

POLI 718 Agenda Setting, Baumgartner, Spring 2017

Questions for week 12, either *Taxing the Rich*, or *Rich People's Movements*

For either book:

1. One puzzle in any democratic system is why the poorest 51 percent of the voters do not bind together in a political party and pass a law that taxes income above their own rate, redistributing it to themselves. After all, they have the voting power to do this, and it could be done through the tax system: A marginal tax rate near 100% for all income above that controlled by the person at the 51st percentile, among voters. Use this book to discuss why this does not happen.
2. Another puzzle is how the rich lose. What forces came together to generate the progressive income tax?
3. Discuss the research methodology used in the book. Be prepared to compare this with another student who will do the same for the other book.

For those reading *Taxing the Rich*:

1. What do we gain from the comparative elements of this book?
2. How do wars affect agendas? Be specific about the argument here, and then go beyond the book to think about it more generally.
3. They argue about the importance of wars in the history of taxation in western countries, but in the end suggest that this may no longer hold true in the future, partly because armies are no longer so huge; no more mass mobilization. What is the value of a book describing a process that is no longer true?

For those reading *Rich People's Movements*:

1. One of the main organizational proponents of creating a federal income tax in 1913 was ... the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). What the...? Explain the logic of such a thing and how these dynamics make it hard to predict, ahead of time, how coalitions will emerge.
2. Following from the readings last week (Dagan and Teles), policy entrepreneurs are shown to be important in these periodic movements to abolish the graduated income tax (or reduce the top rate) or to abolish / reduce inheritance taxes. What is the role of entrepreneurs here; compare Kingdon, Martin, and Dagan / Teles.
3. Those seeking to abolish the income tax have several times in history succeeded in getting this issue on the agenda. But they have never succeeded. What is agenda-access combined with failure?
4. In the last two chapters, he analyzes the success in reducing the estate tax, and then the conditions for success in general. Summarize and discuss these patterns.