



THE DEMOCRACY PROJECT

V. ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

1. CONTOURS OF DEBATE: SOURCES ON ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

The sources below offer teachers and students some foundational information, as well as new ways of exploring the topic of economic inequality. Teachers may wish to use one or more of these sources to better orient themselves to the full range of debate and/or to introduce their students to the basic principles and definitions related to the topic. Teachers and students alike will benefit from familiarizing themselves with the contours of the debate and exploring new ways of thinking about the many implications of economic inequality for our society.

We recommend introducing [Level Questions](#) to your students along with one or more of the sources below. This is not only a valuable annotation tool, it helps students generate analytical questions for class discussion and writing.

Note that those sources preceded by a ■ include an abbreviated version, along with three discussion questions, to make the content more accessible for students and/or to reduce the time required for teachers to review and prep.

PEW Research Center (video)*

[“How Do Americans View Economic Inequality?”](#) *Economic inequality in the U.S. has been rising steadily over the past few decades, and this increase has not gone unnoticed by Americans. In this episode of Trust in America, PEW researchers explain views of economic inequality and trust in the U.S. economic system.*

**Note: We suggest this resource to introduce and define economic inequality with students.*

International Monetary Fund

[A Map of Inequalities](#)

A study of regional inequality in 20 advanced economies, including the United States, Canada, Italy and Germany, finds that regional disparities in income are large, persistent, and increasing over time.

Bruno V. Manno

[“An Education and Training Agenda for Working-Class Families”](#) *Looking back on the past 40 years, many working-class Americans are justifiably glum about their economic position in the country.*

Documentary Film

[“Inequality for All”](#) *A passionate argument on behalf of the middle class. Robert Reich demonstrates how the widening income gap has a devastating impact on the American economy.*

Alana Semuels

[“Severe Inequality Is Incompatible with the American Dream”](#) *Why extreme wealth makes it hard for people to do better than their parents did.*

Scott Galloway (video)

[TED: “How the U.S. Is Destroying Young People’s Future”](#) *Galloway unpacks the root causes and effects of the “great intergenerational theft,” asking why we let it continue and showing how we could make it end.*

Big Think (video)

[“Is the Gender Pay Gap a Myth?”](#) *Author Richard Reeves debunks multiple gender pay gap myths, on both sides of the debate.*

John Halpin

[“The Two Parties Fail to Understand Place-Based Inequality”](#) *New data on the racial/class dimensions of mobility shows the limits of left and right thinking on economic advancement for all Americans.*

■ CATO Institute

[“Exploring Wealth Inequality”](#) *Is wealth inequality the crisis that some people believe? This study examines six aspects of wealth inequality and discusses the evidence for the claims being made. [Cato Institute Excerpt, Questions & Writing Activity](#)*

■ Brookings Institution

[Rising Inequality: A Major Issue of Our Time](#) *Rising inequality and related disparities and anxieties have been stoking social discontent and are a major driver of the increased political polarization and populist nationalism that are so evident today. [Brooking Institution Excerpt, Questions & Writing Activity](#)*

Glenn Hubbard

[“The Economic Populists Have a Point”](#) *Conservatives shouldn’t abandon competition, but there’s a need to assist those it leaves behind.*

CrashCourse (video)

[“Income and Wealth Inequality”](#) *There's no question that economic inequality is real. But there is disagreement as to whether income inequality is a problem, and what can or should be done about it.*

Columbia Business School

[“Rethinking Capitalism: Is the Current System Working for America?”](#) *Oren Cass and Professor Glenn Hubbard Discuss the Challenges and Solutions for an Evolving Capitalist System.*

