

Course Syllabus

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Technology and Inequality
 Professor Yochai Benkler1-
 Syllabus
 Fall 2019

Office Hours: Thursdays 2:00pm-4:00pm (By appointment ONLY)

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Part I: Causes of rising inequality

Week One

Thursday, September 5: Session One: What is the problem, and what are its causes?

Come prepared to discuss: what is the problem / are the problems we should focus on, what are the explanations offered and embraced, rejected, or marginalized in Piketty and Saez and in Autor, respectively; what role does technology play in any of these explanations? How does the data presented in Gould interact with these explanations; and how do each of the three sources map on to the three conceptions of class that Olin Wright identifies in his piece. Think of proposed reforms or solutions to inequality that you know of as background knowledge: where do they fit within these three understandings of class?

- Piketty & Saez, "[Inequality in the Long Run](https://eml.berkeley.edu/~saez/piketty-saezScience14.pdf)" (<https://eml.berkeley.edu/~saez/piketty-saezScience14.pdf>), *Science*, May 23, 2014 (including the supplemental materials)
- Autor, "[Skills, education, and the rise of earnings inequality among the “other 99 percent”](#)", *Science*, 344:843-850, May 23, 2014.
- Gould, [State of Working America Wages 2019](https://www.epi.org/publication/state-of-american-wages-2018/) (<https://www.epi.org/publication/state-of-american-wages-2018/>), Tables 2 and 3 and associated text and figures B and C; (under the headings: Wages by gender; Wages by race/ethnicity); Figures J and K.
- Erik Olin Wright, [Understanding Class](#) 101-111 (including Fig. 5 on p. 112).

Friday, September 6: Session Two: Institutions, and how to think about solutions

Come prepared to discuss how the institutional elements identified in Mishel et al map on to the analytic framework sketched out in Box 1 of the OECD report. How do the old institutional economics and institutionalism in sociology, both old and new, and the historical school in neo-institutional theory in political science differ from the new institutionalism in economics and rational choice in political science, as described in Scott?

- OECD, "[Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising](#)," OECD Publishing, 2011, pp. 22-41—focus on Figs. 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12; read carefully Box 1. The rest is recommended background reading.
- Mishel, Schmitt & Shierholz, "[Wage Inequality: A Story of Policy Choices](#)," *New Labor Forum*, August 4, 2014, pp. 1-6
- Scott, [Institutions and Organizations](#), 2-5, 8-13, 24-31 (1995)

Week Two: Conceptions of technology, economy, and inequalityThursday, September 12: Session Three

- Polanyi, [The Great Transformation](#), Beacon Press, 2001, pp. 35-44, 59-80 (ch. 3, 5 & 6)
- Meiksins Wood, [The Origin of Capitalism, A Longer View](#) pp. 21-26 (A Notable Exception: Karl Polanyi).
- Mumford, [Technics and Civilization](#), University of Chicago Press, pp. 221-229
- Winner, "[Do Artifacts have Politics](#)" *Daedalus*, Vol. 109, No. 1, Modern Technology: Problem or Opportunity? (Winter, 1980), pp. 121-128

Friday, September 13: Session Four:

- Perez, [Technological Revolutions and Financial Capital: The Dynamics of Bubbles and Golden Ages](#), Edward Elgar, 2002, pp. 3-46
- Brynjolfsson & McAfee, [The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies](#), [The Second Machine Age, Chapter 6](#) W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2014, ch. 6, 9, 10
- Bowles, [Social Institutions and Technical Change](#), 1987, pp. 67-81 (this paper includes pages with mathematical notations; if these are opaque to you, skip the math and read the narrative—you will get everything you need from that).

Think: How do these sources differ from each other in their theory of how technology interacts with or causes inequality? How do they differ from yesterday's three sources? Come prepared to generate hypotheses from the various sources about where technology may, or may not, be a cause of inequality, and how, and where, if anywhere, technology interacts with institutions to shape inequality.

NB: Task to be completed for Session Six, next week:

Assignment (due by Monday evening, September 16): search online for readings about the impact of robots and the future of work. Find one reading that you think is particularly interesting or offered you insight either about the problem or about solutions proposed to it. Post your story by Monday evening on the Canvas discussions page. Please do so before doing the readings for Session Six, Friday September 20.

Week Three:Thursday, September 19: Session Five. Institutions and the Race Between Education and Technology

- Goldin & Katz, [The Race between Education and Technology](#), Harvard University Press, March 2010, pp. 89-125
- Fernández-Macías, [Job Polarization in Europe? Changes in the Employment Structure and Job Quality, 1994-2007](#) pp. 159-162, 169-177
- Schmitt, Shierholz & Mishel, "[Don't Blame the Robots: Assessing the Job Polarization Explanation of Growing Wage Inequality](#)(Links to an external site.) [_](http://www.epi.org/files/2013/technology-inequality-dont-blame-the-robots.pdf)(<http://www.epi.org/files/2013/technology-inequality-dont-blame-the-robots.pdf>)," *Economic Policy Institute*, November 19, 2013, executive summary and introduction on pp. 4-9; Figures DA, DB, DC on pp 66-67; GA, GB, GC on pp. 72-74
- Review/skim the piece we read for Session 2: Mishel, Schmitt & Shierholz, "[Wage Inequality: A Story of Policy Choices](#)," *New Labor Forum*, August 4, 2014, pp. 1-6

Friday, September 20: Session Six: SBTC, Robots, and "the Future of Work"

- Brynjolfsson & McAfee, [The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies](#), W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2014, ch. 2-3
- Susskind & Susskind, [The Future of the Professions: How Technology Will Transform the Work of Human Experts](#), Oxford University Press, January 1, 2016, pp. 46-55, 66-71 & 123-134

- Brishen Rogers, [Beyond Automation](#) The Law and Political Economy of Workplace Technological Change, pp. 18-24 (from “The Limits of Machine Learning” to the end of the section on “The realities of workplace automation”).
- Carbonero, Ernst, and Weber, [Robots Worldwide: The Impact of Automation on Employment and Trade](#) , Introduction, pp 1-2. (ILO Oct 2018).
- Dauth et al, [German Robots, The Impact of Industrial Robots on Workers](#), 2017, Conclusion: pp. 41-42.
- Read the stories that you and your classmates have posted to Canvas. Identify ones that you think offer particularly important or interesting insights, or examples of particularly wrongheaded thinking. Be prepared to discuss these in light of the other readings for today.

Week Four:

Thursday, September 26: Session Seven: Winner-take-all markets and superstar salaries

- Frank, "[Talent and the Winner-Take All Society](#)" *The American Prospect*, Spring 1994
- Piketty, [Capital in the Twenty-First Century](#)([Links to an external site.](#)) [_ \(https://dowbor.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/14Thomas-Piketty.pdf\)](https://dowbor.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/14Thomas-Piketty.pdf)., Harvard University Press, 2014, pp. 223-229 (ch. 9, start reading from the heading: “How to explain the Explosion of inequality in the United States” to the end heading: “The Rise of the Supermanager: An Anglo-Saxon Phenomenon”) and 235-238) beginning with "The illusion of marginal productivity" through the end of the chapter. (If you have time, you can read the pages between these sections, on top centile income share in Europe and less wealthy economies, as background.)
- EPI CEO Compensation has grown 980% since 1978, <https://www.epi.org/publication/ceo-compensation-2018/> [\(https://www.epi.org/publication/ceo-compensation-2018/\)](https://www.epi.org/publication/ceo-compensation-2018/)..
- Benkler, [A Political Economy of Oligarchy](#)., pp 20-46.

Friday, September 27: Session Eight: From Sharing Economy to Gig Work

- Pew Research Center, "[Gig Work, Online Selling and Home Sharing](#)([Links to an external site.](#)) [\(http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2016/11/17161707/PI_2016.11.17_Gig-Workers_FINAL.pdf\)](http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2016/11/17161707/PI_2016.11.17_Gig-Workers_FINAL.pdf)," read the executive summary pp. 2-6, particularly focus on the graphs. November 2016
- Sundararajan, [The Sharing Economy](#), The MIT Press, 2016, pp. 23-46, 69-84, 159-202

Week Five: More on Gig Work

Thursday, Oct 3. Session Nine: Digging into the Gig Economy.

- Schor, *Fair Share*, [selections from the draft book](#)  (do not share outside the class)
- Gray and Suri, [Ghost Work](#), ix to xvi, 67-70, 75-77, 80-82, 85-91. (the following pages are recommended as well: 8-15, 21-26)
- Weil, "[Enforcing Labour Standards in Fissured Workplaces: The US Experience](#)([Links to an external site.](#)) [\(http://web.law.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/microsites/career-services/David%20Weil%20Enforcing%20Labour%20Standards%20in%20Fissured%20Workplaces.pdf\)](http://web.law.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/microsites/career-services/David%20Weil%20Enforcing%20Labour%20Standards%20in%20Fissured%20Workplaces.pdf)," 22 *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 33, 2011, pp. 33–41
- Newspaper articles about California AB 5: [LA Times](#) [_ \(https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2019-08-30/ab5-dynamex-independent-contractors-bill\)](https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2019-08-30/ab5-dynamex-independent-contractors-bill)., [Business Insider](#) [_ \(https://www.businessinsider.com/uber-lyft-fighting-ab5-california-senate-set-to-vote-dynamex-2019-9\)](https://www.businessinsider.com/uber-lyft-fighting-ab5-california-senate-set-to-vote-dynamex-2019-9)., [Tech Crunch](#) [_ \(https://techcrunch.com/2019/09/10/gig-worker-bill-ab-5-passes-in-california/\)](https://techcrunch.com/2019/09/10/gig-worker-bill-ab-5-passes-in-california/)..

Friday: Oct 4: Session Ten: An anatomy of politics and policy: 100 years of chauffer service in San Francisco

- Dubal, [Drive to Precarity](#),

- Weil, "[Enforcing Labour Standards in Fissured Workplaces: The US Experience](http://web.law.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/microsites/career-services/David%20Weil%20Enforcing%20Labour%20Standards%20in%20Fissured%20Workplaces.pdf)([Links to an external site.](#)) (<http://web.law.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/microsites/career-services/David%20Weil%20Enforcing%20Labour%20Standards%20in%20Fissured%20Workplaces.pdf>)," 22 *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 33, 2011, pp. 42-50.

As you read Dubal and Weil, try to outline to yourself what are the primary elements of mechanisms for addressing the precarity of work in an on demand setting, or a fissured workplace? What are the advantages and disadvantages of working on broader or narrower jurisdictions (e.g., federal vs. state or local), or with broader or narrower focus (industry vs economy wide vs. a few major targeted firms)? How important is it to constrain competition or enhance it? What mechanisms play which kind of role, in which jurisdiction?

- BLS, Highlights of the May 2017 data on electronically mediated work (September 28, 2018). (<https://www.bls.gov/cps/electronically-mediated-employment.htm> [_](https://www.bls.gov/cps/electronically-mediated-employment.htm) (<https://www.bls.gov/cps/electronically-mediated-employment.htm>))
- WSJ, How estimates of the gig economy went wrong. [How Estimates of the Gig Economy Went Wrong](#)
- American Prospect May 2019 roundtable. [May 2019 Roundtable](#) (good basic explanation of the difficulty of measurement, and the politics of over/under estimation)
- Think as you read these, how do we design policy intervention under conditions of persistent uncertainty as to the causes and patterns of inequality, or wage, or employment?

Team 2-3 page abstract/sources/outline briefing materials due by Tuesday, October 8, at 5pm.

Week Six:

Thursday, October 10: Session Eleven

- Markovitz, [The Meritocracy Trap, Introduction and Chapter 6](#) .
- [Ezra Klein interview with Markovitz](#) (<http://%20https://cms.megaphone.fm/channel/theezrakleinshow?selected=VMP7872580094>). (You get most of what you need from the first 45 minutes. Its probably still worth listening on if you have the time.)

Friday, October 11: Session Twelve

- Solutions briefings workshop. Team meetings fishbowl style.
- Read each of the other teams' 2-3 page outlines. Come prepared to discuss your own proposal and listen to and comment all the other teams' projects.

Week Seven:

Thursday, October 17: Session Thirteen: Financialization

- Krippner, [Capitalizing on Crisis: The Political Origins of the Rise of Finance](#), Harvard University Press, 2012, pp. 50-150
- Review Perez from Session Three, above

Friday, October 18: Session Fourteen: More on financialization

- Davis, [Managed by the Markets: How Finance Re-Shaped America](#), Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 1-28
- Foroohar, [Makers and Takers: How Wall Street Destroyed Main Street](#), Penguin Random House, 2017, pp. 121-142
- Elhauge, "[Horizontal Shareholding](#)([Links to an external site.](#)) (<http://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1267-1317-Online.pdf>)," 129 *Harv. L. Rev.* 1267, Mar. 10, 2016, pp. 1267-1272, 1278-1281, 1291-93

Week Eight:

Thursday, October 24: Session Fifteen: Market power and antitrust

- Elhauge, "[Horizontal Shareholding](http://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1267-1317-Online.pdf)(Links to an external site.) [.\(http://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1267-1317-Online.pdf\)](http://harvardlawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1267-1317-Online.pdf)," 129 Harv. L. Rev. 1267, Mar. 10, 2016, pp. 1281-1291
- Barry Lynn & Phillip Longman, "[Who Broke America's Job Machine?](#)," Washington Monthly, Mar./Apr. 2010
- Khan and Vaheesan, [Market Power and Inequality](#) (focuses on redistribution of consumer surplus to capital owners and managers).

Friday, October 25: Session Sixteen: Trade

- Autor et al, [The China Shock: Learning from Labor-Market Adjustment to Large Changes in Trade](#), AER 2016 8. Abstract and introduction, pp. 205-209 carryover, then Regional employment impacts to end, 223-236. (abstract and pp 1-4, 23-36 in the working paper).
- Autor et al, [Importing Political Polarization: The Electoral Consequences of Rising Trade Exposure](#) (Abstract only).
- WTO [September 2017 Report: Trade, Technology, and Jobs](#) [.\(https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/world_trade_report17_e.pdf\)](https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/world_trade_report17_e.pdf), Executive Summary and pages 132-153.
- Elizabeth Warren, [Trade on Our Terms](#) [.\(https://medium.com/@teamwarren/trade-on-our-terms-ad861879feca\)](https://medium.com/@teamwarren/trade-on-our-terms-ad861879feca).
- Elizabeth Warren, [A Plan for Economic Patriotism](#) [.\(https://medium.com/@teamwarren/a-plan-for-economic-patriotism-13b879f4cfc7\)](https://medium.com/@teamwarren/a-plan-for-economic-patriotism-13b879f4cfc7).
- Come prepared to discuss in class: (a) What are the core elements of strategies the WTO report describes among used by other rich countries to mitigate the negative effects of trade on workers? (b) How is present U.S. policy different from European policies, both the European Social Fund and Global Adjustment Fund and the Danish flexicurity model? (c) How is the Warren plan different from current European policies as described in the WTO report? If you were advising the incoming President of the EU, or a new incoming U.S. president (other than Warren), which elements of either the Warren plan or the European approaches would you advise her to pursue? Why?

Week Nine:Thursday, October 31: Session Seventeen:

- Starr, reviewing Zuboff in Foreign Affairs, [The New Masters of the Universe](#) 
- [Kapczynski, Book review](#)  of Zuboff, *Surveillance Capitalism* and Cohen, *Between Truth and Power*
- [Levy and Barocas, Refractive Surveillance](#) 
- Eubanks, [Automating Inequality, Chapter 2](#) .

Friday, November 1: Session Eighteen:

- Hacker & Pierson, "[Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer--and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class](#)," *Politics & Society* 38(2), 2010, pp. 168-197
- Naidu and Ash, [As if the last 30 years never happened Part I](#) [.\(https://lpeblog.org/2018/10/19/as-if-the-last-30-years-never-happened-towards-a-new-law-and-economics-part-1/\)](https://lpeblog.org/2018/10/19/as-if-the-last-30-years-never-happened-towards-a-new-law-and-economics-part-1/)
- [Common Cause description of H.R. 1](#) [.\(https://www.commoncause.org/our-work/constitution-courts-and-democracy-issues/hr-1/\)](https://www.commoncause.org/our-work/constitution-courts-and-democracy-issues/hr-1/)
- [Heritage Foundation description of H.R. 1](#) [.\(https://www.heritage.org/election-integrity/report/the-facts-about-hr-1-the-the-people-act-2019\)](https://www.heritage.org/election-integrity/report/the-facts-about-hr-1-the-the-people-act-2019)
- [Brennan Center Democracy Report](#) [.\(https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Report_Democracy%20Agenda%202018.pdf\)](https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Report_Democracy%20Agenda%202018.pdf), read pages 3-4 (overview) and 20-26 (Reduce the influence of money in politics)

Week Ten: Ideology, multi-system explanations, and the limits of institutional designThursday, November 7: Session Nineteen: Ideas and multi-system explanations

- Benkler, "[Network Pragmatism: Towards an Open Social Economy](#)," draft proceedings chapter for M. Archer, P. Donati, M. Sánchez Sorondo (eds), *Towards a Participatory Society: New Roads to Social and Cultural Integration*, Proceedings of the 2017 Plenary Session, Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences 28 April – 2 May 2017, pp. 1-14
- Benkler, [Power and Productivity](#) (https://www.dropbox.com/s/nqmjglrv4f9brz7/power%20and%20productivity%20book%20chapter%20nov_4_19_benkler.pdf?dl=0), November 2019
- Optional: Benkler, "[A Political Economy of Oligarchy: Winner-take-all ideology, superstar norms, and the rise of the 1%](#)," Sept. 2017, pp. 1-19 & 50-64

Friday, November 8: Session Twenty: Diversity and the limits of institutional design

- Thelen, [Varieties of Liberalization and the New Politics of Social Solidarity](#), Cambridge University Press, 2014, ch. 1
- Watson, "[Barcode Empires: Politics, Digital Technology, and Comparative Retail Firm Strategies](#)," Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy, University of California, Berkeley, revised: Feb. 10, 2011
- Pierson, [Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis](#), Princeton University Press, 2011, ch. 4 ("The Limits of Institutional Design")

Week Eleven: Solutions

Thursday, November 14: Session Twenty One: Rewriting the Rules exercise

- Stiglitz, "[Rewriting the Rules of the American Economy: An Agenda for Growth and Shared Prosperity](#)([Links to an external site.](#)) (<https://www.researchgate.net/file.PostFileLoader.html?id=5660ee735cd9e3d9fe8b4576&assetKey=AS%3A302751853023232%401449193074997>)," Roosevelt Institute, 2015, executive summary and introduction (pp. 7-21)
 - After you read this once, go back and look at the list of proposed policies in the executive summary. How do these fit the understanding we have come to develop about inequality? What, if anything, is missing? What have you seen here that seems to suggest a causal mechanism that we did not consider or a type of solution we did not consider?

Friday, November 15: Session Twenty Two: Team presentations

Week Twelve: Solutions

Thursday, November 21: Session Twenty Three: Team presentations

Friday, November 22: Session Twenty Four: Team presentation and concluding session

Final Paper

There final paper is due December 9. I am not expecting an original research paper, but rather a critical reflection, analysis, or critique anchored in two or three documents, or in a discrete policy proposal or argument about technology and inequality. You may pick any two-three documents we read together during the term; you may pick a topic and documents from your team work in preparation for the solutions classes. If there is a topic you think would have fit the class, and you want to write about it, that would be also work. Please limit the paper to no more than 2500-3000 words.

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Course Summary:

Date

Details
