



**USC Dornsife**

Dana and David Dornsife  
College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

## **452 – Critical Issues: Inequality and the Welfare State**

Fall 2015

Instructor: Rebecca J. Oliver, PhD

Course Time: Tuesday

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### **Course Description**

In this course we engage in a comparative study of welfare state across European countries with an eye on comparisons with the United States. The course examines fundamental differences in social policy and labor regulation, with close attention to dimensions of socio-economic inequality and gender inequality. We study the following central questions. Why are welfare states different across advanced democracies? How do social and labor policies impact gender roles? In which cases are poverty and precariousness more prevalent? Why? What changes are occurring and to what extent are these changes different across cases? The course will be run primarily as a seminar, which is a form of academic instruction that prioritizes in-depth discussion and active, cooperative learning.

### **Learning Objectives**

By the end of the course students will be able to critically theories and evidence within the comparative social policy and will have gained a solid understanding of the political institutions and political economy in the different country cases. Students will use multiple forms of evidence (i.e., articles, books, multiple forms of data, government publications, public opinion polls, datasets) to analyze welfare and labor policies.

Specifically, the central learning objectives for the class involve students accomplishing the following:

- Define comparative politics concepts
- Summarize political phenomenon in the substantive field of political economy
- Critically assess arguments, compare perspectives and articulate position within debates
- Design and complete independent research. Formulate a hypothesis and identify the appropriate data or evidence sources necessary to investigate a hypothesis.