Great Transformations in American politics and policy  
TPOS220  
University at Albany, SUNY  
Political Science Department  
Fall 2017  
Professor Timothy Weaver  

Building & Room: HU 130  
Meeting day and time: 1:15-2:35  

NOTE: This is a preliminary syllabus and is subject to change  

Contact Details:  
tweaver@albany.edu  

Office Hours: Tuesdays—2:45pm to 4:45pm and by appointment  

Course Description:  
In the last four decades, American politics and policy have undergone a series of profound transformations that have altered the relationship between the government, the market, and the citizen. This course will consider three of these: the shift towards a pro-market economic policy; the rise of mass incarceration; and the changing welfare state. In addition to exploring these policy shifts, we will also examine the ideas that have underpinned them: liberalism, neoliberalism, and conservatism. Moreover, while many of the great transformations in American politics and policy have occurred at the federal level, there is much variation among the states and the cities. Therefore, we will also peer beneath the national level to see how these shifts have played out differently in different places. As such, our study at the subnational level will focus on two contradictory tendencies: the right-wing imposition of austerity on the states and progressive efforts to raise the minimum wage at the state and local levels. We will also consider whether the Trump presidency will herald another “great transformation.” Throughout the semester, we will place the U.S. in comparative context to show how these great transformations reflect or diverge from patterns of political development in other countries.  

This course fulfills the U.S. History requirement in the General Education program. Taking this class will enable students to complete the following learning objectives:  

- To develop knowledge of three great transformations in American political history with special attention to key role played by race, class, and culture in shaping them.  
- To obtain knowledge of representative institutions in American society and how they have shaped and been shaped by different groups;  
- To gain an understanding of the relationship (s) between America and other parts of the world, especially the U.K.  
- To garner a keen understanding of various tools and approaches used in interpreting U.S. political history.
**Academic dishonesty**

The University at Albany takes academic dishonesty extremely seriously. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s policies in this regard. I recommend you watch this video on plagiarism that will help you avoid it: [http://library.albany.edu/infolit/plagiarism1](http://library.albany.edu/infolit/plagiarism1)

Often students leave themselves open to the charge of academic dishonesty because they fail to provide proper citations in their written work. Please be sure to always remember the following: if they are not your words, you must use quotation marks and citations; if it is not your idea, you must cite the source from which the idea came.

**Course requirements**

This class will consist of lectures and in-class discussion of the readings. Therefore, to get a good grade, it is essential that you participate meaningfully in class discussion. This means that you will come to class having read and thought carefully about the material assigned. If it becomes evident that you have not been completing the assigned reading, pop-quizzes will be given. The results of these pop-quizzes will be factored into your final grade.

You will be assessed according to the quality of your general participation in class, your class presentations (see below), and your performance on an early-semester short-answer test, a mid-term exam, and a final take-home exam.

**Presentations and leading class discussion:** each Thursday, one student will make a 10 minute presentation that highlights a key theme from the week’s reading and offers a critique either of the logic of the argument or of the empirical evidence the author brings to bear. The student will then lead class discussion of the reading, having developed questions that encourage fellow students to compare and contrast the week’s readings with previous ones and to consider how contemporary events might inform our analysis.

**Attendance:** In order to do well in this class, regular attendance is crucial. If you miss more than 3 classes during the semester your participation grade will suffer as a result.

Your grade breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-answer test</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-class on Sept. 26
In-class on Oct. 12
Take-home due Dec. 15

Questions for final exam will be distributed on Dec. 7.

Students will be expected to meet all deadlines. Extensions will only be granted in cases of medical or personal emergency.
**Grading**

The grading scale will be as follows:


If you feel you have been awarded an unfair grade, you may contest it. However, if you want to do so, it must be done in writing and no sooner than 48 hours after you have received the grade. In your written complaint you need to provide a specific account of what in particular you are concerned about.

**Accommodations**

Students with disabilities that may impair their ability to complete the assignments listed in this syllabus and/or who require special accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Center. If you do require accommodations please let me know during the first two weeks.

**Readings**

The following required books are available for purchase at university bookstore:


Additional readings will be available on Blackboard.

**Course schedule & reading assignments**

**Week 1: Introduction/the concept of “American Political Development”**

Tuesday August 29: Introduction to APD (lecture)

Thursday August 31: NO CLASS (PLEASE GET STARTRED ON TUESDAY’S READING)
PART 1: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

Week 2: Liberalism & the New Deal


Week 3: New Deal Liberalism in Crisis


Week 4: The Neoliberal Turn—a Transatlantic shift


Thursday September 21:  NO CLASS (Rosh Hashanna)

Week 5: The inner-take-all economy

Tuesday September 26:  ***IN-CLASS SHORT-ANSWER TEST***


**Week 6: The Great Recession**


Thursday October 5: Lewis, Michael. *The Big Short*. Chs. 6-10.

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**PART 2: THE CARCERAL STATE**

**Week 7: The Rise of the Carceral State in Comparative Perspective**


Thursday October 12: ***MID-TERM EXAM (IN CLASS)***

**Week 8: The New Jim Crow?**


Thursday October 19: Gottschalk, Marie. *Caught*. Ch. 7.

**Week 9: The Democratic Consequences of the Carceral State**


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**PART 3: FROM THE WELFARE STATE TO THE WORKFARE STATE**

**Week 10: The Construction of the Welfare State during the New Deal and Great Society**


Week 11: Retrenchment and the Workfare State in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.


**PART 4: TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE STATES AND THE CITIES**

**Week 12: Austerity Urbanism in the U.S. and Europe**


**Week 13: Progressive Urbanism I**


Thursday November 24: CLASSES SUSPENDED (Thanksgiving break)

**PART 5: PRESIDENT TRUMP AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN POLITICS**

**Week 14: Progressive Urbanism II**


Week 15: Why & Wither Trump?
