PS 106: Power, Politics and Inequality: DRAFT SYLLABUS  
Professor Gash  
Office Hours: Monday 11:30-Noon and 1:45-3; Wednesday 11:30-Noon and 2-3 By Appointment

Politics is fundamentally about power. Groups and individuals negotiate in courtrooms, boardrooms, war rooms, and living rooms to gain, maintain or usurp power. From labor disputes and civil rights struggles to battles over access to basic political institutions, power disputes that pit majority wants against minority needs animate much of our political landscape. This course looks at power through the lens of inequality. Students will be introduced--or in many instances re-introduced--to political struggles between the haves and the have-nots. Students will not only grapple with substantive questions concerning income and social inequality but will also identify how these struggles for power and membership are shaped and constrained by the political environment--and how politics is, in turn, marked by these struggles.

Students will be introduced to a range of texts and approaches to the study of politics and inequality. Although the course is offered through the political science department—and uses political struggles as its empirical platform—course readings and content will be drawn from a range of disciplines. Historical resources will introduce students to a range of majority/minority struggles. Sociological interpretations will animate discussions about the nature of power and inequality. Political science scholarship will frame discussions about the problems and consequences of majoritarian policy venues. Students will also reference a number of primary sources including novels, documentary films, and music to identify how political questions about power and inequality become culturally embedded and construed. The course is similarly broad in its empirical focus. Because it’s primary purpose is to challenge students to re-explore the nation’s most salient political struggles through the lens of inequality and discrimination, rather than focusing on the values of democracy and majority rule—students will examine how our nation’s history is energized by the constant battle to resolve conflicts that pit majority wants against minority demands. To that end students will be required to adopt a range of perspectives and explore historical events through the lens of race, gender, sexuality, income and age.

Class will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. Students are expected to attend and to be prepared to contribute to class discussions. Grades will be assessed according to the following:

- Class Participation: 10%  
  - Attendance  
  - Participation  
  - Section Assignments
- Bi-weekly quiz: 11% per quiz (5 total) (every other Monday starting week 2)
- Three Response Projects Due: Week 3 (10%), Week 7 (10%), Week 10 (15%). Response projects require students to express their reactions to a specific topic introduced in class through a range of mechanisms. Students may pick a literary excerpt that best encapsulates the themes explored in class, identify music or
artwork that exemplifies a political struggle or craft their own response. Students must explain their choices in a two-page memo and must provide copies of any materials that are the subject of the response paper (ie. lyrics, literary passages, quotes, art or other visual subjects)

- Week 10 Response Presentations: During the last week students will present an item that exemplifies, for them, the power/inequality imbalances that we have explored in class. These can be from music, literature, art or current events. During the presentations students will explain why they chose the item and how it best exemplifies the themes from class. Students can work alone or in groups of up to 8 students. Students working in groups must be able to articulate their contribution to the group project and will be evaluated as individual participants rather than as one unified group.

**Learning Outcomes**

Students who complete the coursework will gain an understanding of the workings of American political systems at the local, state and national levels and across varying institutional arrangements. They will be introduced—through the lens of inequality—to significant political concepts such as justice, natural law and obligation. Finally, students will gain critical skills in identifying, describing and utilizing facts and will develop fundamentals in analysis and argumentation.

**Expectations**

Essentially your grade will be a reflection of three factors:

*Performance:* This is straightforward. How well are you doing on quizzes and papers?

*Effort.* This one's pretty simple too. Do the reading (which will be heavy at times), put effort into your assignments, think about what the reading/lectures/discussions mean to you and demonstrate that you are interested in learning. Demonstrating the willingness and ambition to improve is highly valued!

*Participation.* One good way to demonstrate effort is through class participation. This includes providing your insights, opinions, questions during lecture and discussion sections; listening respectfully to other students’ insights, opinions, questions; and/or visiting during office hours to discuss any issues that you find troubling or compelling.

Let me be clear: it will be really difficult to receive an A in this course if you skip class or neglect to do the reading or writing assignments.

**Policy on Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism**

*Plagiarism* and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated in this class. Any test, paper, or report submitted by you that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you have obtained my prior written approval.
In all of your assignments, including your homework or drafts of papers, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, Web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. "Proper attribution" means that you have fully identified the original source and extent of your use of the words or ideas of others that you reproduce in your work for this course, usually in the form of a footnote or parenthesis. However, the bulk of your written work should be your own original thoughts. Published or web-based information should only be used to supplement your own ideas.

As a general rule, if you are citing from a published source or from a Web site and the quotation is short (up to a sentence or two), place it in quotation marks; if you employ a longer passage from a publication or Web site, please indent it and use single spacing. In both cases, be sure to cite the original source in a footnote or in parentheses.

Be warned, I conduct periodic web searches for language from student papers. If you have used language from publications or websites without giving them proper attribution I will find out.

**Handing in Assignments**
Instructions for handing in assignments will be included on all written assignments and exams. Students are expected to hand in their assignments on time and in accordance with the instructions provided, unless alternate arrangements have been made prior to the assignment’s due date. Students will lose a half grade on the assignment each day that the assignment is late.

**Grading Disputes**
If you want to dispute a grade on a paper or exam, please submit *in writing* a description of your concerns at least 24 hours after you have received the grade in question. The 24 hours should be used as a cooling off period. Please note, however, that if I, or a GTF, review your work, we will be reviewing the entire exam or paper. This could result in a lower grade.

**Receiving an Incomplete**
In general incompletes will only be permitted under extenuating circumstances (health, family issues, emergency). Students who have outstanding assignments at the time that grades are due and who have not received preapproval for an incomplete will receive an “F” for the assignments they have not completed. In order to receive a passing grade in the class you must hand in all assignments.

**Readings**
There are two required book purchases for this class:
- Robert Moses, The Power Broker
- David Halberstam, The Children

All other readings can be found on Blackboard under Course Documents. A copy of the most up-to-date syllabus will be available on Blackboard as well.
Readings are listed by week. Students are responsible for keeping up with the readings throughout the term. Weekly readings must be completed by Wednesday of each week to keep pace with the lectures.

**Workload and Evaluation**

There are on average 60 pages of reading per week for this class. Papers and projects will be evaluated according to the following grading rubric.

A+ Student has produced truly exceptional work
A  Student has produced outstanding work. Arguments are effective, cohesive, and compelling. Student has demonstrated a mastery of the material both in terms of analysis and synthesis. Writing is articulate and there is evidence of careful and thorough editing. In short, the work is near perfect.
A- Student has produced very strong work. Arguments are effective, cohesive and compelling. The student clearly understands the material and has the ability to synthesize information. There are a few rough spots that need more attention but these issues are marginal.
B+ Student has the beginnings of a strong paper. There is evidence of strong analysis and engagement with the material. However some portion of the paper remains underdeveloped.
B  Student understands the assignment and has introduced a compelling line of inquiry. Student has received this grade for one of three issues: writing is rough and disorganized; there is insufficient attention to appropriate materials; arguments (while interesting) are underdeveloped.
B- While student has completed the assignment, one of the substantive features of the assignment is severely lacking. Arguments may be underdeveloped and unconvincing; evidence may be wrongly utilized or absent altogether; writing may be extremely disorganized or sloppy.
C  While the student has touched on most of the important objectives of the assignment the work product is deficient in analysis, writing, or use of engagement with materials.
D or F The assignment is incomplete in one or more of the following areas: writing, analysis, engagement with materials Grade given will be a function of the degree of incompleteness.

**Weekly Reading Assignments**

Week 1: What is Power?

a. Dr. Seuss, Yertle the Turtle
   http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/class_domination.html
Week 2: The Roots of Inequality (Quiz Monday)
  g. Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Winner Takes All Politics*, p. 11-73
  j. “Mapping Three Decades of Income Inequality,” *CityLab* (The Atlantic)

Week 3: Power at the Founding
  c. Ray Raphael, *Mr. President: How and Why the Founders Created a Chief Executive*, Chapter 1, 9-28
  f. Frederick Douglass, The Meaning of July Fourth (speech)
     http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2927t.html

Week 4: Power to the People (Quiz Monday)
  b. Frances Fox Piven, *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America*, Chapter 5, 81-108
  d. Newspaper Articles TBD

Week 5: Power Brokers
  b. Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters*, p. 351-379
  c. Newspaper Articles TBD

Week 6: Power Sources (Students to do three selected readings) (Quiz Monday)
c. Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression*, Chapters 7 and 8


e. Carson et al., *Eyes on the Prize* Reader, Chapter 7 (excerpts on Black Panther Party) (20 pages)

**Week 7:**  Power Struggles: Civil Rights
a. David Halberstam, *The Children* (excerpt) 3-50
c. Newspaper Articles TBD

**Week 8:**  Power Struggles: Income (Quiz Monday)
c. “A Giant Statistical Round-up of the Income Inequality Crisis,” *The Atlantic*
d. Newspaper Articles TBD

**Week 9:**  Power Struggles: Federalism
a. John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, Chapter 4, 70-89
c. ABC, 32 States ask Supreme Court to Settle Gay Marriage Question
d. NPR, Lawyer Reflects on Nation’s First Gay Marriages

**Week 10:**  Expressions of Power: Student Presentations (Quiz Monday)