
BILLIONAIRESWATCH.ORG in Fall 2019 (PO3066)

Course Code	PO3066	Professor(s)	Peter Haegel
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	G-L17
Class Schedule	MR: 13:45-15:05 in C-102	Office Hours	Mon + Thu 15h15-16h15
Credits	4	Email	phaegel@aup.edu
Semester	Fall 2019	Office Tel. Ext.	

Course Description

In times of rising inequalities, do the superrich rule? “billionaireswatch.org” is combining a research seminar with watchdog activism, exploring the roles of billionaires in politics in order to develop a framework with which to scrutinize their influence. First, we study social science approaches that help us to conceptualize billionaires in politics, drawing on the political sociology of elites and theories of agency. We also examine how civil society may foster transparency to improve accountability. Then, we use these analytical tools to research case studies of billionaires as social and political entrepreneurs, which will also address normative questions concerning billionaires’ power. Throughout the course, our research will be geared towards building a watchdog website – the underlying assumption being that, at the very least, the political impact of private wealth should be transparent. We will develop profiles of individual billionaires and their political interventions, and discuss how to improve the website so that it fosters civic debate about political equality and the danger of plutocracy.

Course Learning Outcomes

how to study the role of elites and individuals in politics
to assess the political consequences of economic inequality
how (some) billionaires influence politics
about the potential of transparency to produce accountability
about the potential of civil society to affect elite behavior

General Education

Course Outline

CLASS SCHEDULE:

2 September: Introduction + practical matters

Our website: www.billionaireswatch.org

5 September:

Required reading:

Alvaredo, Facundo, Anthony B. Atkinson, Thomas Piketty, and Emmanuel Saez (2013). The Top 1 Percent in International and Historical Perspective. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27/3: 3-20.

And check out your position on the globalrichlist: <http://www.globalrichlist.com/>

Further reading:

Atkinson, Anthony B. and Thomas Piketty (eds) (2010). *Top Incomes: A Global Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Atkinson, Anthony B. (2015). *Inequality: What Can Be Done?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Frank, Robert H., and Philip J. Cook (1995) [2010]. *The Winner-Take-All Society: Why the Few at the Top Get So Much More Than the Rest of Us*. New edition. London: Virgin Books.

Freund, Caroline (2016). *Rich People Poor Countries: The Rise of Emerging-Market Tycoons and their Mega Firms*. Washington, DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, online: <http://bookstore.piie.com/book-store/7038.html> .

Milanovic, Branko 2016. *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

OECD (2011). *Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Piketty, Thomas (2014). *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Rosen, Sherwin (1981). The Economics of Superstars. *American Economic Review* 71: 845-858.

World Inequality Report 2018: <http://wir2018.wid.world/executive-summary.html>.

8 September: Last day to DROP/ADD courses online

9 September:

Required reading:

West, Darrell M. (2014). *Billionaires: Reflections on the Upper Crust*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1-29.

Also take a look at:

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2014/billionaires-us-political-power-index-november2014>

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2014/billionaires-global-political-power-index>

Further reading:

Green, Jeffrey Edward (2013). Rawls and the Forgotten Figure of the Most Advantaged: In Defense of Reasonable Envy toward the Superrich. *American Political Science Review* 107/1: 123-138.

POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF ELITES

12 September:

Required reading:

Hartmann, Michael (2007). *The Sociology of Elites*. New York: Routledge, pp. 5-12 ("Mosca"), 18-21, 31-39.

Dahl, Robert A. (1958). A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model. *The American Political Science Review* 52/2: 463-469.

16 September:

Required reading:

Hartmann, Michael (2007). *The Sociology of Elites*. New York: Routledge, pp. 41-60.

Check out the following websites:

<http://nndb.com/>, <http://www.opensecrets.org>, <http://sunlightfoundation.com/>

Further reading:

Graz, Jean-Christophe (2003). How Powerful Are Transnational Elite Clubs? The Social Myth of the World Economic Forum. *New Political Economy* 8/3: 321-340.

Khan, Shamus Rahman (2012). The Sociology of Elites. *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 361-377.

19 September:

Required reading:

Winters, Jeffrey A. (2011). *Oligarchy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, xi-xviii + 1-39.

Further reading:

Freeland, Chrystia (2012). *Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super-Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else*. New York: Penguin, pp. 188-228.

Hacker, Jacob S., and Paul Pierson (2010). *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer – And Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Mount, Ferdinand (2012). *The New Few or a Very British Oligarchy: Power and Inequality in Britain Now*. London: Simon & Schuster.

Oxfam (2014). *Working for the Few: Political capture and economic inequality*. Oxfam Briefing Paper, 20 January 2014, online:
https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-working-for-few-political-capture-economic-inequality-200114-en_3.pdf .

Vogel, Kenneth P. (2014). *Big Money: 2.5 Billion Dollars, One Suspicious Vehicle, and a Pimp - On the Trail of the Ultra-Rich Hijacking American Politics*. New York: PublicAffairs.

Winters, Jeffrey A., and Page, Benjamin I. (2009). Oligarchy in the United States? *Perspectives on Politics* 7/4: 731-751.

23 September:

Required reading:

Skocpol, Theda, and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez (2016). The Koch Network and Republican Party Extremism. *Perspectives on Politics* 14/3: 681-699.

Further reading:

Brulle, Robert J. (2014). Institutionalizing delay: foundation funding and the creation of US climate change counter-movement organizations. *Climatic Change* 122/4: 681-694.

Greenpeace USA (2010). *Koch Industries Secretly Funding the Climate Denial Machine*. Washington, DC: Greenpeace USA.

Jacques, Peter/ Dunlap, Riley/ Freeman, Mark (2008). The Organisation of Denial: Conservative Think Tanks and Environmental Skepticism. *Environmental Politics* 17/3: 349–85.

Mayer, Jane (2016). *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires behind the Rise of the Radical Right*. New York: Penguin Random House.

Schulman, Daniel (2014). *Sons of Wichita: How the Koch Brothers Became America's Most Powerful and Private Dynasty*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.

26 September:

Required reading:

Sewell, William H., Jr. (1992). A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation. *American Journal of Sociology* 98/1: 1-29, esp. 1-21.

Kaufman, Michael T. (2002). *Soros: The Life and Times of a Messianic Billionaire*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 163-165.

Porter, Anna (2015). *Buying a Better World: George Soros and Billionaire Philanthropy*. Toronto: TAP Books, 201-204.

Soros, George (2011). My Philanthropy. In: Sudetic, Chuck. *The Philanthropy of George Soros*. New York: PublicAffairs, 1-2, 37-38.

Further reading:

Archer, Margaret (2000). *Being Human: The Problem of Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archer, Margaret (2007). *Making Our Way through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barnes, Barry (2000). ***Understanding Agency: Social Theory and Responsible Action***. London: Sage.

Beaumont, Elizabeth (2011). Promoting Political Agency, Addressing Political Inequality: A Multilevel Model of Internal Political Efficacy. *The Journal of Politics* 73/1: 216-231.

Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Ann Mische (1998). What is Agency? *American Journal of Sociology* 103: 962-1023.

Giddens, Anthony (1984). *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity.

30 September:

Required reading:

Cook, Fay Lomax, Benjamin I. Page, and Rachel Moskowitz (2014). Political Engagement by Wealthy Americans. *Political Science Quarterly* 129/3: 381-398.

Further reading:

Bartels, Larry M. (2008). *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gilens, Martin (2012). *Affluence & Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page (2014). Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens. *Perspectives on Politics* 12/3: 564-581.

Page, Benjamin I., Larry M. Bartels, and Jason Seawright (2013). Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans. *Perspectives on Politics* 11/1: 51-73.

3 October:

Page, Benjamin I., Jason Seawright, and Matthew J. Lacombe (2019). *Billionaires and Stealth Politics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 25-53.

TRANSPARENCY AND WATCHDOG ACTIVISM

7 October:

Required reading:

Fox, Jonathan (2007). The uncertain relationship between transparency and accountability. *Development in Practice* 17/4: 663-671.

Etzioni, Amitai (2010). Is Transparency the Best Disinfectant? *Journal of Political Philosophy* 18/4: 389–404.

AND ... take 10 minutes to look at the following website: <https://www.activistfacts.com/>

Further reading:

European Journal of Social Theory, Special Issue on “Logics of Transparency in Late

Modernity", May 2015.

Joshi, Anuradha, and Peter P. Houtzager (2012). Widgets or watchdogs? Conceptual explorations in social accountability. *Public Management Review* 14/2: 145-162.

Loewenstein, George, Cass R. Sunstein, and Russell Golman (2013). Disclosure: Psychology changes everything. Regulatory Policy Program Working Paper RPP-2013-20. Cambridge, MA: Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University.

10 October:

Research exercise #1: Evaluation of watchdog websites (10% of final grade)

Possible choices:

<http://www.transparency.org/>, <http://www.globalwitness.org/>, <https://www.charitywatch.org/>, <http://www.opensecrets.org/>, <http://www.hrw.org/>, <http://www.finance-watch.org/>, <http://www.foodwatch.org/> (mainly in Dutch, French or German), <http://www.corpwatch.org/>, <http://www.prwatch.org/>, <http://www.consumerwatchdog.org/>, <http://www.natowatch.org/>, <https://www.tni.org/>, <http://www.stopcorporateimpunity.org/> - or others in consultation with the professor

14 October:

Required reading:

Lieberman, Evan. S., Daniel N. Posner, and Lily L. Tsai (2014). Does information lead to more active citizenship? An Evaluation of the Impact of the Uwezo Initiative in Kenya. *World Development* 60: 69-83. *Read pp. 69-71 and 76-79, browse the rest!*

Bauhr, Monika and Grimes, Marcia (2014). Indignation or Resignation: The Implications of Transparency for Societal Accountability. *Governance* 27/2: 291–320. *Read pp. 291-299 and 309-311, browse the rest!*

Highly recommended:

Fox, Jonathan A. (2015). Social accountability: what does the evidence really say? *World Development* 72: 346-361, esp. 346-348 (sections 1+2) and 352-357.

Further reading:

Barry, Colin M., K. Chad Clay, and Michael E. Flynn (2012). Avoiding the Spotlight: Human Rights Shaming and Foreign Direct Investment. *International Studies Quarterly* 57: 532–544.

Gillies, Alexandra (2010). Reputational Concerns and the Emergence of Oil Sector Transparency as an International Norm. *International Studies Quarterly* 54/1: 103–126.

Kosack, Stephen, and Archon Fung (2014). Does Transparency Improve Governance? *Annual Review of Political Science* 17: 65-87.

Murdie, Amanda. M., and David R. Davis (2012). Shaming and Blaming: Using Events Data to Assess the Impact of Human Rights INGOs. *International Studies Quarterly* 56/1: 1-16

van Zyl, Albert (2014). How civil society organizations close the gap between transparency and accountability. *Governance* 27/2: 347-356.

17 October: Midterm exam in class

21 October:

Discussion: What should billionaireswatch.org aim to achieve, and how?

CASE STUDIES: BILLIONAIRES AS POLITICAL ACTORS

24 October:

Required reading:

West, Darrell M. (2014). *Billionaires: Reflections on the Upper Crust*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 33-54 + 92-109. Online:
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aup/detail.action?docID=1781844>

Further reading:

Ball, Molly (2012). Who Is Sheldon Adelson, the Gingrich Super PAC's Billionaire Backer? *The Atlantic*, 25 January 2012, online: <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/01/who-is-sheldon-adelson-the-gingrich-super-pacs-billionaire-backer/252003/>

Bennet, James 2012: The New Price of American Politics. *The Atlantic*, October 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2012/10/the/309086/>

28 October:

Required reading:

Stille, Alexander (2007). *The Sack of Rome: Media + Money + Celebrity = Power = Silvio Berlusconi*. London: Penguin, read pp. 120-121, 129-146, 151, 156, 162-169, 174-175, and just browse in between and after.

31 October: fall break, no class!

4 November:

Last day to withdraw from a course or to choose CR/NC grading option

Discussion: new features and content for www.billionaireswatch.org

7 November:

Required reading:

Goss, Kristin A. (2016). Policy plutocrats: How America's Wealthy Seek to Influence Governance. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 49/3: 442-448.

Reich, Rob (2016). Repugnant to the Whole Idea of Democracy? On the Role of Foundations in Democratic Societies. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 49/3: 466-472.

Further reading:

Bishop, Matthew, and Michael Green (2008). *Philanthrocapitalism: How the Rich Can Save the*

World. New York: Bloomsbury.

Callahan, David (2017). *The Givers: Wealth, Power, and Philanthropy in a New Gilded Age*. New York: Vintage Books.

Carnegie, Andrew (1889). Wealth. *North American Review* 148/391: 653-665.

Edwards, Michael (2010). *Small Change: Why Business Won't Save the World*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Giridharadas, Anand (2018). *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World*. New York: Knopf.

Ostrower, Francie (1995). *Why the Wealthy Give: The Culture of Elite Philanthropy*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

Reich, Rob (2018). *Just Giving: Why Philanthropy is Failing Democracy and How It Can Do Better*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

West, Darrell M. (2014). *Billionaires: Reflections on the Upper Crust*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 55-91. Online:
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aup/detail.action?docID=1781844>

11 November: Armistice break, no class!

14 November:

Required reading:

Birn, Anne-Emanuelle (2014). Philanthrocapitalism, Past and Present: The Rockefeller Foundation, the Gates Foundation, and the setting(s) of the international/ global health agenda. *Hypothesis* 12/1: 1-27.

Further reading:

Burch, Tiffany, Nathaniel Wander, and Jeff Collin (2010). Uneasy Money: The Instituto Carlos Slim de la Salud, Tobacco Philanthropy and Conflict of Interest in Global Health. *Tobacco Control* 2010/19: e1-e9.

Harman, Sophie (2016). The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Legitimacy in Global

Health Governance. *Global Governance* 22/3: 349-368.

McGoey, Linsey (2015). *No Such thing as a Free Gift: The Gates Foundation and the Price of Philanthropy*. London: Verso.

Youde, Jeremy (2013). The Rockefeller and Gates Foundations in Global Health Governance. *Global Society* 27/2: 139-158.

18 November:

Discussion: the power of billionaires, and how to demonstrate it.

21 November:

Presentations of research exercise #2: case study of a billionaire's political or social engagement(s) (10% of final grade)

25 November:

Presentations of research exercise #2: case study of a billionaire's political or social engagement(s) (10% of final grade)

28 November:

Required reading:

Carole Cadwalladr, "Revealed: How US billionaire helped to back Brexit", *The Observer*, 26 February 2017, online: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/feb/26/us-billionaire-mercero-helped-back-brexit>

Carole Cadwalladr, "The great British Brexit robbery: how our democracy was hijacked", *The Observer*, 7 May 2017", online: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/07/the-great-british-brexit-robbery-hijacked-democracy?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

Jane Meyer, "The reclusive hedge-fund tycoon behind the Trump presidency", *The New Yorker*, 27 March 2017, online: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/27/the-reclusive-hedge-fund-tycoon-behind-the-trump-presidency>

Further reading:

Arsenault, Amelia, and Manuel Castells (2008). Switching power: Rupert Murdoch and the global business of media politics: A sociological analysis. *International Sociology* 23/4: 488-513.

2 December:

Required reading:

Hägel, Peter (2019). *Electioneering Security: Sheldon Adelson and the Israel-Palestine Conflict*. Draft manuscript. Paris: The American University of Paris.

5 December:

Thinking about the future of billionaireswatch.org

12 December: General exercise during the final exam period, 12h00-14h30

Final project / term paper due! (30% of final grade)

Textbooks

This course doesn't have any textbook.

Attendance Policy

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an

absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

IN ALL CASES OF MISSED COURSE MEETINGS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROFESSOR, AND FOR ARRANGING TO MAKE UP MISSED WORK, RESTS SOLELY WITH THE STUDENT.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods.

Grading Policy

GRADING:

- a. Class participation (15% of final grade)
- b. Midterm on 17 October 2019, in class (25% of final grade)
- c. Research exercise #1: evaluation of other watchdog websites (10% of final grade)
- d. Research exercise #2: case study of a billionaire's political or social engagement(s) (10% of final grade)
- e. Term paper (30% of final grade), due on 12 December 2019 - you have two options:
 - 1. Make a substantial contribution to the development of the website billionaireswatch.org
 - 2. Write a research paper on billionaires in politics
- f. Pop quiz (unannounced) in class on the assigned reading(s) of the session (10%)
- g. General exercise during the final exam period on 12 December 2019, 12h00-14h30

I reserve **A** for outstanding work, demonstrating superior effort, mastery of information and understanding of concepts. A grade of **B** indicates a solid effort, a good grasp of information, and above-average comprehension of concepts. A grade of **C** reflects a minimally acceptable effort and comprehension, while a grade of **C-** or below indicates results that are less than

satisfactory.

An excellent class-participation grade will depend on consistent attendance, regular participation, as well as the ability to respond to and to respect the contributions and views of your peers. Simple attendance without participation will earn you a class-participation grade of C.

Guidelines for written work:

- You are expected to analyze – rather than summarize – your topic, and to develop your argument(s) convincingly.
- Your writing should be coherent. Help the reader to follow your line of reasoning by making it explicit: An introduction should outline what you will present and why it is interesting. The main body should develop your argument(s) step by step, and a conclusion should sum them up.
- Imagine that the reader is **unfamiliar** with both the topic/question and the sources you are discussing.

All written work must be your own. **Students submitting plagiarized work for any assignment will automatically receive a grade of F for the whole course.** Plagiarism is defined as the act of misrepresenting work done by others as one's own. It constitutes a serious violation of AUP rules, and may result in more serious disciplinary action.

Other
