

Indv 102: Social Issues in America

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Spring 2010
Section 56
MWF 12:00–12:50, Harvill 150
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Course Description and Requirements

Description

This course explores key social, economic, and political issues in the contemporary United States. It has five parts. The first two consider developments in living standards, inequality, opportunity, economic security, poverty, and happiness in America, with an emphasis on comparison to the past and to other affluent nations. The third explores what government should and can do to help improve things. The fourth part examines U.S. politics. The fifth looks at America's role in the world and its contribution to progress in poorer countries.

Summary of requirements

- Books are at the UA bookstore; other readings are at www.u.arizona.edu/~lkenwor/indv102readings.html
- Lecture slides are at www.u.arizona.edu/~lkenwor/courses.html
- Five exams, each worth 20% of the course grade
- Makeup exams are permitted only in special circumstances
- Traditional grading scale, with no extra-credit

Lecture materials

During lecture I will show you a number of slides with text, charts, diagrams, and photos. You can access these at www.u.arizona.edu/~lkenwor/courses.html.

Readings

The following books are at the UA bookstore. They also can be ordered online at amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, powells.com, etc.

- Krugman, Paul. 2007. *The Conscience of a Liberal*. W.W. Norton.
- Reich, Robert B. 2007. *Supercapitalism*. Knopf.
- Hacker, Jacob S. 2006. *The Great Risk Shift*. Oxford University Press.
- Layard, Richard. 2005. *Happiness*. Penguin Press.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara. 2001. *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. Henry Holt and Co.
- Page, Benjamin I. and Lawrence R. Jacobs. 2009. *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality*. University of Chicago Press.
- Friedman, Milton and Rose Friedman. 1979. *Free to Choose*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Edsall, Thomas Byrne. 1992. *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics*. W.W. Norton.
- Judis, John B. and Ruy Teixeira. 2002. *The Emerging Democratic Majority*. Simon and Schuster.
- Collier, Paul. 2007. *The Bottom Billion*. Oxford University Press.
- Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press.

The following articles and book chapters are available for downloading or printing at www.u.arizona.edu/~lkenwor/indv102readings.html.

- Wilkinson, Will. 2009. "Thinking Clearly about Economic Inequality." Policy Analysis #640. Cato Institute.
- Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 2007. "Equal Opportunities and the Welfare State." *Contexts* 6(3): 23-27.
- Shorto, Russell. 2009. "Going Dutch." *New York Times Magazine*, May 3.
- Miller, Matt. 2009. "Dead Idea #4: Taxes Hurt the Economy (and They're Always Too High)." Pp. 84-107 in *The Tyranny of Dead Ideas*. Times Books.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 2005. "A 50:50 Nation? The Red and the Blue States." Pp. 7-21 in *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. Pearson Longman.
- Gelman, Andrew, David Park, Boris Shor, Joseph Bafumi, and Jeronimo Cortina. 2008. *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State*. Princeton University Press. Pp. 3-23.
- Just, Richard. 2008. "The Truth Will Not Set You Free." *The New Republic*. August 27: 36-47.
- Kristof, Nicholas. 2009. "Where Sweatshops Are a Dream." *New York Times*, January 15.

Grading

Course grades will be based on five exams, each accounting for 20%. The grading scale for the course is: A = 90 and above; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; E = below 60. Do not expect any opportunity for extra-credit projects or assignments.

Exams

The exam dates are listed in the schedule below. Makeups will be permitted only in special circumstances. If something happens that forces you to miss an exam, you must notify one of the course TAs — either in person, by email, or by voice mail — within two hours of the scheduled exam start time and (later) provide documented proof of the circumstances. Otherwise you will receive a zero for the exam.

Officially excused absences

All holidays or special events observed by organized religions will be honored for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion. Absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean's designee) will be honored.

Students with disabilities

If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is very important that you be registered with Disability Resources (621-3268, drc.arizona.edu) and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. We can then plan how best to arrange your accommodations.

Academic integrity

Students are expected to observe the University's Code of Academic Integrity. The Code can be found at deanofstudents.arizona.edu/codeofacademicintegrity.

Behavior in the classroom

Students are expected to observe the University's Student Code of Conduct as it pertains to classroom behavior (see deanofstudents.arizona.edu/policiesandcodes/studentcodeofconduct) and should be familiar with University policies against threatening behavior by students (see policy.web.arizona.edu/~policy/threaten.pdf).

Honors credit

Students taking the course for Honors credit will, in addition to the regular course requirements, write a 6,000-to-8,000-word paper. A two-page proposal is due in class on the date of the third exam. The paper is due at the final exam. The paper should be single-spaced with 1.5-inch margins. The assignment: propose and argue for a change in a policy or institution that would make the United States a better place. You aren't limited to issues and problems I cover during the semester. Your grade will be based on how effectively you argue on behalf of your proposed solution. Some keys to success: State the proposal. Identify the problem(s) it aims to address. Say how it will help. Anticipate objections. Refer to relevant research and/or data. Write clearly. Try your idea out on friends, family, classmates.

1. Prosperity in America, Part I

Class dates

- January 13, 15, 20, 22, 25, 27, 29; February 1, 3
- No class January 18

Exam date

- Friday, February 5

Topics

- Living standards
- Inequality
- Opportunity

Readings

- Krugman, *The Conscience of a Liberal*
- Reich, *Supercapitalism*, Introduction and chapters 1-3
- Wilkinson, "Thinking Clearly about Economic Inequality"
- Esping-Andersen, "Equal Opportunities and the Welfare State"

2. Prosperity in America, Part II

Class dates

- February 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24

Exam date

- Friday, February 26

Topics

- Economic security
- Poverty
- Happiness

Readings

- Hacker, *The Great Risk Shift*
- Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*
- Layard, *Happiness*, chapters 1-6, 8, 14

3. Can Government Help?

Class dates

- March 1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 22, 24
- No class March 15, 17, 19

Exam date

- Friday, March 26

Topics

- What is just?
- What do Americans want?
- Is there a tradeoff between social justice and a healthy economy?
- What can government do?
- How to pay for it

Readings

- Friedman and Friedman, *Free to Choose*, Introduction and chapters 1, 4, 5
- Page and Jacobs, *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality*, chapters 2-4
- Shorto, "Going Dutch"
- Miller, "Dead Idea #4: Taxes Hurt the Economy (and They're Always Too High)"

4. Politics

Class dates

- March 29, 31; April 2, 5, 7, 9, 12, 14

Exam date

- Friday, April 16

Topics

- Polarized America?
- The collapse of the New Deal coalition
- A new Democratic majority?
- Red states and blue states
- What difference can a president make?

Readings

- Edsall, *Chain Reaction*, chapters 1-9
- Judis and Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, Introduction and chapters 1-4
- Fiorina, "A 50:50 Nation? The Red and the Blue States"
- Gelman et al., *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State*, pp. 3-23

5. America and the World

Class dates

- April 19, 21, 23, 26, 28; May 3, 5
- No class April 30

Exam date

- Wednesday, May 12, 11:00am

Topics

- Is there a cure for poverty?
- Democracy
- When should we intervene?
- How many immigrants should we let in?
- Coming to terms with globalization

Readings

- Collier, *The Bottom Billion*
- Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Introduction and chapters 1, 2, 4, 5 (pp. 111-127), 6
- Just, "The Truth Will Not Set You Free"
- Kristof, "Where Sweatshops Are a Dream"