The Comparative Politics of Redistribution in Advanced Democracies

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1. Introduction: Inequalities and Redistribution in the Advanced Democracies

This session provides an empirical overview of the dependent variable: inequalities of wealth, income and opportunity in the advanced democracies. Some basic quantitative indicators of inequalities are provided, and patterns of variation amongst advanced democracies and over time, and popular explanations for them, are assessed.


2. Distributional Coalitions and Interest Politics

This session assesses some of the political economy literature on redistributive politics as battles between rival coalitions of interests. We examine the theory of state formation as a form of redistributive “predatory rule”, the Olsonian theory of the emergence and consequences of interest groups, and redistribution through electoral coalitions.


Lohmann, Susanne (2003). ‘Representative Government and Special Interest Politics (We Have Met the Enemy and He Is Us)’, *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15: 299-319.


### 3. Ideas, Institutions and Redistribution

This session examines a variety of “institutionalist” approaches to the study of redistributive politics and comparative politics more generally. Three broad perspectives are examined: the “constitutional engineering” approach focusing on the institutions of electoral democracy, the “historical institutionalist” approach and its emphasis of sequencing and path dependency, and the “ideational” approach which focuses on the role of changing ideas and theory in political change.


### 4. Welfare States and Taxation

This session introduces some basic findings about the growth of state taxation and spending in the 20th century, and assesses some of the best known theoretical accounts of the emergence of the welfare state and the contemporary challenges it faces. This work
will provide a framework for the remainder of the course, which deals with more in-depth studies of the principal welfare regime types and the way they redistribute resources.


5. Alternatives to the Market (I): Social Democracy

This session looks at the Social Democratic welfare regime type, paying particular attention to Sweden, and assesses its historical origins and responses to contemporary pressures. Particular attention will be paid to the role of political parties and labour
movements in building the welfare state, and to the role of markets in the social democracies.


Schwartz, Herman (2001), *The Danish “Miracle”: Luck, Pluck or Stuck?*, *Comparative Political Studies* 34/2: 131-55.


6. Alternatives to the Market (II): Christian Democracy

This session looks at the Christian Democratic welfare regime type in continental Western Europe and assesses its historical origins and the way in which distributive policies fit into a broader pattern of state-market relations. We will examine how
redistributive institutions are affected by the impact of late democratization, and the nature of electoral politics in the postwar period.


7. Redistribution in the English-Speaking Democracies

This session examines the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ democracies, particularly the US and the UK, where the welfare state has come under heavy pressure in recent times. We will examine
the historical origins of redistributive institutions, and the ways in which electoral politics interact with institutional legacies to promote welfare state retrenchment. The nature of redistributive policies after a period of retrenchment is also carefully examined.


8. The Labour Market: Parties, Unions and Employers
Income inequalities in the rich democracies are in large part determined by labour market institutions. This session analyzes the role of labour market institutions in redistributing income, and traces the relationships between these labour market institutions and the institutions of electoral and governmental politics. Recent changes in some of the most distinctive wage-setting regimes are also examined.


9. Redistribution Between Generations and Genders
Much of the welfare state literature and the political science literature on electoral and interest coalitions emphasizes redistribution between occupational or ‘social class’ groups. This session looks at how income and wealth are redistributed inside these categories, paying particular attention to the increasingly important gender and age dimensions in welfare politics.


**10. Rent-Seeking, Corruption and Political Finance**
This session looks at redistribution through corruption, clientelism and lobbying. It examines the logic behind corruption in political decision-making, and applies that logic to a range of redistributive issues, including public investment, public enterprise, interterritorial financial transfers, and public employment.


