

**PUBLIC OPINION & POLICY  
Winter 2019**

**Instructor:** Dr. Michelle L. Dion  
**Lecture:** Mo 19:00 - 22:00 In LRW 5012  
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**Office Hours:** Book a virtual (phone, FaceTime or Skype) or in-office (KTH 533) appointment:

- [online](#)
- in-person (before or after class)

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### **Course Description**

The course provides an exploration of the politics surrounding income inequality and social justice in the developing world. In particular, we will examine the sources of variation in public opinion or attitudes toward equality, fairness, and government redistribution around the globe. We will do this through a combination of reviewing the relevant research and original data analysis of public opinion surveys.

Students will have the opportunity to do original research using survey data and present their findings at the end of the course in a poster session, to which political science faculty and students will be invited. Students' research projects and related assignments will be the primary basis for their evaluation in the course and will provide students a unique opportunity to apply their research skills to a focused research question.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- read and critique research papers that apply regression-based methods to public opinion;
- identify and summarize the literature relevant to answering a research question;
- operationalize key concepts using public opinion surveys;
- estimate and interpret a linear regression model using public opinion survey data; and
- present their research in a scientific poster and short 3-5 minute oral presentation.

### **Required Materials and Texts**

Most of the readings for this course will be available through the library's journal subscriptions, and others will be either posted on Avenue or be freely available on the Internet.

We will be using statistical software to perform data analysis in this course. The software is available in the computer labs in the basement of KTH. For lab locations and hours, see the

[UTS Lab Hours of Operation](#) chart. Alternatively, you have the option of buying for \$45USD a 6 month student license for [STATA/IC software](#) to install on your own computer.

### **Class Format**

Our class will be a mixture of seminar and computer lab sessions.

### **Course Evaluation**

#### **Attendance and participation (10%)**

To get the most out of our class meetings and to be able to participate actively, you must have done the reading and any assigned exercises prior to class and you must attend class regularly. Asking thoughtful or insightful questions is just as important as answering questions posed by others in the class. Participation through Avenue will also count positively toward your participation grade. This includes asking questions and posting answers to others' questions. Absences, tardiness, and mobile phone/internet disruptions will adversely affect participation grades.

#### **Weekly assignments (3.33% each, 20% total)**

Most weeks (except when papers are due) there will be assignments (7 in total). These assignments will range from looking up characteristics of countries, running analyses, explaining findings, to describing ideas from the literature. Many of these assignments are drafts of the analysis or content for either papers or the final poster. Twenty percent of the final mark will be based on marks from 6 out of 7 assignments, meaning students can either a) do all 7 and have their lowest mark dropped or b) skip any one assignment without penalty.

#### **Paper 1: Report on social policy and economic context of country at time of survey (15%)**

This assignment is designed to develop some basic familiarity with the country that you will address in your research project. The paper should include answers to the following questions at the time of the survey: a) what types of welfare and social policies did the country have? and b) what were the main political or economic problems or challenges facing the country? The report should include references to at least 3 peer-reviewed articles/chapters and any other data sources consulted to produce the report. Your paper should have 1000-1100 words (not including bibliography or tables).

#### **Paper 2: Review of literature and research hypotheses (20%)**

This paper is designed to help you identify the relevant hypotheses that will help explain variation in support for redistribution. Your paper should explain the reason for the hypothesis (including references or citations to the relevant literature) and clearly state the hypothesized effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable of your study. Your paper should explore at least two different research hypotheses discussed in the course readings so far and one additional hypothesis from other readings. The paper should also briefly explain the need for any alternative or control variables that are often included in the relevant literature. Your paper should have 2000-2200 words (not including bibliography or tables).

#### **Paper 3: Output and description of preliminary results (20%)**

For this assignment, you will turn in the output of your data analysis, and you will write up a short discussion of what you have found so far. This discussion of your analysis should describe the steps of your data analysis and explain the reason for any choices or decisions you made during the process. Your discussion of the results should reference your original hypotheses and discuss to what extent the findings are or are not consistent with what you hypothesized.

You can also describe any problems or issues you encountered, including questions that you would like to discuss or understand better. Your paper should have 1500-1700 words (not including bibliography or tables).

### **Final research poster (15%)**

The final component of your research project will be a poster to be presented at a final poster session in April. (Graduate students from my graduate statistics class will also be presenting posters at this session.) Political science graduate students and faculty will be invited to attend. During the poster session, I will spend a few minutes with each of you to discuss your poster and results, which will form the basis of your mark on the poster. You will also be asked to submit a .ppt or .pdf version of your poster.

### **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

#### **Week 1 January 7**

**Introductions. Overview of course and research projects.**

#### **Week 2 January 14**

##### **Overview of inequality**

Readings: World Bank. 2005. *World Development Report 2006 Equity and Development*. Washington, D.C.; Oxford: World Bank ; Oxford University Press.  
Overview and chapters 1 & 4

Assignment due: Country reports (2)

#### **Week 3 January 21**

##### **Support for redistribution in comparative perspective**

Readings: [“Regression Analysis” \(unedited version\)](#) in 21st Century Political Science: A Reference Handbook. Eds. John Ishiyama and Marijke Breuning pp. 478-489 (Sage Publications, 2010).

Dion, Michelle L., and Vicki Birchfield. 2010. “Economic Development, Income Inequality, and Preferences for Redistribution1.” *International Studies Quarterly* 54(2): 315–34.

Pittau, Maria Grazia, Riccardo Massari, and Roberto Zelli. 2013. “Hierarchical Modelling of Disparities in Preferences for Redistribution\*.” *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 75(4): 556–84.

Assignment due: Descriptive statistics

#### **Week 4 January 28**

##### **Overview of public opinion analysis**

Readings: None. Do Paper 1 instead.

Assignment due: Paper 1

**Week 5 February 4**

**National identity and self-interest: Income, class and occupation**

Readings: Haggard, Stephan, Robert R. Kaufman, and James D. Long. 2013. "Income, Occupation, and Preferences for Redistribution in the Developing World." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 48(2): 113–40.

Johnston, Richard, Keith Banting, Will Kymlicka, and Stuart Soroka. 2010. "National Identity and Support for the Welfare State." *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 43(2): 349–77.

Assignment due: Measuring association

**Week 6 February 11**

**The politics of luck and reciprocity**

Readings: Bowles, Samuel, and Herbert Gintis. 2000. "Reciprocity, Self-Interest, and the Welfare State." *Nordic Journal of Political Economy* 26(1): 33–53.

León, Francisco José. 2012. "Reciprocity and Public Support for the Redistributive Role of the State." *Journal of European Social Policy* 22(2): 198–215.

Assignment due: Paper 2:

**Week 7 February 18**

**READING WEEK**

**Week 8 February 25**

**The economy and employment status**

Readings: Wang, Kate Yeong-Tsy, Chack-Kie Wong, and Kwong-Leung Tang. 2013. "Citizens' Attitudes towards Economic Insecurity and Government after the 2007 Financial Tsunami: A Hong Kong and Taiwan Comparison." *International Journal of Social Welfare* 22(2): 152–63.

Margalit, Yotam. 2013. "Explaining Social Policy Preferences: Evidence from the Great Recession." *American Political Science Review* 107(01): 80–103.

Assignment due: Regression assignment I

**Week 9 March 4**

**Religion**

Readings: Chang, Wen-Chun. 2010. "Religion and Preferences for Redistributive Policies in an East Asian Country." *Poverty & Public Policy* 2(4): 81–109.

Pepinsky, Thomas B., and Bozena C. Welborne. 2011. "Piety and Redistributive Preferences in the Muslim World." *Political Research Quarterly* 64(3): 491–505.

Assignment due: Regression assignment 2

**Week 10 March 11**

**Race and ethnicity**

Readings: P. Luttmer, Erzo F. 2001. "Group Loyalty and the Taste for Redistribution." *Journal of Political Economy* 109(3): 500–528.

Roberts, Benjamin J. "Your Place or Mine? Beliefs About Inequality and Redress Preferences in South Africa." *Social Indicators Research*: 1–24.

Assignment due: Table of research hypotheses

**Week 11 March 18**

**Ideology and political parties**

Readings: Morgan, Jana, and Nathan J. Kelly. 2016. "Social Patterns of Inequality, Partisan Competition, and Latin American Support for Redistribution." *The Journal of Politics* 79 (1): 193–209.

**Week 12 March 25**

**Overview of posters**

Readings: None. Do Paper 3 instead.

Assignment due: Paper 3

**Week 13 April 1**

**Discuss results & troubleshoot models**

Readings: None. Come to class with a rough draft of your poster content instead.

Assignment due: Draft of poster content

**Week 14 April 8**

**Last lab session & final revisions to poster drafts**

**Poster Session April 16 – MUSC 311/313, 11:30-15:00 (to be confirmed)**

**Course Policies**

**Course Communication Policy**

This course has a strict "no email" policy. Emails to the instructor will not be answered. Students should make an appointment to meet with the instructor in her office or virtually (phone, Skype, or FaceTime). Students can [schedule an office hours appointment online](#) or in-person at the beginning or end of class.

Students are encouraged to use the Discussion section of Avenue to Learn to post questions about the course outline, assignments, links to course-related media, or to organize study groups. Engagement on Avenue, including answering other students' questions about the course, will count positively toward participation marks. The professor will also monitor the Discussions board to answer questions and confirm information posted by others.

**Submission of Assignments (including papers)**

- Assignments will be due on paper at the beginning of class, unless otherwise noted below.
- Assignments should use the [author-date citation style of the Chicago Manual of Style](#).
- Assignments should be double-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. They do not require a cover sheet. Data analysis, tables, and bibliography are not part of word counts.

### **A note on collaboration**

While you may work with other students to generate statistical output and discuss the interpretation of any research results, all written assignments should be your own individual work (and computer output) and include all appropriate citations or references to any literature.

### **Grades**

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

<b>MARK</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

### **Late Assignments**

In this class, assignments are designed to be cumulative; each assignment builds on the last. For this reason, it is important to not fall behind and to complete assignments on time. Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Assignments turned in at the end of class or within one hour of the end of class will only be eligible for 95% of the total value. Assignments turned after class but within 24 hours of class will be eligible for a maximum grade of B+. Assignments received after 24 hours of the due date will be eligible for a maximum grade of C+. Late assignments will not be accepted after 48 hours after the original due date.

Use of the MSAF form will automatically move the due date back 72 hours, with no other possibility of extension or late submission without additional confirmation of the circumstances by the Faculty advising office. If you use the MSAF form for an assignment, *you do not need to email me*. Just turn in the assignment within 72 hours to the Political Science office (KTH 527). There is a drop box for after hours

### **Absences, Missed Work, Illness**

Regular attendance is crucial to your success in this course and is expected of all students. Attendance is incorporated into your participation grade, which is a portion of your final grade. Students will not have access to my class notes for missed classes and are responsible for finding out about any material covered in class from their classmates.

### **Avenue to Learn**

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you

have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **University Policies**

### **Academic Integrity Statement**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

### **Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

### **Course Modification**

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.