentation.

The quality of the seminar crucially depends on the participation and the contributions of the students. Students are therefore expected to actively participate in class discussions and complete the assigned readings every week.

**Research paper (75%)**:

Students are expected to submit a research paper at the end of the seminar. The topic and research question must be directly related to the seminar. The research paper should follow the structure of an academic article, that means it should include a discussion of the substantive importance of your research question, a brief review of the relevant literature, a discussion of the theoretical argument and the hypotheses, a research design and an analysis section as well as a conclusion. The research paper should contain between 5700 to 6300 words including references, figures and tables. You should send the research paper until 31 March in PDF or Word format to florian.weiler@uni-bamberg.de.

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**Office hours**

During the semester I hold office hours on Mondays between 4 and 5.30 pm. Registration is not necessary, just come to my office (FG1/01.04) during that time.
COURSE OUTLINE

1 Introduction

12.10. Introduction, Topic assignment

19.10. Setting the stage

2 Inequality

26.10. Measuring income inequality, Definition of poverty

2.11. Empirical trends 1

9.11. Empirical trends 2

16.11. Inequality: Should we care?
3 Representation

22.11. Theories of representation


30.11. Models of government responsiveness


7.12. Inequalities in political representation


4 Income inequality and representation

14.12. Political institutions and inequality


21.12. Are the ‘poor’ represented?


28.12. Resource based explanations of representation


11.1. Is big business overrepresented?

18.1. Consequences of inequality

25.1. General discussion

1.2. Wrap-up