Democracy is based on the ideal of political equality. Yet inequality is an undeniable feature of American society. How does inequality affect the working of American democracy, and how do (and, looking forward, how can) public policies influence inequality and its effects? These questions will map a voyage of inquiry spanning philosophical considerations, historical debates, illustrative cases, and key questions about participation, power, and policy in the United States.

This course is unusual in two respects. First, a large share of it will consider contemporary debates fought outside the academy. We will read a variety of viewpoints, many expressed strongly, and students should recognize that some of them will be inconsistent with their own views (or mine, for that matter). Students should also be prepared to discuss these subjects in a thoughtful and respectful fashion, even if the authors they read, or the larger society, are not always so inclined.

Second, the course will employ a variety of media, including films. An important theme, in fact, is that views of inequality are heavily mediated. In most cases, that is, our knowledge and perceptions are not based on direct experience. The goal of using a variety of media is to simultaneously enrich our perceptions of the world around us and to show that this world is powerfully refracted by the ways in which it reaches our senses.

**Course Organization.** The course will begin by laying down conceptual and empirical foundations. It will then proceed through three overlapping areas: participation, power, and policy. We will survey what is known about the effects of inequality on political participation and efficacy, consider the impact of inequality on policymaking, and examine policy developments and debates in three broad areas: "security," "poverty," and "opportunity." The course will close with a consideration of what can and should be done to alter the relationship between inequality and American democracy in the future.

**Course Requirements.** A take-home midterm, a final exam, two short (2-3 pp.) discussion papers, and active participation in section discussions are the principal requirements; 40 percent of the grade will be determined by the final, 30 percent by the midterm, and 30 percent by discussion papers (5 percent each) and participation (20 percent). All written assignments should be submitted via the classes server. Late papers will be downgraded by 10% for each hour behind schedule, rounding up. Plagiarism is a serious violation and is punishable with a failing grade and possibly more severe action.

**Sections** are a vital part of this course, and they will be led by an exceptional set of graduate/law students. Course participants should come to section prepared to discuss the week's readings and to listen and respond thoughtfully and respectfully to others.
**Papers.** For their sections, students will also be required to write a 2-3 pp. discussion paper, which should be completed on or before week 6, and a 2-3 pp. policy memo, which should be completed on or before week 12. A good discussion paper will do more than simply summarize the readings; it will critically evaluate the arguments made in the readings, including the evidence presented to support those arguments. The requirements for the policy memo, which will become the basis for an oral presentation in section, will be discussed more fully as the second half of the course approaches.

**Community-Based Learning (CBL) Section.** This year I will offer a CBL section for those students who wish to enhance their classroom learning and fulfill course requirements with a field-based research project requested by a local nonprofit agency. (Students will be paired with agencies based on their interests and skills.) The CBL section will be smaller in size than a normal section, and its requirements will differ. Instead of discussion papers and the midterm, CBL students will write a longer paper based on their research project at the end of the course. They will take the final.

**Writing-Intensive (WI) Section.** In the WI section, students will write two drafts of each of their two short papers, as well as write a research paper in lieu of the final exam. For the final research paper, students will need to prepare a draft research proposal as well as a precis of the paper prior to turning in the final draft. WI students will take the midterm.

**Online Component.** Before Monday's lecture (except in week 1), students should review any online materials (available on the classes server) for that week. These will principally be breaking-news media stories, but also include statistics, audio, images, and definitional discussions that are easiest reviewed online.

**Clickers.** I will be using classroom response systems, aka clickers, to enable students to answer survey questions—often for comparison of student responses with American public opinion—and to periodically check understanding of key concepts. **Clicker responses are completely anonymous.** I will not know your individual answer, only the total distribution of responses. Clickers may be checked out free of charge from the Bass Library circulation desk. You will need your clicker for the Friday, January 17, lecture, when Matt Regan (matthew.regan@yale.edu) of ITS will give a brief intro. For additional information, see the FAQs at [http://clickers.commons.yale.edu/clicker-faqs/](http://clickers.commons.yale.edu/clicker-faqs/).

**Movies.** Two movies are required: *People Like Us: Social Class in America* (week 2) and *The House I Live In* (week 9). The latter can be rented for $1.99 via YouTube.

**Books** that are required for the course are available at the Yale bookstore (77 Broadway Street, (203) 777-8440) as well as on course reserve:

1. Martin Gilens, *Affluence and Influence*
2. Suzanne Mettler, *The Submerged State*
3. Paul Starr, *Remedy and Reaction*
4. Wes Moore, *The Other Wes Moore*
5. Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*
Additional Readings are available online. Students should also read at least one general source on American politics daily, such as the New York Times and Wall Street Journal.

Office Hours will be held on Wednesdays from 1:30 to 3:20 in 77 Prospect Street, B213 (2-5554 jacob.hacker@yale.edu). Appointments can be made by signing up online (drop-ins are welcome, but appointments have first priority).

VERY IMPORTANT: Because I will be traveling abroad for a UN meeting during the first week of classes, there will be no course meeting on Wednesday, January 15.

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<th>WEEK</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>Monday</th>
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<td>1 (1/13-17)</td>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Friday Lecture: Inequality: What is It; Why Does It Matter?</td>
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<td>2 (1/22)</td>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>No Lecture: MLK Day</td>
<td>U.S. Inequality in Historical and Cross-National Relief</td>
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<td>3 (1/27-29)</td>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>Top-Heavy Inequality: Rents or Rewards?</td>
<td>Inequality and American Political Thought and Institutions</td>
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<td>4 (2/3-5)</td>
<td>Participation &amp; Inequality</td>
<td>Participation in American Politics: The Interplay of Institutions and Behavior</td>
<td>Putting the Pieces Together: The Transformation of Civic America</td>
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<td>5 (2/10-12)</td>
<td>Power &amp; Inequality</td>
<td>Political Power in Theory and Practice</td>
<td>Responsiveness as a Measure of Power</td>
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<td>6 (2/17-19)</td>
<td>Policy I: Security</td>
<td>America's Odd Welfare State</td>
<td>The Middle Class at Risk?</td>
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<td>7 (2/24-26)</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>American Health Care: Reality, Reform, Reaction</td>
<td>Guest Lecture: Jonathan Cohn, New Republic</td>
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<td>8 (3/3-5)</td>
<td>Policy II: Poverty</td>
<td>American Poverty in Historical and Cross-National Relief</td>
<td>America's Strange Politics of Redistribution</td>
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<td>Guest Lecture: Annie Lowrey, New York Times</td>
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<td>Take-Home Midterm</td>
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<td>11 (4/7-4/9)</td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>The Working Poor</td>
<td>Inequality, Opportunity, and American Opinion</td>
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<td>12 (4/14-16)</td>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>&quot;Winner-Take-All&quot; Politics?</td>
<td>Battles of the Budget</td>
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<td>Guest Lecture: Michael Grunwald, Time Magazine</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 (4/21-23)</td>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>Should—and Can—</td>
<td>Occupy Wall Street, the Tea</td>
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READINGS  
( starred readings are available on the classes server; most linked readings require use of a Yale-network computer or the use of Yale VPN)  

Week 1  

Monday  

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Week 2  

Wednesday  
Timothy Noah, "The Great Divergence," Slate, 2010. [Read all but Part Ten]  

Week 3.  

Monday  
Wednesday


Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Chap. 3 (1835).

James Madison, *Federalist* 10 (1787).

Week 4

Monday

Wednesday
Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), selections.*

Week 5

Monday

Wednesday

Week 6

Monday
Alberto Alesina, Edward Glaeser, and Bruce Sacerdote, "Why Doesn't the United States Have a European-Style Welfare State?" *Brookings Papers on Economic

**Wednesday**

Jacob S. Hacker, "The Middle Class at Risk," in *Broke*, edited by Katherine M. Porter (Stanford, 2010).*


**Week 7**

**Monday**


**Wednesday**


**Week 8**

**Monday**


**Wednesday**


**Week 9**

**Monday**


Bruce Western, "The Prison Boom and the Decline of American Citizenship,"
Weds

Wes Moore, *The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates* (Random House, 2010).

Week 10

Monday


Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick* (1868), Chap. 27.

Wednesday


Economic Mobility Project, "Does the United States Promote Mobility As Well As Other Nations?" November 2011.

Week 11

Monday


Wednesday

Benjamin Page and Lawrence Jacobs, *Class War? What Americans Really Think About Economic Inequality* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), selections.


Week 12

Monday

Wednesday

Week 13

Monday
Peter Wehner and Robert Beschel, Jr., "How to Think About Inequality," National Affairs 11 (Spring 2012).
Lane Kenworthy, "America's Social Democratic Future," Foreign Affairs (January/February 2014).

Wednesday: