

Opportunity Politics:

Education, Housing, Credit, and Inequality in Democracies

Research Tutorial

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Course Meetings: [removed]

Office hours: [removed]

Course Description: [removed]

"Equal Opportunity" is an ideal that has broad appeal. If one begins with a belief in human equality and the importance of freedom to pursue one's own idea of the good life, the ideal of all citizens having fair chances to access opportunities seems not just appealing but required for citizens to feel valued in political communities. However, consensus often falls apart when theory meets practice, since interpretations differ on what it means to realize these ideals with limited resources, when opportunity access becomes competitive, and if policy is constrained by political, social, and economic legacies from history.

Difficult questions arise when "Equal Opportunity" is interrogated as more than an agreeable but empty slogan. For example, is "Equal Opportunity" just one value among many, or should it take priority over other political goals? Describing, analyzing, and interpreting how such questions are resolved in democracies through political contests over policy details is fundamental to understanding contemporary politics in democracies like the United States. This course seeks to understand these "Opportunity Politics" by examining the politics of public policy in three interacting "arenas" that mediate access to opportunity: education, housing, and credit systems.

Consider American Politics as an example: in the U.S., students are assigned to schools funded by local taxes based on where they live. To get a house in a specific school assignment zone, a family needs to obtain mortgage credit, often on terms subsidized by the government. Credit in the form of student loans, also often subsidized, can determine who gets access to higher education as well. By the end of this course, students of American Politics will be equipped to understand and analyze how policy in these arenas of education, housing, and credit as well as their interactions can inform the politics of watershed moments in recent American Political History: The New Deal, the Civil Rights Era, the Neo-Liberal turn, the 2008 Financial Crisis, and acrimonious present-day politics.

The course will feature readings from empirical political science but will also draw from allied fields such as political theory & philosophy, sociology, economics, and history. Within political science, the course will lead with a "comparative" perspective, understanding "Opportunity Politics" within and across countries to establish and test both insights specific to each country and those that generalize across countries. The syllabus will primarily explore cases from within relatively "rich"

liberal democracies of the "Global North" (e.g East Asia, North America, and Europe) but we will also explore implications for "Opportunity Politics" in the "Global South" by the end of the course.

Students interested in all aspects of Political Science as a field of study may find the course rewarding. Students interested in American Politics will find that the U.S. is a key comparative case for opportunity politics, as the example suggests. Students interested in International Relations can explore how features of the international trade, finance, and immigration systems, determined by the distribution of power *across* states, in turn shape opportunity politics *within* national country contexts. Finally, students interested in political theory will find that better understanding "Opportunity Politics" in practice can inform our understandings of how and whether "Equality of Opportunity" has and ought to be realized as an ideal in democratic politics. In short, this class not only accepts but values and elevates eclecticism in subjects, styles, and methodologies within our broad field.

This course will start without expectations of prior background and develop students' understandings of political science (or political theory) as an approach to social inquiry, through studying the democratic politics of opportunity. By the end of the course, students will have learned not only facts about how opportunity is distributed within and across countries by social, economic, and political institutions, but also develop familiarity with an analytical approach to politics valuable for future research-oriented work. The default track for the course will focus on developing students' general skills as empirical political scientists regardless of subfield and methodological interests through a common "Skills Syllabus", designed to mesh well with the substantive reading on "Opportunity Politics" for any given week. An optional alternative track focused on developing students' skills as political theorists will also be available for interested and motivated enrollees.

Course Meetings:

[removed]

Office hours:

[removed]

Written Assignments:

1. **Readings and Discussion Posts:** [removed]
2. **Writing as a Social Scientist:** In this course, students will learn how to write like a social scientist, which is an essential part of social science research. To that end, students will write a series of short papers that will accumulate toward a work product central to social science: a research paper. The purpose of the assignments is to make you a skilled consumer of social science claims and evidence and to prepare you to undertake more social science research. Writing these papers is an interactive process and you will meet with your instructor throughout the process.

For the research prospectus, you will compose a research question that speaks to a topic covered in the course. You will then draw on literature from the course, in addition to literature from outside the course, to consider possible answers to your question. You will propose data sources and analysis to answer your question. Qualitative or quantitative research proposals are permitted.

- a. Pre-Prospectus/Literature Review: The pre-prospectus paper will propose a research question and review the literature related to that question. It will allow you to make a first attempt at writing a compelling introduction and will provide practice with tying a specific research question to a broader theory in the surrounding social science literature. In the pre-prospectus, you will also build from the literature to articulate preliminary hypotheses about the answer to your research question. The pre-prospectus will be 4 to 5 pages in length. You will meet with your Teaching Fellow at some point in this process, before the due date of the pre-prospectus. You will upload the completed assignment by **2/27/2024 at 11:59 PM**.
- b. Analysis Reflection Paper: The analysis reflection paper will allow you to explore the strengths and drawbacks of various methodological approaches to answering your proposed research question. In the reflection paper, you will propose **two** potential methodological approaches to answering your research question. You will identify potential data sources and describe preliminary plans for using them to generate evidence for your hypotheses. You will then discuss the limitations of each approach. This assignment will be 3 to 4 pages in length. You will upload the completed assignment by **3/26/2024 at 11:59 PM**.
- c. Prospectus: The prospectus will be 6 to 7 pages, and will lay out your research question, review the relevant literature, describe your planned methodology to answer the question, and address any limitations with this methodology. You will essentially combine an edited version of the pre-prospectus and a portion of the analysis reflection paper to generate the prospectus. The prospectus will allow you to refine your presentation of the research question and literature review based on your TF's feedback and your growing knowledge of the topic. You will also propose a refined version of *one* of the methodological approaches described in your analysis reflection paper and broaden your discussion of the limitations of your chosen methodology. You will meet with your Teaching Fellow at some point in this process, before the due date of the prospectus. You will upload the completed assignment by **4/30/2024 at 11:59 PM**.

Assignment Due Dates and Contribution to Final Grade:

Assignment	Percent of Final Grade	Due Date
1. Class Participation	35%	
1.1 Discussion Section Participation	15%	
1.2 Reading Discussion Posts	15%	
1.3 Skill-Building Activities	5%	
2. Written Assignments	65%	
2.1 Pre-Prospectus	15%	2/27/2024
2.2 Analysis Reflection Paper	15%	3/26/2024
2.3 Prospectus	35%	4/30/2024

Course Policies

Grading: Assignments are to be submitted via Canvas at the times noted. *To reduce potential bias, assignments are graded using a standardized rubric.*

Choice of Track: This course will allow students to choose between two tracks: empirical political science and political theory. The default content of the section's reading and skills syllabus will be on empirical political science. An alternative track will also be available for those interested in specializing in political theory. Students on this track will have access to the same political theory skills syllabus course materials as are made available for students in other research tutorials focused solely on political theory. Student who choose this track are expected to read any *Theory Supplement* readings on the syllabus, but for each theory reading required in a week they may choose one of the main readings to only read the introduction for. Students on the Theory track will submit assignments matching the Theory skills syllabus materials.

Students who want to follow the political theory track are required to notify me **by the end of Week 3** and to schedule a brief chat in office hours to discuss. **Any student who doesn't opt in to the theory track by notifying me will be on the default empirical political science track by default, and their course work will be evaluated accordingly.** Note that following the theory track may involve additional time investment outside of class sessions (e.g. meeting in office hours to discuss alternative assignment expectations).

Skills Materials: Skills Materials, listed/linked under the "Goals" section for each week, are content for the course common across tutorials. The purpose of this material is to provide adequate scaffolding ahead of later assignments in this course and to fulfill the course's objective to prepare you for future research-oriented coursework. As such, they are just as important as the substantive reading specific to this seminar. Students are asked to review and complete any interactive content associated with this material *ahead of class session* unless otherwise noted, since class discussion will build upon it. Links to additional skills materials specific to political theory track students will be listed under the "Theory Supplements" section.

Supplemental Readings/Material: With the exception of Theory Supplements for students who select into the political theory track as noted above, supplemental materials are *optional*. However, this also means that supplemental materials should not be taken to substitute for the core assigned readings for the week. Reading the Abstract or Introduction of the Theory Supplement readings is recommended to facilitate conversation in class across tracks for all students, but not required.

[remaining content on detailed course policies removed]

Week 1: Introduction: Equal Opportunity to...What?

Goals:

The discussion questions and readings below demonstrate how *concepts* like “opportunity” and “equality” are subject to interpretation. Students will learn how political scientists or theorists define *concepts*, and how they might be used differently than in everyday discourse. Course expectations will be reviewed, and students will begin to explore what makes political science and the topic of “opportunity politics” distinct, as well as what distinguishes political theory as a subfield.

Discussion Prompts:

What does “Opportunity” mean for you? For most people in your political community? Is achieving “Equality of Opportunity” desirable? Is achieving “Equal Outcomes” to some degree necessary to achieve “Equality of Opportunity” – or should we distinguish between the concepts of Equal Opportunity and Equal Outcomes? Can one person’s “opportunity” conflict with another’s? What is the relationship of class and race to opportunity? Are violations of equal opportunity or norms of meritocracy more urgent issues for contemporary democracies like the U.S. from your perspective?

Skills Materials:

- [“Defining the Discipline”](#) (Gov Writes)
- “How to Read Political Science Articles” (Handout)

Reading:

- 1) Reeves, Richard. *Dream hoarders: How the American upper middle class is leaving everyone else in the dust, why that is a problem, and what to do about it*. Brookings Institution Press, 2018. **Ch. 1**
- 2) Cashin, Sheryll. *White space, black hood: Opportunity hoarding and segregation in the age of inequality*. Beacon Press, 2021. **Ch. 5** “Opportunity Hoarding”
- 3) Fishkin, Joseph. *Bottlenecks: A new theory of equal opportunity*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2014. Introduction (p. 1-14)

Multimedia Supplement: “Education, Elitism, Economic Opportunity:” Raj Chetty, Michael Sandel, Dani Rodrik

Week 2: Sources of Opportunity, Sites of Inequality: Education, Housing, and Credit Access

Goals:

We will use “Annual Reviews”, broad surveys of academic research, to explore what kind of questions social scientists ask and try to get answers about. Students will get a big picture idea of what social scientists have learned about the politics of education, housing, and credit access. Skills-wise, students will be able to identify the characteristics of research questions, explain what distinguishes normative from empirical research questions, and causal from descriptive research questions, as well as to identify what “independent” and “dependent” variables are.

Discussion Prompts:

How do education, housing, and credit systems shape access to opportunity? How do these systems differ across countries? Do you think they are all equally important for opportunity in all countries? What kind of questions are still left unanswered about the politics of these different areas based on your impressions from the readings? What distinguishes political science from other social science disciplines? What kind of research questions are characteristic of political science?

Skills Materials:

- [“Posing a Question”](#) (Gov Writes)
- "Normative and Positive Political Science" (Handout)

Reading:

- 1) Gift, Thomas, and Erik Wibbels. 2014. “Reading, Writing, and the Regrettable Status of Education Research in Comparative Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 17 (1): 291–312. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-080911-131426>.
- 2) Ansell, Ben W. 2019. “The Politics of Housing.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (1): 165–85. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-050317-071146>.
- 3) Dwyer, Rachel E. 2018. “Credit, Debt, and Inequality.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 44 (1): 237–61. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-060116-053420>.

Multimedia Supplement: “The Opportunity Atlas” <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>

Political Theory Supplement:

- Wolff, Jonathan. 2011. “Equality.” In George Klosko ed. *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*. Oxford ; New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press.

Week 3: Policy Spillover Arguments: How the Arenas of Opportunity Politics Interact

Goals:

We will familiarize ourselves with primary political science research to examine “spillovers” across policy arenas. Students will get to see how academic books and journal articles present social science research differently. Along the way, students will learn to identify what “theories” social scientists put forward to test, how they frame these in terms of existing scholarship, and begin to develop their own “theories” of opportunity politics in preparation for later course assignments.

Discussion Prompts:

How might education, housing, and credit systems relate to each other to determine access to opportunity? Are they connected in the same way across countries, and over time? How might the outcomes of politics in one of these policy areas influence the politics of opportunity access in others?

Skills Materials:

- Developing an Argument (Gov Writes)
- Arguments in Political Theory (Handout)

Reading:

- 1) Cashin, Sheryll. *White space, black hood: Opportunity hoarding and segregation in the age of inequality*. Beacon Press, 2021. Ch. 6-7
- 2) Gingrich, Jane, and Ben Ansell. 2014. “Sorting for Schools: Housing, Education and Inequality.” *Socio-Economic Review* 12 (2): 329–51.
- 3) Iversen, Torben, and Philipp Rehm. 2022. “Information and Financialization: Credit Markets as a New Source of Inequality.” *Comparative Political Studies* 55 (14): 2349–81.

Multimedia Supplement: “The Social Capital Atlas” <https://socialcapital.org/>

Political Theory Supplement:

- Anderson, Elizabeth. 2010. *The Imperative of Integration*. Course Book. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. **Ch 1,2,6**

Week 4: Staking a Claim: Theories of Opportunity and Welfare Across Policy Arenas:

Goals:

Students will read the theory and literature review sections of book projects on opportunity politics in different policy arenas, to gain a sense of how scholarly research builds on existing work while advancing new theories. Students will begin to workshop their own “theories” of opportunity politics in discussion and explore how these might fit into existing literature to prepare for the upcoming literature review assignment.

Discussion Prompts:

How have social scientific understandings of education, housing, and credit politics changed over time? Within each topic, where are the lines of debate and where do political scientists disagree? Which theories that you read that seem compatible, and which seem potentially contradictory? Do you have sympathy for some theories over others? Why?

Skills Materials:

- [“Reviewing the Literature”](#) (Gov Writes) [*Political Science & Political Theory* versions]
- [“Citation and Plagiarism”](#) (Gov Writes)

Political Science Only:

- Using Lit Reviews to Build Hypotheses (Handout)

Reading:

- 1) Ansell, Ben W. *From the ballot to the blackboard: The redistributive political economy of education*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. **Ch. 1** “The Redistributive Political Economy of Education”
- 2) Trounstein, Jessica. 2018. *Segregation by Design : Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **Ch 2.** “A Theory of Segregation by Design”
- 3) Wiedemann, Andreas. *Indebted societies: Credit and welfare in rich democracies*. Cambridge University Press, 2021. **Ch 2.** “A Social Policy Theory of Everyday Borrowing”.

Multimedia Supplement: “College Mobility” <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility>

Political Theory Supplement:

- Fishkin, Joseph. *Bottlenecks: A new theory of equal opportunity*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2014. Ch 1 “Equal Opportunity and its Problems” (p. 24-64)

Week 5: Opting out: Private Alternatives to Public Goods as “Opportunity Hoarding”?

Goals: Familiarize yourself with the distinct concepts of "private" and "public" service provision. Learn to pay attention to the nuance of related but distinct concepts in Political Science, and how these might change how to interpret arguments in relation to each other and to your own argument for the purposes of a literature review. Identify how to make introductions more effective.

Discussion Prompts: What effects do private alternatives to publicly provided goods and services have on political support for public provision? What effects do publicly provided goods and services have on economic demand for private alternatives? What distinguishes Thurston’s concept of public-private policy from either public or private provision? What arguments might other authors make about the persistence of what Thurston calls “Race-class subjugated communities”? Do you think these explanations might complement each other, or do you they are competing theories? How does style presentation differ in the introductions of the journal articles by Trounstein and Wiedemann differ from the previous Book versions of the theory you read?

Skills Materials:

- [“Writing an Introduction”](#) (Gov Writes)

Optional Supplement:

- “Three Templates for Introductions to Political Science Articles” (Little 2016)
- “Doing a Literature Review”, Knopf (Handout)

Reading:

- 1) Busemeyer, Marius R., and Torben Iversen. 2014. “The Politics of Opting Out: Explaining Educational Financing and Popular Support for Public Spending.” *Socio-Economic Review* 12 (2): 299–328.
- 2) Freemark, Yonah, Justin Steil, and Kathleen Thelen. 2020. “Varieties of Urbanism: A Comparative View of Inequality and the Dual Dimensions of Metropolitan Fragmentation.” *Politics & Society* 48 (2): 235–74.
- 3) Thurston, Chloe. “Racial inequality, market inequality, and the American political economy.” *The American Political Economy: Politics, Markets, and Power* 133 (2021).
- 4) Trounstein, Jessica. 2020. “The Geography of Inequality: How Land Use Regulation Produces Segregation.” *The American Political Science Review* 114 (2): 443–55.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055419000844>. **(Introduction Only)**
- 5) Wiedemann, Andreas. 2023. “A Social Policy Theory of Everyday Borrowing: On the Role of Welfare States and Credit Regimes.” *American Journal of Political Science* 67 (2): 324–41.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12632>. **(Introduction Only)**

Multimedia Supplement: [Public vs. Private Goods](#)

Political Theory Supplement:

- Gourevitch, Alex. “Debt, freedom, and inequality.” *Philosophical Topics* (2012):
- Shelby, Tommie. 2014. “Integration, Inequality, and Imperatives of Justice: A Review Essay.” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 42 (3): 253–85. **(Introduction Only)**
- Brighouse, Harry, and Adam Swift. [“Educational equality versus educational adequacy: A critique of Anderson and Satz.”](#) *Journal of applied philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2009): 117-128. **(Introduction Only)**

Week 6: Opportunity Politics Empirical Case Study: US Home Mortgage Credit:

Goals: Understand differences between quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as the types of arguments they may be useful for supporting. Determine which type of data may be appropriate for which types of research questions.

Theory only: Compare methods based on interpretations of historical political thought, and methods based on analytical political philosophy, as well as in what way either or both approaches can engage with real world descriptive or causal observations.

Discussion Prompt: What types of insights can Thurston's mode of research offer, and how does this map to the kind of research question Thurston is asking? Conversely, what kind of insights can quantitative methods offer us and how does this map to Mian et al's question/methods? Do the two readings lend themselves to combined insights on the causes of the US Financial Crisis of 2008?

Theory only: Compare and contrast the Gourevitch reading from last week with the Avramenko and Boyd reading this week: would these authors disagree on the best normative interpretation of the US Subprime Mortgage Crisis? Does this reflect different methods, different normative commitments, or different understandings of empirical reality? Does the approach of either or both fit Wolff's framework of "Engaged" normative theory?

Skills Materials:

Political Science Only:

- [Tying in Evidence](#) (Gov Writes)
- Qualitative and Quantitative Research (Handout)
- Using Evidence (Handout)

Political Theory Only:

- "The Vocation of Political Theory" (Excerpt, Stears 2005)
- "Political Theory, Social Science, and Real Politics (Excerpt, Swift and White 2008)
- "The Scope of Political Theory" (Excerpt, List and Valentini 2016)
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Reading:

- 1) Mahoney, James, and Gary Goertz. 2006. "A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research." *Political Analysis* 14 (3): 227–49. [**Read Introduction and Conclusion, Skim the Rest**]
- 2) Thurston, Chloe N. 2018. *At the Boundaries of Homeownership : Credit, Discrimination, and the American State*. Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, Ny: Cambridge University Press. **Ch. 1**
- 3) Mian, Atif, Amir Sufi, and Francesco Trebbi. 2010. "The Political Economy of the US Mortgage Default Crisis." *The American Economic Review* 100 (5): 1967–98.

Multimedia Supplement: [The 2008 Financial Crisis - 5 Minute History Lesson](#)

Political Theory Supplement:

- Wolff, Jonathan. "Method in philosophy and public policy: Applied philosophy versus engaged philosophy." In *The Routledge handbook of ethics and public policy*, pp. 13-24. Routledge, 2018. [**Instead of Mahoney and Goertz**]
- Avramenko, Richard, and Richard Boyd. "Subprime virtues: The moral dimensions of American housing and mortgage policy." *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 1 (2013): 111-131 [**Instead of Mian et al**]

Week 7: Why Differences in Opportunity Politics? Interests, Institutions, Parties, History

Goals: We examine examples of “mixed methods” research on opportunity politics. Learn how different research methods are justified based on the research questions being asked, and the conclusions one can draw from different methods. Learn in more detail what we mean by a “concept” and what it means to *operationalize* a concept. Identify how researchers *operationalize* concepts that are critical to their question and arguments. Be able to discuss whether these authors’ methods are quantitative, qualitative or some mix, using the paradigm we encountered last week.

Theory only: This week familiarizes you with History of Political Thought as a field. Consider how contemporary debates are embedded in a historical dialogue over political values. Note how this may lend itself to “historicizing” John Rawls as a thinker and placing him within a canon, even though many in the analytical tradition still engage with his theories as contemporary. Learn how concepts are deployed in Political Theory and familiarize yourself with historians of political thought in our department.

Discussion Prompts: What role does public opinion play in explaining differences in opportunity politics across countries? What about political parties, interest groups, inherited institutions, and ideas? Do the authors’ explanations generalize outside of Western Europe where they mostly focus, or do they not and why? Next How are each of the authors using quantitative and qualitative methods? How do these connect with the research question they are asking? Could you imagine the authors using a different methodological approach to address the same question, or to ask a different question about the same puzzle that is better suited to different methods? How do the authors take abstract *concepts* and make them measurable?

Theory only: How do thinkers across the history of political thought differ in using the concept of “Equality”? Using Valentini and List’s characteristics of concepts, why might this be? How are concepts in the History of Political Thought similar or different to those used in political science? Do Rawls and Nozick’s disagreements arise from different conceptions of equality, or how they judge the relevance of equality with respect to other politically normative values? In any case, why do their views differ? How might Forrester and/or Nelson answer these questions?

Skills Materials:

Political Science Only:

- “What is Scientific about Political Science” (Excerpt, Writing Center at UNC Chapel Hill)
- [Skim after Busemeyer et al] Online Appendix for *A Loud but Noisy Signal?*
- [Skim after Busemeyer et al] Codebook INVEDUC

Political Theory Only:

- “Concepts in Political Theory” (Excerpt, List and Valentini 2016)
- “Political Theory and History (Excerpt, Philp 2008)
- *Optional, HPT focus:* “The Detective Analogy” (Excerpt, Blau 2015)
- *Optional, HPT focus:* “Esotericism and Rhetoric”(Excerpt on Strauss & Skinner, Ward 2009)

Readings:

- 1) Busemeyer, Marius R., Julian L. Garritzmann, and Erik Neimanns. *A loud but noisy signal?: Public opinion and education reform in Western Europe*. Cambridge University Press, 2020. [Ch 1-2; Part 1: “Quantitative Evidence” and Part 2: “Qualitative Evidence” Intros]
- 2) Giudici, Anja, Jane Gingrich, Tom Chevalier, and Matthias Haslberger. 2023. “Center-Right Parties and Post-War Secondary Education.” *Comparative Politics* 55 (2): 193–218.
- 3) Kohl, Sebastian. 2020. “The Political Economy of Homeownership: a Comparative Analysis

of Homeownership Ideology through Party Manifestos.” *Socio-Economic Review* 18 (4): 913–40.

Multimedia Supplement: [The Great Gatsby Curve: Income Immobility vs Income Inequality](#)

Political Theory Supplement:

- [“Rawls vs Nozick” \(Excerpt, Magee interviews Dworkin on Philosophy and Politics\)](#)
- Forrester, Katrina. 2019. “The New Egalitarians.” In *In the Shadow of Justice*, 104–39. United States: Princeton University Press.

Optional (HPT focus), Substitute for either/ both additional empirical reading:

- Nelson, Eric. 2019. “The Bargain Basis: Rawls, Anti-Pelagianism, and Moral Arbitrariness.” In *The Theology of Liberalism*, 49. United States: Harvard University Press.

Week 8: Education, Housing, Credit, and Political Opportunity: Representation and Power

Goals: Explore how opportunity politics in the policy areas we have examined may intersect with opportunity for political representation. Learn about the concept of *internal validity*. Learn about what concerns about internal validity may accompany different modes of analysis (quantitative vs qualitative) and different types of data. [Theory: Same as above, but learn about the concept of “internal critique” of a normative argument and concerns about validity that may accompany different types of normative argument.]

Discussion Prompts: What relationship does opportunity in education, housing, and credit have with opportunity to participate effectively in politics? In turn, how can political opportunity affect opportunity in each of the policy areas we study? Regarding criteria of internal validity, are there any concerns you have about whether the authors have successfully defended their argument with the evidence they bring to bear? What connection does your view have to the research question the author is trying to answer, and the choice of data they use to try to answer it? [Theory: Same as above but applied to “internal” criteria of critiquing the validity of normative arguments, and connection to authors’ mode of argument].

Skills Materials:

Political Science Only:

- Internal Validity and Data Problems (Handout)
- [Skim after Schakel and Van der Pas] Supplementary Appendix for “Degrees of Influence”
- [Skim after Thurston] Thurston Appendix: Archival Sources and Congressional Hearings

Political Theory Only:

- “Principles, Theories, Internal Criteria of Assessment” (Excerpt, List and Valentini 2016)
- *Normative*: “Modes of Argument, Internal Criticism” (Handout, Courtesy of Beerbohm)
- *HPT*: “Uncertainty, Underdetermination, Falsification” (Excerpt, Blau 2015)

Readings:

- 1) Schakel, Wouter, and Daphne Van Der Pas. 2021. “Degrees of Influence: Educational Inequality in Policy Representation.” *European Journal of Political Research* 60 (2): 418–37.
- 2) Einstein, Katherine Levine, David M. Glick, and Maxwell Palmer. 2020. “Neighborhood Defenders: Participatory Politics and America's Housing Crisis.” *Political Science Quarterly* 135 (2): 281–312
- 3) Thurston, Chloe N. 2018. *At the Boundaries of Homeownership : Credit, Discrimination, and the American State*. Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, Ny: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 3-4

Multimedia Supplement:

Biden State of the Union on Housing, Education, Credit, and Fairness [53:55-1:07:42]

The decline of American democracy in one graph - Vox

Political Theory Supplement:

- Young, Iris Marion. 2002. *Inclusion and Democracy*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch 1, 4

Optional (Normative focus), Substitute for one additional empirical reading:

- Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent “Yes”.” *The Journal of Politics* 61 (3): 628–57.

Week 9: Opportunity Politics in the Global South – Case Studies from Latin America

Goals: Learn the concept of *external validity* (aka *generalizability*). Be able to distinguish “internal” and “external” validity. Understand what kinds of data issues may entail external validity concerns. Understand how “scope conditions” can help to address concerns about generalizability. Through case studies in Latin America, explore differences between opportunity politics in developing democracies and rich Global North liberal democracies. Be able to apply *external validity/generalizability* concepts to the theoretical and empirical insights of this week’s reading vis a vis that of previous weeks.
Theory Only: Same as above but applying “External” criteria of assessing normative arguments.

Discussion Prompts: What political processes determine access to education, housing, and credit in Latin American democracies? Regarding criteria of external validity, what concerns are the authors raising about the generalizability of existing theories, especially those built from cases among rich democracies in the Global North? Are there concerns you have about whether the authors have adequately addressed the generalizability of their own arguments? What connection does your view have to the scope of the question being asked, and the empirical method used to try to answer it?
Theory Only: Same as above, applying criteria of “External” Criticism to Author(s) modes of normative argument.

Skills Materials:

Political Science Only:

- Generalizability/External Validity (Handout)

Political Theory Only:

- “External Criteria, Abstraction, and Idealization” (Excerpt, List and Valentini 2016)
- *Normative:* “External Criticism, Non-Phil Sources” (Handout, Courtesy of Beerbohm)
- HPT: “Testing, Theory, Triangulation” (Excerpt, Blau 2015)

- 1) Schneider, Ben Ross. 2024. *Routes to Reform: Education Politics in Latin America*. Oxford University Press, USA. Ch 1 “Introduction: The Contentious Politics of Education”, Ch 2 “Theorizing on Education Politics: Macro to Micro”
- 2) Holland, Alisha. 2017. *Forbearance as Redistribution : the Politics of Informal Welfare in Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Introduction, Chapter 3 “What Enables Forbearance: Inadequate Social Policy and Squatting”
- 3) Calomiris, Charles W., and Stephen H. Haber. 2015. *Fragile by design: The political origins of banking crises and scarce credit*. Princeton University Press, 2015. Ch 2, 11, 13.

Multimedia Supplement: Harvard Growth Lab: Country Profiles

(<https://atlas.cid.harvard.edu/countries/138>)

Political Theory Supplement:

- Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Knopf. Ch. 5 “Markets, State and Social Opportunity”.

Week 10: Migration and Opportunity Politics: Distinguishing Correlation from Causation

Goals: Learn the concept of *causality* in social science, by distinguishing it from *correlation*. Learn about the “fundamental problem of causal inference”. Understand the concepts of “control” variables and “confounder” variables. Explore *randomization* in experimental or quasi-experimental settings as an approach to achieve causal inference. Substantively, explore the relationship between migration and opportunity, examining actors in multiple positions: migrants in “origin” countries, non-migrants in “receiving” countries, and immigrants navigating opportunity access in destination countries. Examine threats to “causal inference” in studies on migration and opportunity in this week’s readings.

Theory only: In addition to a high-level understanding of ‘causality’ and how it can play a role in positive premises to normative arguments, understand how counterarguments, like threats to causal inference, can raise concerns about the validity of normative argument, and about strategies to address the concerns that potential counterarguments raise.

Discussion Prompts: How does opportunity influence the decision to migrate? How does migration influence opportunities in receiving countries? How do immigrants navigate access to opportunity in destination countries? How might the answers to these questions depend upon institutions or other contextual factors? How can we distinguish between correlations and causations in answering these questions? In what sense can unaccounted for contextual factors act as “confounders” that threaten causal inference? What are different methodological approaches to the problem of “confounders”?

Theory only: What kinds of positive and normative premises can help to ground a normative argument for a right to migration? Likewise, which such premises can ground a right to community self-determination to control immigration against a right to migration? What are possible counterarguments to that question underlying premises in each case?

Skills Materials:

Political Science Only:

- Causality (Handout)
- Causality (In-Class Handout)

Political Theory Only:

- Disagreement in Political Theory (Excerpt, List and Valentini 2016)
- Counterarguments in Political Theory (Handout)

Readings:

- 1) Holland, Alisha C., and Margaret E. Peters. 2020. “Explaining Migration Timing: Political Information and Opportunities.” *International Organization* 74 (3): 560–83.
- 2) Burgoon, Brian. 2014. “Immigration, Integration, and Support for Redistribution in Europe.” *World Politics* 66 (3): 365–405.
- 3) Michael Jones-Correa. 2008. “Race to the Top?: The Politics of Immigrant Education in Suburbia.” In *New Faces in New Places*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Multimedia Supplement: Chinese migrants are fastest growing group crossing into U.S. from Mexico | 60 Minutes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7TNP2OTY2g>)

Political Theory Supplement:

- Song, Sarah. "Justice, Collective Self - Determination, and the Ethics of Immigration Control." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 40, no. 1 (2023): 26-34.

Week 11: Opportunity and Explanations for Populism: Economic, Cultural, or What?

Goals: In light of the previous weeks' content on operationalization, internal validity, external validity, and establishing causality, revisit the comparative strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Learn about how these approaches can complement each other, either across studies in a literature or within studies (i.e. mixed-methods approaches). Explore theories that explain contemporary populism in rich democracies. Distinguish between economic and cultural explanations for populism, and learn about how alternative theories can transcend these dichotomies.

Theory only: In addition to the above, explore the ways in which normative arguments may or may not be "sensitive" or "dependent" on empirical facts about the world in further detail, using the example of Sandel's argument on Populism.

Discussion Prompts: What are some theories for why populism has increased in rich democracies? What role does opportunity access have in these theories, and specifically what role education, housing, and credit policy play? Are economic or cultural explanations for populism competing or are they complementary? Which explanations for populism do you find most convincing? Which empirical approaches to studying populism in this week's readings did you find most convincing? Can readings from this week be synthesized theoretically, such that the empirical approaches complement each other, or are the theories of populism from the readings irreconcilable and competing? Do the readings differ in the extent to which opportunity helps to explain populism? If so, why?

Theory only: What types of empirical facts about the world does Sandel's normative argument rely on? Which parts of the argument are "fact-insensitive" vs "fact-dependent"? How do this week's empirical readings speak to the plausibility of the parts of Sandel's normative argument that are "fact-dependent"?

Skills Materials:

Political Science Only:

- Quantitative Analysis (GovWrites)
- Qualitative Analysis (GovWrites)

Political Theory Only:

- Zotero Practice (Handout)

Readings:

- 1) Gidron, Noam, and Peter A. Hall. 2020. "Populism as a Problem of Social Integration." *Comparative Political Studies* 53 (7): 1027–59.
- 2) Iversen, Torben, and David Soskice. 2019. *Democracy and Prosperity: Reinventing Capitalism through a Turbulent Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Ch 4 "Knowledge Economies and their Political Construction" (4.1, 4.5-4.8 only). Ch. 5 "The Politics of the Knowledge Economy and the Rise of Populism"
- 3) Ternullo, Stephanie. 2024. *How the Heartland Went Red: Why Local Forces Matter in an Age of Nationalized Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Introduction, Ch. 5 "Politics in a Dying Place"

Multimedia Supplement: How Could Trump and Brexit happen? Understanding the roots of populism - Peter Hall on Social Europe Podcast

Political Theory Supplement:

- Sandel, Michael J. 2020. *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* Ch. 7 "Recognizing Work"

Week 12: Gender and Opportunity Politics: Do Breadwinner-Model Theories Generalize?

Goals: Revisit the concept of *external validity* (aka *generalizability*). Be able to distinguish “internal” and “external” validity. Understand what kinds of data issues may entail *external validity* concerns. Understand how *scope conditions* can help address concerns about generalizability explicitly. Substantively, explore how gender inequality intersects with the various domains of Opportunity Politics previously explored in this class. Then, be able to apply *external validity/generalizability* concepts to the theoretical and empirical insights of the reading vis a vis existing, “male-breadwinner” focused scholarship. [*Political Theory: Same as above but applying criteria of “External” Criticism of normative arguments.*]

Discussion Prompts: What relationship does opportunity in education, housing, and credit have with gender inequality? Regarding criteria of external validity, what concerns are the authors raising about the generalizability of both existing theories of gender inequality and theories of opportunity that abstract from gender? Are there any concerns you have about whether the authors themselves have adequately addressed the generalizability of their arguments? What connection does your view have to the scope of the question being asked, and the empirical method used to try to answer it? [*Political Theory: Same as above, applying criteria of “External” Criticism to Author(s) modes of normative argument.*]

Readings:

- 1) Iversen, Torben., and Frances McCall Rosenbluth. 2010. *Women, Work, and Politics : the Political Economy of Gender Inequality*. New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press. **Ch 1,2,7.**
- 2) Gingrich, Jane, and Alexander Kuo. 2022. “Gender, Technological Risk, and Political Preferences.” In *Digitalization and the Welfare State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 3) Thurston, Chloe N. 2018. *At the Boundaries of Homeownership : Credit, Discrimination, and the American State*. Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, Ny: Cambridge University Press. **Ch. 5-6**

Multimedia Supplement: “[Gender equality: Japan lagging behind other developed nations](#)”
(Source: France 24.)

Political Theory Supplement:

- Fraser, Nancy. 2013. *Fortunes of Feminism : from State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*. 1st edition. Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books. **Ch 4** (“After the Family Wage: A Postindustrial Thought Experiment”), **Ch 6**. (“Feminist Politics in the Age of Recognition: A Two-Dimensional Approach to Gender Justice”)

Week 13: Technological Change, Opportunity, and the Future of Democratic Capitalism

Discussion Prompts: Take time to reflect on the course's theme of "opportunity" politics. Can democratic institutions secure equal opportunity, have they historically, and could they in the future? Why or why not? Can opportunity gaps threaten democracy? What are some overall takeaways from the course? Does the course leave you optimistic or pessimistic about contemporary liberal democratic capitalism? What kind of policy recommendations would you make based on the social scientific findings we have encountered in the course? Why? Where do you think there are gaps in social scientific knowledge that new research --e.g. proposed in your prospectus -- can address, including for the purposes of developing concrete policy recommendations to redress opportunity gaps?

Skills Materials:

- Writing a Conclusion (GovWrites)
- Caltech Rules for Writing Papers: How to Structure your Paper and Write and Introduction (Weingast 2010)

Readings:

- 1) Hall, Peter A. 2022. "The Shifting Relationship Between Post-War Capitalism and Democracy (The Government and Opposition/Leonard Schapiro Lecture, 2021)." *Government and Opposition* (London) 57 (1): 1–30.
- 2) Iversen, Torben, and David Soskice. *Democracy and prosperity: Reinventing capitalism through a turbulent century*. Princeton University Press, 2020. **Ch. 6 "Conclusion: The Future of Advanced Capitalist Democracies"**
- 3) Thelen, Kathleen. 2019. "The American Precariat: U.S. Capitalism in Comparative Perspective." *Perspectives on Politics* 17 (1): 5–27.
- 4) Iversen, Torben, Philipp Rehm, and Cambridge University Press. 2022. *Big Data and the Welfare State : How the Information Revolution Threatens Social Solidarity*. Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. **Ch 7. Conclusion.**
- 5) Fishkin, Joseph. *Bottlenecks: A new theory of equal opportunity*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2014. **Conclusion**

Multimedia Supplement: "Starr Forum: Power and Progress: Our Thousand-Year Struggle Over Technology and Prosperity" – Daron Acemoglu lecture
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X34OvIpdvjA>