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AMERICAN SOCIETY AND PUBLIC POLICY
General Education: United States in the World 31 (US-World 31)
Professors: Theda Skocpol (Government) and Mary Waters (Sociology)
Fall 2016, Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00am-11:00am
Belfer Case Study Room (S-020), CGIS South Building
Course website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/14255>

In a period of contentious politics, Americans are debating fundamental issues about economic wellbeing and social justice. How can the nation expand opportunity and security for workers and families following years of rising socioeconomic disparities and shifts in the relationship of families to work? How might we redefine and regulate access to U.S. citizenship in a period of rising legal and illegal immigration from new parts of the world? Amid partisan polarization and rising economic inequalities, can American democracy address climate change and environmental risks in effective and equitable ways? Controversies in these areas are not new, and US-World 31 will introduce students to the ways the United States has dealt with each of these sets of challenges in the past -- and how U.S. approaches compare to those of other major nations.

“American Society and Public Policy” starts with an overview of major societal trends and patterns of inequality in the United States. Then the course probes in some depth recent dynamics in civic participation and electoral and party politics, U.S. social programs and immigration policies, and responses to environmental crises and climate change. Taught by an interdisciplinary team, the course synthesizes several kinds of data and features excellent scholarship using various research approaches – including demography, social surveys, interviews, organizational analyses and ethnographic observations. Sociological approaches are enriched by evidence about institutional arrangements and organized groups in politics. The course shows how present-day policy dilemmas and choices are shaped by previous accomplishments and shortfalls, and reveals the ways in which debates are skewed by power differentials in society and in the governing process.

Students who take this course will have more to say and think about when they read a news article or hear about a policy debate on television or on the internet. The course illuminates U.S. policies about social security and health care, immigration, and climate change, placing them in cross-national perspective and linking past successes and failures to current controversies – including those playing out in the November 2016 elections. This provides a deep understanding of the issues and values at stake. In section discussions and written assignments, students will also have opportunities to make real-world arguments, along with demonstrating mastery of course materials.

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COURSE STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS

Course Meetings. USW31 includes two one-hour lectures per week on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00am to 11:00am, plus a weekly one-hour section discussion at a time to be scheduled on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. Students are required to attend sections and participate actively, and 20% of the final grade is based on section participation. Lectures will often include participatory discussions, back and forth with the professors. Attendance at all course meetings is required. After the lectures, PowerPoint summaries and various figures and tables will be posted on the course website.

Short Writing Assignments. Requirements will include two short writing assignments, to be submitted to the course website, each of which will count for 20% of the final grade (40% total).

- Assignment No. 1 has two parts: 1) a blog post due Tuesday, October 11, and, 2) comments on blog posts by two other students, due Sunday, October 16.
- Assignment No. 2, due Tuesday, November 29 (or earlier in the semester if a student chooses), will involve using course materials from Units 1-4 (not Unit 5) to inform an analysis of one of three books: Katherine Cramer's *The Politics of Resentment*; Charles Murray's *Coming Apart*; OR Robert Putnam's *Our Kids*.

Both assignments are described in more detail on the [next page](#).

Late assignments cannot be negotiated. Late assignments lose one grade level for each day or fraction of a day in their delayed arrival. In other words, a B-plus assignment handed in two days late will receive the grade of B-minus. If a student misses a deadline due to illness, that must be documented by the student's Resident Dean and, if applicable, the University Health Services.

Midterm Examination. There will be a written, in-class, one-hour midterm examination on Monday, October 24. The midterm will count for 20% of the final grade.

Course Final Assignment. By Saturday, December 3 (or as soon as possible after the last course section has met), a final assignment will be posted on the course website. Course staff will notify students as soon as it has been posted. The completed final assignment must be submitted to the course website by 11:59pm on Friday, December 9. The final assignment will count for 20% of the final grade. **Late final assignments will not be accepted**, unless the student has a medical or emergency excuse verified by the student's Resident Dean and, if applicable, the University Health Services.

There is NO three-hour final examination for this course. All coursework will be completed by Friday, December 9.

Students must achieve passing grades in all components of the course to achieve a passing grade overall. Lectures, section discussions, and readings will ordinarily cover somewhat different themes and materials -- and students are responsible for completing and showing mastery in all phases of the course. In other words, skipping sections or omitting assignments is not an option; such omissions cannot be redeemed by high grades in other class components.

Course Collaboration Policy. For the short writing assignments, midterm exam, and course final assignment, each person is expected to present his or her own work. Discussion is always encouraged, but, when doing individual work on writing assignments or exams, students should not exchange written outlines or texts. Work presented by an individual student must always properly cite quotations and indicate sources of evidence for each claim. Although materials beyond the course may be used, students are expected to master the course readings and cite parts of them where relevant.

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SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (Details)

Assignment No. 1 has two parts.

1. A blog post on how understanding civic or electoral participation, party dynamics, or money in politics helps us understand some aspect of election 2016. Due to course website by 11:59pm on Tuesday, October 11.

Prepare a blog posting on some key issue or development in the 2016 election, casting light on it using what we have learned about U.S. civic participation, electoral or party politics, or the dynamics about money in politics. The post should be about 1000 words and you can also include pictures or graphs. For example, you might analyze positions or actions taken by a candidate, party, or advocacy group – or examine some trends that have emerged in the election season. Back up your arguments about current developments with appropriate specific references to empirical findings or arguments we have explored in readings, lectures, or section discussions. We encourage you to link your analysis to online commentary, debate, or news articles that illustrate the argument you are making.

2. Comment on two other students' blog posts. Due to course website by 11:59pm on Sunday, October 16.

The second part of this assignment is that each student should then make a comment of approximately 250 words each on two different classmates' blog posts. You can comment on the argument, either agreeing or disagreeing with it. Or you can add new evidence to support or refute your classmates' arguments.

The point of this assignment is not only to relate the class readings and lectures to the 2016 election but also to foster written debate and dialogue among class members. This dialog should of course be respectful and based on what you are learning in class and how it relates to the class materials.

Assignment No. 2. Analysis of a thought-provoking book.

Six- to eight-page paper, double-spaced, is due to course website by 11:59pm on Tuesday November 29. Note that students are free to submit this assignment much earlier in the semester if the scheduling works better, because it does not depend on materials covered in the final unit of the course. Pick ONE of the following three books and draw on course materials to offer an informed analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the author's findings, arguments, and conclusions.

- Katherine J. Cramer. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- Charles Murray. *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010*. New York: Crown Forum, 2012.
- Robert D. Putnam. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015.

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ACCESS TO READINGS

Books Required for Reading Assignments and for Short Writing Assignment No. 2 are listed below (ordered by assignment date). All are available from the [Harvard COOP](#) and will be on reserve at Lamont Library.

- Jake Rosenfeld. *What Unions No Longer Do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. [Hollis Record](#).
- Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer -- and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010. [Hollis Record](#).
Note: Although only two chapters from Winner-Take-All Politics are assigned (Unit 1, Lectures 1-5), we've included it in the list of required books because the cost per student for a coursepack with only the two chapters would be about \$15.00, which, except for the publisher's price of \$16.00 for a new paperback, is much more than the \$7.99 price listed by the publisher for several eBook options (Kindle, Nook, GooglePlay, iBooks, etc.). Also, the Harvard COOP will likely have several inexpensive used copies of the book for much less than what a coursepack would cost.
- Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. (2016 edition ok too.)
Note: Entire book is available for free viewing AND download (as pdf) via the View Online button in the [Hollis Record](#).
- Kathryn J. Edin and H. Luke Shaefer. *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Boston, MA and New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015.
Note: Entire book is available for free viewing (But NOT for copy, print, or download) via View Online button in [Hollis Record](#). Also note, apparently only one person at Harvard can view this book online at a time. So, it may make best sense to buy the print copy.
- OPTIONS FOR SHORT WRITING ASSIGNMENT NO. 2 (buy one):
 - Katherine J. Cramer. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016. [Hollis Record](#).
 - Charles Murray. *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010*. New York: Crown Forum, 2012. [Hollis Record](#).
 - Robert D. Putnam. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015. [Hollis Record](#).

All other readings for this course are available online either directly or via Hollis. Links are provided in the syllabus' Course Outline and Reading List (next). There is no coursepack for this course.

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COURSE OUTLINE AND READING LIST

Lecture 1 (Wed. 8/31): Introduction to the Course (Skocpol and Waters)

No Class (Mon. 9/05): Labor Day holiday.

UNIT I. SHIFTING INEQUALITIES IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Lecture 2 (Wed. 9/07): Demographic Changes in the United States and Europe (Waters).

No Sections: Teaching Fellows will announce sectioning procedure during Wednesday's lecture.

Study Cards are due on Thursday, September 8.

Lecture 3 (Mon. 9/12): Inequality in Comparative Perspective (Waters)

Lecture 4 (Wed. 9/14): Gender and Family Changes in the United States (Waters)

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): Why have economic inequalities increased, and does it matter?

Lecture 5 (Mon. 9/19): Explaining the Sharp Rise in U.S. Economic Inequality (Skocpol)

Readings for Lectures 1-5 (in order):

Richard V. Reeves. "[The Dangerous Separation of the American Upper Middle Class.](#)" *Brookings Social Mobility Memos* blog, September 3, 2015.

Bruce Western and Becky Pettit. "[Incarceration and Social Inequality.](#)" *Daedalus* 139(3) (Summer 2010): 8-19.

Jake Rosenfeld. *What Unions No Longer Do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014. [Hollis Record](#). READ CHAPTERS 1-7.

Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson. *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer -- and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010. [Hollis Record](#). READ CHAPTERS 1 AND 2 (pp. 11-72).

Martin Feldstein. "[Reducing Poverty, Not Inequality.](#)" *The Public Interest* 137 (Fall 1999): 33-41.

UNIT II. CHANGES IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Lecture 6 (Wed. 9/21): From Membership to Management in American Civic Life (Skocpol)

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): What has happened to voluntary organizations, interest groups, and civic participation?

Readings for Lecture 6:

Kay Lehman Schlozman, Henry E. Brady, and Sidney Verba. "[The Big Tilt: Participatory Inequality in America.](#)" *The American Prospect* 8(32) (May-June 1997).

Kay Lehman Schlozman. "[Did Working Women Kill the PTA?](#)" *The American Prospect* 11(20) (September, 2000).

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Andrea L. Campbell. "[How Social Security Encourages Older Americans to be Active Citizens.](#)" SSN Key Findings brief, Scholars Strategy Network, January 2012.

Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. [Hollis Record](#). READ ENTIRE BOOK.

Lecture 7 (Mon. 9/26): U.S. Voting and Political Parties (Skocpol)

Lecture 8 (Wed. 9/28): How Money Matters in Politics (Skocpol)

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): How has U.S. electoral democracy changed?

Lecture 9 (Mon. 10/03): The Roots and Consequences of Polarization (Skocpol)

Readings for Lectures 7-9:

Selected briefs (listed below) from "[SSN Spotlight: Forward or Back on Voting Rights?](#)" Collection of SSN Basic Facts and Key Findings briefs on voting rights by various SSN scholars, January 2014.

- Lorraine C. Minnite. [The Misleading Myth of Voter Fraud in American Elections.](#)
- Keith Gunnar Bentele and Erin O'Brien. [Convincing Evidence that States Aim to Suppress Minority Voting.](#)
- David C. Kimball. [Evidence that Negative Views of Minority Voters Influence Public Worries about Election Fraud.](#)
- William W. Franko, Nathan J. Kelly, and Christopher Witko. [How Roadblocks to Voting Make Income Inequality Worse.](#)
- Marion Johnson. [How Conservatives Rewrote North Carolina Election Laws to Discourage Voter Participation.](#)
- Rebecca Sager. [North Carolina's "Moral Monday" Protests in Defense of Equal Voting Rights and Social Protections.](#)
- Richard F. Doner, Jonathan Schneer, and Daniel Amsterdam. [How Recent Changes in Voting Laws Threaten Equal Rights in Georgia - And Beyond.](#)
- Daniel A. Smith. [When Florida Rolled Back Early Voting, Minorities were Especially Affected.](#)

Tierney Sneed. "[Study: Yup, Voter ID Laws Dampen Turnout For Minorities And Liberals.](#)" *Talking Points Memo*, February 9, 2016.

Zoltan Hajnal, Nazita Lajevardi, and Lindsay Nielson. "[Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes.](#)" Work in Progress, University of California at San Diego, 2016.

Peter Beinart. "[The Republican Party's White Strategy.](#)" *The Atlantic*, July/August 2016.

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

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UNIT III. U.S. SOCIAL POLICY: OPPORTUNITY, SECURITY, INEQUALITY

Lecture 10 (Wed. 10/05): The Development of U.S. Social Policies (Skocpol)

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): *How and why is the U.S. welfare state distinctive?*

Readings for Lecture 10:

Christopher Howard. "[Tax Expenditures: What They Are and Who Benefits.](#)" SSN Basic Facts brief, Scholars Strategy Network, January 2012.

Suzanne Mettler. "[Why Americans Can't See Government -- And Why It Matters.](#)" SSN Key Findings brief, Scholars Strategy Network, October 2011.

Theda Skocpol. "[Universal Appeal: Politically Viable Policies to Combat Poverty.](#)" *The Brookings Review* 9(3) (Summer 1991): 28-33.

No Class (Mon. 10/10): Columbus Day holiday.

Due to course website by 11:59pm on Tuesday October 11:

Part 1 of Assignment No. 1: A blog post on how understanding civic or electoral participation, party dynamics, or money in politics helps us understand some aspect of election 2016. Details on page 3.

Lecture 11 (Wed. 10/12): Policy Responses to Poverty (Waters)

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): *Is the U.S. safety net for the poor adequate?*

Reading for Lecture 11:

Kathryn J. Edin and H. Luke Shaefer. *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*. Boston, MA and New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015.

[Hollis Record](#). READ ENTIRE BOOK.

Due to course website by 11:59pm on Sunday October 16:

Part 2 of Assignment No. 1: Comments on two other students' blog posts. Details on page 3.

Lecture 12 (Mon. 10/17): The Long War about Health Insurance (Skocpol)

Lecture 13 (Wed. 10/19): Ongoing Disputes over Family and Medical Leave and Minimum Wages (Skocpol)

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): *Can U.S. social policies meet the needs of today's working families?*

Readings for Lectures 12-13:

Anne-Marie Slaughter. "[Why Women Still Can't Have it All.](#)" *The Atlantic*, July-August 2012.

Alison Earle, Zitha Mokomane, and Jody Heymann. "[International Perspectives on Work-Family Policies: Lessons from the World's Most Competitive Economies.](#)" *The Future of Children* 21(2) (Fall 2011): 191-210.

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Ruth Milkman and Eileen Appelbaum. "[Paid Family Leave in California and New Jersey: The Benefits for Working Families and Employers.](#)" SSN Basic Facts brief, Scholars Strategy Network, March 2012.

Ruth Milkman and Eileen Appelbaum. "[Low-Wage Workers and Paid Family Leave: The California Experience.](#)" SSN Key Findings brief, Scholars Strategy Network, March 2012.

Midterm (Mon. 10/24): ONE-HOUR MIDTERM EXAM, IN-CLASS.

UNIT IV. IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Lecture 14 (Wed. 10/26): Regulating Immigration: Development of Policy and Laws (Waters)

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): Can and should laws effectively limit immigration to the U.S.?

Readings for Lecture 14:

Joseph Carens. "[Aliens and Citizens: The Case for Open Borders.](#)" *The Review of Politics* 49(2) (Spring 1987): 251-273.

Douglas S. Massey. "[America's Immigration Policy Fiasco: Learning from Past Mistakes.](#)" *Daedalus* 142(3) (Summer 2013): 5-15.

Panel on the Integration of Immigrants into American Society, commissioned by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. "[Legal and Institutional Context for Immigrant Integration.](#)" pp. 59-92, Chapter 2 in Mary C. Waters and Marisa Gerstein Pineau, eds., *The Integration of Immigrants into American Society*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015.

Lecture 15 (Mon. 10/31): The Demography and Geography of Immigration (Waters)

Lecture 16 (Wed. 11/02): Race, Undocumented States and Assimilation (Waters)

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): Are new immigrants assimilating? How should we measure assimilation?

Readings for Lectures 15-16:

Roberto G. Gonzales. "[Learning to be Illegal: Undocumented Youth and Shifting Legal Contexts in the Transition to Adulthood.](#)" *American Sociological Review* 76(4) (August 2011): 602-19.

Mary C. Waters and Philip Kasinitz. "The War on Crime and the War on Immigrants: Racial and Legal Exclusion in the Twenty-First-Century United States," pp. 115-144, Chapter 4 in Nancy Foner and Patrick Simon, eds., [Fear, Anxiety and National Identity: Immigration and Belonging in North America and Western Europe](#). New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2015. *How to access: Follow link to RSF book webpage where you can "order" entire book for free. RSF will email you a download link for pdf of entire book.*

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Panel on the Integration of Immigrants into American Society, commissioned by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. "[Summary](#)," pp. 1-14 in Mary C. Waters and Marisa Gerstein Pineau, eds., *The Integration of Immigrants into American Society*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015.

Panel on the Integration of Immigrants into American Society, commissioned by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. "[Political and Civic Dimensions of Immigrant Integration](#)," pp. 159-206, Chapter 4 in Mary C. Waters and Marisa Gerstein Pineau, eds., *The Integration of Immigrants into American Society*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015.

Lecture 17 (Mon. 11/07): Integration and Cultural Fears: The U.S. and Europe (Waters)

Lecture 18 (Wed. 11/09): Immigration Review (Waters) and Election Roundup (Skocpol and Waters)

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): *How do European countries manage immigration and are there American approaches that would work for Western European societies?*

Readings for Lectures 17-18:

Aristide Zolberg and Long Litt Woon. "[Why Islam is Like Spanish: Cultural Incorporation in Europe and the United States](#)." *Politics and Society* 27(1) (March 1999): 5-38.

Katherine Fennelly. "[Why Immigration Worries Americans -- Especially Rural Residents](#)." SSN Basic Facts brief, Scholars Strategy Network, February, 2012.

Jeanne Park. "[Europe's Migration Crisis](#)." CFR Backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations, September 23, 2015.

Nancy Foner and Richard Alba. "[Immigrant Religion in the U.S. and Western Europe: Bridge or Barrier to Inclusion?](#)" *International Migration Review* 42(2) (June 2008): 360-392.

Nancy Foner and Richard Alba. "[Immigration and the Legacies of the Past: The Impact of Slavery and the Holocaust on Contemporary Immigrants in the United States and Western Europe](#)." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52(4) (October 2010): 798-819.

UNIT V. CLIMATE CHANGE AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Lecture 19 (Mon. 11/14): U.S. Government Faces the Challenge of Climate Change (Skocpol)

Lecture 20 (Wed. 11/16): Making Sense of Public Opinion on Climate Change (Waters)

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): *Why has addressing climate change become so polarizing?*

Readings for Lectures 19-20:

Theda Skocpol. "[Naming the Problem: What It Will Take to Counter Extremism and Engage Americans in the Fight Against Global Warming](#)." Report commissioned by the Rockefeller Family Fund and published online at www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org in January 2013.

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David Roberts. "[The GOP is the World's Only Major Climate-Denialist Party. But Why?](#)" *Vox*, December 2, 2015.

Lecture 21 (Mon. 11/21): Climate Risks and Mitigation Strategies (Waters)

No Class (Wed. 11/23): Thanksgiving Recess begins.

No Sections (Wed.-Fri.) Thanksgiving Recess

Readings for Lecture 21:

John McQuaid. "[The Lessons America Never Learned from Hurricane Katrina.](#)" *The Atlantic*, September 3, 2015.

Brentin Mock. "[Why Louisiana Fought Low-Income Housing in New Orleans After Katrina.](#)" *The Atlantic*, August 28, 2015.

Lecture 22 (Mon. 11/28): Can Carbon Emissions Be Limited in Equitable Ways? (Skocpol)

Readings for Lecture 22:

Scholars Strategy Network, eds. "[SSN Forum on Building Democratic Support for Equitable Carbon Pricing.](#)" Six SSN scholars discuss ways to design economically equitable carbon pricing programs with broad democratic appeal. Scholars Strategy Network, March 2016.

Due to course website by 11:59pm on Tuesday November 29:

Assignment No. 2: Six- to eight-page paper, double-spaced. Use course materials from Units 1-4 to inform an analysis of one of three books: Katherine Cramer's *The Politics of Resentment*; Charles Murray's *Coming Apart*; OR Robert Putnam's *Our Kids*. Details on page 3.

Lecture 23 (Wed. 11/30): Course Wrap-Up (Skocpol and Waters) and Class Discussion

Sections (Wed.-Fri.): Course Review.

THE COURSE FINAL ASSIGNMENT IS DUE TO THE COURSE WEBSITE BY 11:59PM ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9.

By Saturday, December 3 (or as soon as possible after the last course section has met), the final assignment will be posted on the course website. Course staff will notify students as soon as it has been posted. The completed final assignment must be submitted to the course website by 11:59pm on Friday, December 9. The final assignment will count for 20% of the final grade. ***Late final assignments will not be accepted***, unless the student has a medical or emergency excuse verified by the student's Resident Dean and, if applicable, the University Health Services.

Recommended: Review [Course Collaboration Policy](#) on page 2.

Reminder: There is NO three-hour final examination for this course. All coursework will be completed by Friday, December 9.