Syllabus for HLE-512/Gov 2340: Spring 2007
Proseminar on Inequality and Social Policy
Wednesdays, 2:10 to 4 PM
124 Mount Auburn St. Suite 100

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Prerequisites: Students may take HLE-512/Gov 2340 only if they have taken HLE-511/Soc 296a.

The first half of the spring semester will be led by Kathryn Edin and Christopher Jencks. It will focus on policies related to equal opportunity. Specifically, it will consider the effects of family structure, parental SES, genes, race, gender, and residential segregation on children’s economic prospects and what can be done to reduce these effects.

The second half of the spring semester, led by Torben Iversen, will examine the politics of redistribution in rich democracies from a comparative perspective.

Organization of spring classes:

The first meeting of the spring semester will be on Wednesday January 31. This will be a regular class, with assigned readings and memos.

During the first seven weeks we will vary the format slightly from the fall. At least initially, Edin and Jencks will take responsibility for starting each class with a discussion of salient points raised by the memos. Students will be expected to do six memos for these seven classes. Memos are due by 9AM on the Monday before class. Late memos will not count.
Copies of readings: Most of the readings for the first seven weeks will be available on a CD in the Kennedy School library. You can make one copy of this CD for your own use or copy its contents directly onto your laptop if you have one. Reproducing the CD for any other purpose is illegal.

The CD contains both the required and recommended readings. You should read all the required papers. You should also read at least the abstract of each recommended paper and take it into account in your memo if it seems relevant.

The following books are not on the CD and should be bought from Amazon:

- Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, *Promises I Can Keep* (University of California, 2005)

To save on shipping and ensure that you have copies when you need them, order these well in advance. You can also save on shipping by buying several copies at once.

Professor Iversen’s readings will be available on the official course website for Gov2340: [www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/5491](http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/5491). Simply click the underlined readings for each week. The online reading list for this part of the course is always the official reading list (not the printed version).

The following books are not on the course CD or the website. They should all be bought from Amazon.


Grades: A third of your spring grade will be based on your weekly memos and participation. The other two-thirds will be based on your paper.

Papers:

Those who want to get a June degree must submit their research paper by May 17 to be sure of getting a grade in time to graduate. Those who plan to take the third semester of the proseminar next fall can get an extension and work on their paper during the summer, but you must ask your advisor for an extension and agree on a due date. The normal deadline for submitting your second semester paper is July 15, which ensures adequate time for your advisor to read and grade your paper, suggest revisions, and allow
you to make these revisions prior to the deadline for submission of your revised paper for HLE-513. **Papers for HLE-513 are officially due on September 1.**

Your presentation date will be the date on which your commentator is scheduled to speak in the Monday seminar. This date cannot be changed. **You must distribute your paper to your commentator, your classmates, and Bill Wilson at least two weeks before your presentation date. Students with very early presentation dates may therefore be unable to get an extension beyond September 1. Others may be able to negotiate with their advisor for additional time.**

You will have 20 minutes to present your paper in HLE-513. The speaker from the Monday seminar will then comment for about 20 minutes, and there will be 20 minutes of open discussion. You will also be expected to attend your classmates’ presentations and provide written comments on their papers prior to their presentations. The second hour of each seminar will focus on the outside speaker’s paper. You will be expected to comment on an outside speaker’s paper at some point during the fall.

**All papers should be submitted electronically. If your advisor also wants a paper copy, you should provide that as well.**

**Length:** Papers should not exceed 15,000 words, excluding appendices.

**Format.** Double space with 1.25 inch margins, so readers have plenty of room to scribble comments on their copy. **Don't forget to paginate your paper so that your readers can refer to specific pages.**

**Abstract.** Your paper should have an abstract that says what its main point is.

**File names.** File names should start with your last name, include a short title, and the submission date (e.g. “Wolfers divorce 9-9-99”).

**Charts and tables.** Excel charts and tables should be pasted into your manuscript, not sent as separate Excel files. The best way to paste Excel tables and charts is usually to copy them in Excel, go to your Word document, and click “Edit,” “Paste Special,” and “Picture.” You should print a clean copy of your paper and look it over before submitting it, to be sure that this process has worked. You can simplify subsequent revisions of your paper by including the number of each table or figure as text in your Word document rather than in the Excel picture.

**Spell checking and table checking.** If you want people to read your paper carefully, you have to convey the impression that you have read it carefully yourself. A paper that has not been spell checked creates the impression that you couldn’t be bothered.

**You should also check charts and tables to be sure that your numbers look reasonable.** Including numbers that cannot possibly be correct – means and standard deviations that defy common sense, for example -- suggests that you either don’t know or don’t care whether your empirical work is correct.
Readings for HLE-512/Gov 2340: Spring 2007

Jan 31: Why aren’t more children living with their fathers? (Kathryn Edin, Penn)


2. Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, *Promises I Can Keep*, University of California, 2005, pp1-220. [Buy from Amazon.](#)


*Also recommended:*


Feb 7: Family structure, welfare, and poverty (Edin & Jencks)


*Also recommended:*


Feb 14: Effects of family background and parental income (Edin and Jencks)


Also recommended:


Feb 21: Genes and equal opportunity (Edin and Jencks)


Feb 28: Labor market discrimination (Edin & Jencks)


Also recommended:


March 7: Affirmative Action (Frank Dobbin, Dept of Sociology)


March 14: Causes and effects of residential segregation (Edin & Jencks)


Also recommended


The remainder of the reading list is tentative. The final reading list will be available at [www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/5491](http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/5491).
March 21: Theoretical approaches to the comparative study of welfare states (Iversen)


Also recommended:


March 28: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

April 4: Political institutions and redistribution (Iversen)


Also recommended:


April 11: Explaining preferences for social policy


2. David Austen-Smith and Michael Wallerstein, “Redistribution in a Divided Society.”


*Also recommended:*


April 18: Comparative Gender Inequality and the Family


*Also recommended:*

April 25: Forces of change and welfare state reform


Also recommended:


May 5: Inequality, information, and political polarization

1. Alesina and Glaeser, Fighting Poverty, ch. 7.


5. Martin Gilens, “Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness: Who Gets What They Want from Government?”


Those seeking June degrees must submit their paper by May 17. Others should see page 2 of the syllabus.