

# Topics in Comparative Politics III:

## *American Political Economy*

Winter 2021  
Political Science 379/American Studies 312  
Mondays 10:00 – 12:00 p.m.  
BL325

Professor Nicole Wu  
3035 Sidney Smith Hall  
[nicolek.wu@utoronto.ca](mailto:nicolek.wu@utoronto.ca)

Office hours: Mondays 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. and by appointment (best to email)

This course surveys key issues and topics in American political economy. It analyses how firms, interest groups, voters, political parties, and electoral institutions shape important policy outcomes. It also helps students make sense of contemporary issues such as deindustrialization, rural resentment, the backlash against globalization, and increasing political polarization.

### Course requirements

25% of your course grade will be based on short weekly quizzes starting week 4 (approximately 10 minutes each). The quizzes are meant to test if you understand the main argument of the readings and not their details. These should be very straightforward if you've done the readings. I will drop your 3 lowest scores.

60% of your course grade will jointly come from your take-home midterm (35%) and final (25%) examinations.

Finally, a short essay will constitute 15% of your grade. This essay should be roughly 500-600 words. This assignment requires that you (1) attend a US-related public event on campus (in-person or remotely) or watch a documentary (from a list) (2) write a paper summarizing key arguments, relating it to the course and/or reflecting on the key takeaways of the presentation or documentary.

### Readings

Textbook: Hacker, Jacob S., Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Paul Pierson, and Kathleen Thelen, eds. *The American Political Economy: Politics, Markets, and Power*. Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Other readings will be made available on Quercus or through the University Library.

### Documentary list (choose any one)

- American Factory (requires Netflix subscription)
- America's Great Divide (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5vyDPN19ww>)

- The Healthcare Divide (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVvEkeH4O8o>)
- Trump's Trade War ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4\\_xQ5JisFuo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_xQ5JisFuo))
- Money, Power, and Wall Street (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-Q9AOp2FW8>)
- American Insurrection ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcGi4maiJW8&list=PL\\_pPc6-qR9ZyNGtWHN2RG6z6oGF8QsnPD&index=7](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcGi4maiJW8&list=PL_pPc6-qR9ZyNGtWHN2RG6z6oGF8QsnPD&index=7))
- Amazon Empire (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVVfJVj5z8s>)

### **Event list (to be announced)**

- Subject to change due to COVID

### **COVID-19 etiquette and safety measures**

According to [U of T policy](#), face masks have to be worn in indoor spaces on campus. If you refuse to do so, you will be asked to leave for the protection of you and others. Absences due to illness or quarantine/self-isolation restrictions will not be penalized.

### **Inclusion and special accommodation**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach Accessibility Services ([accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca)) and/or me as soon as possible. Developed jointly by you and your accessibility advisor, a letter of accommodation maintains confidentiality about the nature of your disability but informs me about relevant accommodations needed to help you be successful in the course.

### **Religious observances**

Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during the academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please contact me to discuss appropriate arrangements.

### **Academic integrity**

The University treats cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments to the University's plagiarism detection tool website for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their material to be included as source documents in the University's plagiarism detection tool reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the University's plagiarism detection tool service are described on the company web site.

### **Copyright and privacy in instructional settings**

If students wish to audio record, video record, photograph, or otherwise reproduce lectures, course notes or other similar materials provided by instructors, they must obtain the instructor's written consent beforehand. Otherwise, all such reproduction is an infringement of copyright and is prohibited. In the case of private use by students with accommodation needs, they must have registered for the accommodation through AccServ.

## Reading list

Week 1: Overview (Jan 10)

- Hacker, Jacob S., Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Paul Pierson, and Kathleen Thelen, eds. *The American Political Economy: Politics, Markets, and Power*. Cambridge University Press, 2021. Introduction.
- Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson. "Winner-take-all politics: Public policy, political organization, and the precipitous rise of top incomes in the United States." *Politics & Society* 38, no. 2 (2010): 152-204.

### I. Political arenas and actors

Week 2: Institutional hurdles to shared prosperity (Jan 17)

- Hacker, Jacob S., Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Paul Pierson, and Kathleen Thelen, eds. *The American Political Economy: Politics, Markets, and Power*. Cambridge University Press, 2021. Chapters 1 and 2.

Week 3: How voters reason and what voters know (Jan 24)

- Larry Bartels, "Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind," *Perspectives on Politics* 3 (2005), 16-26.
- Lupia, Arthur. "Shortcuts versus encyclopedias: Information and voting behavior in California insurance reform elections." *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 1 (1994): 63-76.
- Kim, Eunji, Entertaining Beliefs in Economic Mobility (2021). Conditionally Accepted, *American Journal of Political Science*, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3838127> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3838127>

### II. The Great Risk Shift

Week 4: Risking it all – America in comparative perspective (Jan 31)

- Hacker, Jacob S. *The great risk shift: The new economic insecurity and the decline of the American dream*. Oxford University Press, 2019. Chapters 1, 2, and 5.

Week 5: Organized labor's rise and fall (Feb 7)

- Listen: <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/29/1059910517/the-rise-and-fall-and-rise-of-organized-labor> (9 minutes)

- Ahlquist, John S. "Labor unions, political representation, and economic inequality." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20 (2017): 409-432.
- Brady, David, Regina S. Baker, and Ryan Finnigan. "When unionization disappears: State-level unionization and working poverty in the United States." *American Sociological Review* 78, no. 5 (2013): 872-896.

Week 6: Corporate influence (Feb 14)

- Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson. *Let them eat tweets: How the right rules in an age of extreme inequality*. Liveright Publishing, 2020. Chapter 2.
- Rahman, K. Sabeel, and Kathleen Thelen. "The rise of the platform business model and the transformation of twenty-first-century capitalism." *Politics & Society* 47, no. 2 (2019): 177-204.
- Drutman, Lee. *The Business of America is Lobbying: How Corporations Became Politicized and Politics Became More Corporate*. Oxford University Press, 2015. Chapter 1 or 7, TBD.

Week 7: Reading week (Feb 21)

Week 8: Mid-term exam (questions released on Feb 28 at 12:00 a.m.; due March 1 at 11:59 p.m.)

- No class on Feb 28
- You may pick any 2-hour window to complete exam within those 48 hours
- This is an *individual* assignment, see academic integrity note

III. Space and race

Week 9: Political geography of economic decline (March 7)

- Broz, J. Lawrence, Jeffrey Frieden, and Stephen Weymouth. "Populism in place: the economic geography of the globalization backlash." *International Organization* 75, no. 2 (2021): 464-494.
- Hacker, Jacob S., Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Paul Pierson, and Kathleen Thelen, eds. *The American Political Economy: Politics, Markets, and Power*. Cambridge University Press, 2021. Chapter 7.
- Irwin, Douglas A. *Free trade under fire*. Princeton University Press, 2020. Chapter 3.

Week 10: Inequality in urban America (March 14)

- Hacker, Jacob S., Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Paul Pierson, and Kathleen Thelen, eds. *The American Political Economy: Politics, Markets, and Power*. Cambridge University Press, 2021. Chapters 5 and 6.

Week 11: Rural resentment

- Cramer, Katherine J. *The politics of resentment: Rural consciousness in Wisconsin and the rise of Scott Walker*. University of Chicago Press, 2016. Chapters 3 and 4.

#### IV. Knowledge economy

Week 12: American dynamism – a country of radical innovation?

- Hacker, Jacob S., Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Paul Pierson, and Kathleen Thelen, eds. *The American Political Economy: Politics, Markets, and Power*. Cambridge University Press, 2021. Chapters 11 and 13.

Week 13: Final exam (25%)